



REWARDS AND PUNISHMENTS IN DIGITAL ISLAMIC EDUCATION: AN INTEGRATIVE LITERATURE REVIEW AND THE RAHMAH ETHICAL FRAMEWORK

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji kondisi penghargaan mendukung atau justru melemahkan motivasi belajar, batas pendidikan dan etis *punishment* di lingkungan digital, serta prinsip yang dapat menuntun praktik pendidikan Islam. Tinjauan literatur integratif mensintesis 54 sumber substantif, terutama terbit Januari 2015–September 2026, dengan karya fondasional sebelum 2015 dipertahankan. Penelusuran dilakukan secara iteratif melalui Google Scholar, platform penerbit, dan repositori resmi WHO, UNESCO, serta regulasi Indonesia. Sumber dikelompokkan menurut jenis bukti dan dinilai secara peka-desain berdasarkan transparansi metode, relevansi langsung, kekuatan inferensi, otoritas dokumen, dan keterbatasannya. Sintesis tematik menunjukkan bahwa penghargaan paling konsisten mendukung pembelajaran ketika berfungsi sebagai umpan balik informatif, mengakui kemajuan yang bermakna, dan tidak menggantikan otonomi peserta didik, efek gamifikasi tetap heterogen menurut desain, konteks, dan durasi. Bukti paling kuat menolak hukuman fisik dan merendahkan, sedangkan bukti langsung mengenai sanksi digital masih lebih terbatas dan terutama memerlukan inferensi hati-hati dari kajian privasi, analitik pembelajaran, dan disiplin sekolah. Berdasarkan pemisahan antara temuan empiris dan penalaran normatif, penelitian ini mengusulkan RAHMAH sebagai kerangka keputusan etis yang saling berinteraksi: *Respect dignity and privacy*, *Align with learning purposes*, *Human review of digital data*, *Meaningful proportionality*, *Autonomy-supportive feedback*, dan *Healing through restoration*. RAHMAH merupakan kerangka konseptual berbasis bukti, bukan paket intervensi yang telah tervalidasi, kelayakan, penerimaan, implementasi, hasil, dan dampak tidak terduganya masih perlu diuji di berbagai lembaga pendidikan Islam.

Kata Kunci: Rewards and Punishments, Pendidikan Islam Digital, Motivasi Peserta Didik, Disiplin Etis, Kerangka Kerja RAHMAH

Abstract

This study examines the conditions under which rewards support or undermine learning motivation, the educational and ethical limits of punishment in digital environments, and principles that can guide Islamic

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educational practice. An integrative literature review synthesized 54 substantive sources published primarily from January 2015 to September 2026, while retaining pre-2015 foundational works when conceptually. Literature was identified iteratively through Google Scholar, publisher platforms, and official WHO, UNESCO, and Indonesian regulatory repositories. Sources were grouped by evidence type and appraised in a design-sensitive manner for methodological transparency, direct relevance, strength of inference, documentary authority, and limitations. The thematic synthesis indicates that rewards most consistently support learning when they function as informative feedback, recognize meaningful progress, and do not displace learner autonomy; gamification effects remain heterogeneous across design, context, and duration. The strongest evidence rejects physical and humiliating punishment, whereas direct evidence on digitally mediated sanctions is more limited and requires cautious inference from privacy, learning-analytics, and school-discipline scholarship. Separating empirical findings from normative reasoning, the study proposes RAHMAH as an interacting ethical decision framework: Respect dignity and privacy, Align with learning purposes, Human review of digital data, Meaningful proportionality, Autonomy-supportive feedback, and Healing through restoration. RAHMAH is an evidence-informed conceptual framework rather than a validated intervention package; its feasibility, acceptability, implementation, outcomes, and unintended effects require empirical evaluation across diverse Islamic educational settings.

Keywords: Rewards and Punishments, Digital Islamic Education, Learner Motivation, Ethical Discipline, RAHMAH Framework

INTRODUCTION

Digital transformation has changed not only the media used for teaching but also the mechanisms through which student behaviour is monitored, rewarded, corrected, and displayed. Learning-management systems, quiz applications, dashboards, and gamified platforms routinely use points, badges, streaks, levels, leaderboards, automated reminders, and progress notifications. These features can make feedback immediate and visible, but the same affordances can also intensify external control, social comparison, data capture, and persistent records. The educational question is therefore no longer simply whether teachers should use rewards or punishment, but how digitally mediated motivation and discipline affect autonomy, dignity, fairness, learning, and moral development.

Reward and punishment are not symmetrical tools. Self-determination theory distinguishes controlled regulation from autonomous motivation and shows why the meaning of an incentive matters: feedback that communicates competence can support engagement, whereas incentives experienced primarily as control can weaken autonomy (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Earlier experimental synthesis also found conditions under which expected tangible rewards can reduce intrinsic motivation (Deci et al., 1999), while more recent reviews emphasize that intrinsic and extrinsic motives can coexist and interact in context-dependent ways (Howard et al., 2021),(Morris et al., 2022),(Bardach &

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Murayama, 2025). Accordingly, this review treats learning motivation as the primary outcome and distinguishes it from engagement, achievement, immediate compliance, and moral internalization.

The expansion of gamification makes this distinction especially important. Meta-analyses and systematic reviews generally report positive average effects on learning or motivation, but they also show substantial heterogeneity across learner groups, design elements, duration, educational level, and outcome measures (Bai et al., 2020),(Zainuddin et al., 2020),(Kim & Castelli, 2021),(Li et al., 2023),(Zeng et al., 2024). Individual elements do not automatically increase intrinsic motivation, and competitive or highly visible features can alter the social meaning of feedback (Mekler et al., 2017),(Sailer et al., 2017),(Toda et al., 2019),(Ratinho & Martins, 2023). Digital rewards should therefore be treated as pedagogical design choices rather than as neutral technical features.

Punishment raises a different evidentiary and ethical problem. Reviews of physical punishment associate it with harmful developmental, behavioural, mental-health, relational, and educational outcomes, without evidence of positive developmental benefit (Gershoff & Grogan-Kaylor, 2016),(Gershoff, 2017),(Gershoff et al., 2018),(Heilmann et al., 2021),(Heekes et al., 2022). The World Health Organization likewise concludes that corporal punishment carries multiple risks of harm and no benefits for children, parents, or societies (World Health Organization, 2025). These findings support a firm boundary against physical, cruel, humiliating, and degrading practices while leaving open the educational question of how proportionate, logical, and restorative consequences should be designed.

Digital environments can reproduce coercion without physical contact. Public rankings, screenshots, exclusion from online learning spaces, behavioural dashboards, automated deductions, and data-intensive monitoring can create privacy, profiling, surveillance, or unequal-impact risks (Ferguson et al., 2016),(Ifenthaler & Schumacher, 2016),(Regan & Jesse, 2019),(Andrejevic & Selwyn, 2020),(Kimmons, 2021). However, direct causal evidence on “digital punishment” as a discrete intervention is much thinner than the evidence on corporal punishment or gamification. Claims about digitally mediated sanctions must therefore distinguish direct evidence from extrapolation based on learning-analytics ethics, data governance, and school-discipline research. UNESCO’s technology-in-education guidance similarly emphasizes human agency, equity, governance, and the educational purpose of technology (UNESCO, 2023).

This issue has specific relevance for Islamic education because its formative aims extend beyond observable compliance. Al-Attas places *adab* at the centre of education, and Halstead describes Islamic education as an integrated moral, spiritual, and



intellectual formation (Al-Attas, 1980),(Halstead, 2004). Scholarship on Islamic teacher education likewise emphasizes the teacher's moral identity, faithful praxis, reflective judgment, and responsibility for shaping learning relationships (Memon, 2011),(Memon, Alhashmi, Abdalla, et al., 2024),(Memon, Alhashmi, & Abdalla, 2024),(Assalihee et al., 2024). Contemporary studies of Islamic educational settings also underline the importance of value internalization and responsible character formation in digital contexts (Jusubaidi et al., 2024),(Sholehuddin & Abdul, 2024),(Syafri & Budin, 2025).

The closest bodies of review literature remain largely separate. Gamification reviews synthesize effects and design moderators; punishment reviews focus on corporal punishment and child outcomes; restorative reviews examine school discipline and exclusion, and digital-ethics reviews examine privacy, AI, and governance (Bai et al., 2020),(Heekes et al., 2022),(Lodi et al., 2022),(Samimi et al., 2023),(Gouseti et al., 2025). These literatures do not, on their own, provide an integrated decision framework that connects motivation quality, nonviolent discipline, digital data practices, restorative accountability, and the normative aims of Islamic education. That unresolved intersection constitutes the specific gap addressed by this review.

The principal population of interest is school-age learners in primary and secondary education, particularly where discipline, child protection, and digital school culture are concerned. Evidence from higher education is retained only when it illuminates motivational mechanisms or digital-gamification design and is not treated as directly representative of children. The review asks: (1) Under what conditions do rewards support or weaken learning motivation in digital environments? (2) What are the educational and ethical limits of punishment and digitally mediated discipline? and (3) What evidence-informed principles can guide motivation and accountability in Islamic educational settings? The intended contribution is an ethical decision framework rather than a new causal theory or an effectiveness evaluation of RAHMAH.

For the Indonesian context, Regulation of the Minister of Primary and Secondary Education Number 6 of 2026 defines safe and comfortable school culture to include spiritual needs, physical protection, psychological well-being, sociocultural safety, and digital civility and safety (Kementrian Pendidikan, 2026). This regulatory development reinforces the practical relevance of connecting disciplinary practice, digital governance, learner dignity, and educational purpose.



LITERATURE REVIEW

Rewards, Feedback, and the Quality of Motivation

Educational reward should be distinguished from neurobiological reward, computational reward functions, and workplace incentives. In this review, reward refers to pedagogical recognition, incentives, privileges, points, badges, or feedback intended to strengthen engagement or signal progress. Self-determination theory is central because it differentiates external control from more autonomous forms of regulation (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Reviews of student motivation show that autonomous motivation is more consistently associated with persistence and well-being than externally controlled regulation (Howard et al., 2021),(Urhahne & Wijnia, 2023). Hattie and Timperley (2007) further show why feedback is educationally useful when it clarifies task performance, process, and self-regulation rather than merely evaluating the person.

The gamification literature provides empirical tests of these ideas at scale. Meta-analytic and systematic-review evidence suggests that gamification can support outcomes on average but does not establish that every point, badge, leaderboard, or reward system is beneficial (Bai et al., 2020),(Zainuddin et al., 2020),(Kim & Castelli, 2021),(Li et al., 2023),(Manzano-León et al., 2021),(Zhan et al., 2022),(Zhang et al., 2022). Theoretical reviews and taxonomies show that effects depend on the psychological function and combination of design elements (Koivisto & Hamari, 2019),(Krath et al., 2021),(Toda et al., 2019). Empirical work also shows that game elements may change performance without reliably increasing intrinsic motivation, and longer-term or higher-education studies caution against assuming that novelty or competition produces durable motivational gains (Mekler et al., 2017),(Aguiar-Castillo et al., 2021),(Ratinho & Martins, 2023).

Punishment, Educational Consequences, and Restorative Practice

This review distinguishes punishment by behavioural function from the ethical and educational purpose of a consequence. A response can reduce future behaviour yet still differ markedly in whether it humiliates, excludes, teaches, repairs harm, or protects safety. For physical punishment, the evidence base is comparatively strong and convergent: meta-analytic, prospective, and school-focused reviews report harmful or non-beneficial child outcomes (Gershoff & Grogan-Kaylor, 2016),(Gershoff, 2017),(Gershoff et al., 2018),(Heilmann et al., 2021),(Heekes et al., 2022). The educational implication is not that all consequences should disappear, but that violence and degradation should not be treated as teaching methods.



Restorative practice provides a more directly educational literature for alternatives to exclusionary or purely retributive discipline. School-based reviews report promising associations with school climate, relationships, conflict management, and reduced exclusionary outcomes, while also emphasizing implementation variability and limits in causal evidence (Lodi et al., 2022),(Samimi et al., 2023). Preventive classroom-management evidence also supports teaching expectations, providing structure, increasing opportunities to respond, and using consistent feedback before problems escalate (Korpershoek et al., 2016). Autonomy-supportive teaching adds a complementary principle: structure and authority can coexist with rationale, perspective-taking, and meaningful student agency (Reeve & Cheon, 2021).

Digital Mediation: Visibility, Data, and Human Oversight

Digital discipline changes the visibility, persistence, and reach of educational responses. Learning analytics can provide timely information, yet learners may not understand what is collected, how indicators are generated, or how long records persist (Ferguson et al., 2016),(Ifenthaler & Schumacher, 2016),(Kimmons, 2021). Data-intensive technologies can also sort, profile, or normalize surveillance in ways that affect educational opportunity (Regan & Jesse, 2019),(Andrejevic & Selwyn, 2020). Reviews of AI ethics in K-12 and religious education similarly identify transparency, privacy, bias, accountability, and meaningful human oversight as recurring concerns (Gouseti et al., 2025),(Papakostas, 2025). These literatures support ethical safeguards but do not justify treating every automated prompt or public reward as equally harmful.

Islamic Educational Ethics as an Interpretive Lens

Islamic educational scholarship is used in this review as a normative and interpretive source, not as empirical proof of intervention effectiveness. Al-Attas and Halstead frame education as moral formation in which knowledge, conduct, and character are integrated. Memon and more recent work on Islamic teacher education emphasize that pedagogical competence includes ethical identity, reflective judgment, and faithful praxis (Memon, Alhashmi, Abdalla, et al., 2024),(Memon, Alhashmi, & Abdalla, 2024),(Assalihee et al., 2024). Studies of Islamic learning environments further illustrate how character, values, relational pedagogy, and digital challenges are negotiated in practice (Jusubaidi et al., 2024),(Sholehuddin & Abdul, 2024),(Syafri & Budin, 2025). Within this interpretive lens, rahmah (compassion), hikmah (wise judgment), 'adl (justice), amanah (trust), satr (protection from unnecessary exposure), islah (repair), and tadarruj (gradual development) function as ethical criteria for assessing educational responses.



RESEARCH METHODS

This study used an integrative literature review because the research problem spans empirical, theoretical, policy, and normative bodies of knowledge. Integrative review methodology is suitable for combining heterogeneous evidence when the purpose is conceptual synthesis rather than statistical aggregation, provided that problem identification, search, evaluation, analysis, and presentation are made explicit (Whittemore & Knafl, 2005). The review was also guided by the broader requirement that literature reviews function as transparent research methods rather than ad hoc summaries (Snyder, 2019). The review focused primarily on school-age learners and school-based discipline. Higher-education studies were eligible only when they directly informed mechanisms of learning motivation, gamification, or digital feedback. Adult organizational performance, criminal punishment theory, computational reward engineering, and health-behaviour reward studies that had appeared in the earlier manuscript were removed from the formal synthesis because their educational transfer was too indirect. The main publication window was January 2015–September 2026, pre-2015 works were retained only when foundational to motivation theory, feedback, Islamic educational aims, or teacher education.

Literature was identified iteratively through Google Scholar and publisher-hosted search platforms, supplemented by official repositories of the World Health Organization, UNESCO, and Indonesian regulation. Search combinations included reward and intrinsic motivation, gamification and student motivation, leaderboard and learning, punishment and school, corporal punishment and educational outcomes, restorative practice and school discipline, learning analytics and privacy, digital education and surveillance, Islamic education and adab, and Islamic teacher education and ethics. Searches were updated through September 2026. Because the original project was an iterative integrative review rather than a prospectively registered systematic review, no PRISMA-style claim of exhaustive retrieval is made; instead, the revised article makes the final analytic corpus and evidence-to-claim logic explicit.

Sources were included when they directly contributed to at least one review question: (a) empirical or review-level evidence on rewards, gamification, motivation, classroom management, discipline, punishment, or restorative practice; (b) research on digital privacy, learning analytics, surveillance, AI ethics, or educational data governance; (c) authoritative public-health, educational-policy, or legal guidance; or (d) scholarship directly addressing the aims, ethics, pedagogy, or teacher formation of Islamic education. Promotional material, duplicate publications, purely opinion-based



commentary, and sources whose relevance depended primarily on analogy from non-educational settings were excluded from the formal corpus.

The final substantive corpus comprised 54 sources. Each source was assigned a primary role for audit purposes, although individual sources could inform more than one theme. Review-level evidence was prioritized for broad claims; primary studies were used for mechanisms and design-specific findings; official documents were used for legal, public-health, and governance standards; and Islamic educational scholarship was used for normative interpretation rather than causal claims. Table 1 summarizes the composition and the appraisal logic applied to each source class.

Table 1. Composition and design-sensitive appraisal of the 54-source analytic corpus

Primary source role	n	Appraisal focus	Use in synthesis
Systematic reviews, meta-analyses, evidence syntheses	20	Search/selection transparency; appropriateness of synthesis; heterogeneity; alignment between evidence and inference.	Broad patterns in motivation, gamification, punishment, restorative practice, and digital ethics.
Primary empirical studies	8	Design, sample/context, measures, comparison/analysis, duration, and acknowledged limitations.	Mechanisms, implementation detail, and context-specific findings; not generalized beyond design.
Foundational/theoretical educational and motivation sources	8	Conceptual clarity, relevance to review questions, and consistency with empirical evidence.	Definitions and explanatory mechanisms; no causal claims made from theory alone.
Digital ethics and technology-governance scholarship	6	Directness to education, privacy/data implications, transparency, equity, and human oversight.	Ethical safeguards and interpretation of digitally mediated risks.
Islamic educational scholarship and normative interpretation	9	Relevance to educational aims, teacher ethics, adab/character formation, and interpretive coherence.	Normative lens; explicitly separated from empirical effectiveness evidence.



Official legal/public-health/policy documents	3	Institutional authority, currency, scope, and applicability to education/child protection.	Rights, safety, governance, and Indonesian policy boundaries.
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Appraisal was design-sensitive rather than reduced to a single numerical quality score. Stronger conclusions required convergence across higher-level syntheses or direct evidence of appropriate design; indirect or contextually distant evidence was used only to interpret mechanisms or risks. Contradictory findings were retained and used to calibrate conclusions. For example, positive average effects of gamification were considered alongside evidence of heterogeneity and studies showing that individual game elements do not necessarily increase intrinsic motivation.

Analysis followed a thematic synthesis. First, sources were coded for the purpose, mechanism, outcome, risk, population, setting, and evidentiary status of rewards or disciplinary responses. Second, codes were grouped into five recurrent themes: the informational-versus-controlling function of rewards; digital amplification of visibility and comparison; the distinction between compliance and internalization; risks of digital exclusion/surveillance; and the ethical reorientation of discipline toward dignity and restoration. Third, empirical findings were compared with Islamic educational concepts without treating normative sources as equivalent to empirical studies. An evidence matrix linked each theme to supporting sources, contradictory or limiting evidence, and the strength of the resulting proposition.

Trustworthiness was addressed in four ways. Credibility was supported by triangulation across source types while allowing conflicting findings to weaken or qualify claims. Transferability was addressed by identifying educational level and by treating higher-education findings as indirect for school-age populations. Dependability was strengthened by reconstructing the final source corpus, eligibility rules, coding categories, and evidence matrices in the revised manuscript. Confirmability was supported by distinguishing source-derived findings from the authors' interpretation and from the proposed RAHMAH framework. Reflexively, the authors acknowledge an Islamic and restorative orientation; this normative commitment guided the questions asked but was not used to override contradictory empirical evidence.

The study analyzed published literature and publicly available policy/legal documents; it involved no recruitment, intervention, identifiable personal data, or human-participant consent procedures. Funding and competing-interest declarations were not contained in the manuscript files supplied for revision and should be confirmed



by the authors before resubmission. The substantive limitations of the review are its non-exhaustive integrative search, heterogeneous populations and designs, uneven evidence across themes, and limited direct research on digital punishment within Islamic educational institutions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Results: Rewards Support Motivation When They Communicate Progress Rather Than Control

The first theme is that the educational effect of a reward depends less on its material form than on its functional meaning. A badge, point, privilege, or verbal acknowledgment can operate as information about competence and progress or as a controlling condition for approval and access. Self-determination theory predicts different motivational consequences for these functions (Ryan & Deci, 2020), and meta-analytic evidence links more autonomous forms of motivation with stronger learning-related and well-being outcomes than externally controlled regulation (Howard et al., 2021). Accordingly, the evidence does not support the categorical claim that rewards are either always beneficial or always harmful.

Review-level evidence on gamification is compatible with this conditional interpretation. Positive average effects are reported across multiple syntheses, but the magnitude and durability of effects depend on user type, design principles, learning environment, duration, and outcome definition (Bai et al., 2020),(Zainuddin et al., 2020),(Kim & Castelli, 2021),(Li et al., 2023),(Zeng et al., 2024). The Li publication is a meta-analysis rather than a longitudinal classroom study, the revised manuscript therefore does not attribute specific declines in motivation, satisfaction, empowerment, or examination performance to that article. Instead, it uses Li et al. to support the existence of positive average effects with substantial heterogeneity and relies on design-specific studies such as Mekler for the observation that game elements can affect performance without necessarily increasing intrinsic motivation.

The most defensible educational use of rewards is therefore as concise, informative recognition: signaling meaningful progress, strategy use, revision, cooperation, persistence, or responsible participation. Hattie and Timperley's (2007) feedback model and Reeve and Cheon's (2021) autonomy-supportive teaching literature both support shifting learners toward clearer rationales, self-monitoring, and increasing responsibility. The review treats gradual reduction of external prompts as a design proposition grounded in these principles, not as a universally proven best sequence.



Digital Rewards Amplify Immediacy, Visibility, and Social Comparison

Digital platforms make feedback faster, more frequent, and easier to display. Private progress indicators, competency badges, and structured levels can reduce uncertainty and help learners monitor progress. At the same time, leaderboards and reputation features change the social meaning of reward by making relative standing visible. Taxonomies and theory-focused reviews show that social comparison, competition, and reputation are distinct design mechanisms rather than interchangeable forms of feedback (Toda et al., 2019),(Krath et al., 2021),(Koivisto & Hamari, 2019). Four recurrent design risks emerged: metric fixation, novelty dependence, competitive exposure, and inequitable accumulation. Systematic reviews of gamified learning note that motivational effects may vary over time and across levels of education, while empirical studies show that isolated game elements do not guarantee intrinsic motivation(Manzano-León et al., 2021),(Ratinho & Martins, 2023),(Aguiar-Castillo et al., 2021),(Mekler et al., 2017). These findings justify calibrated recommendations: progress should preferably be private or consent-based, criteria transparent, opportunities for recovery available, and game metrics supplemented by substantive feedback. They do not justify the stronger claim that all public recognition is harmful.

Physical and Humiliating Punishment Has a Stronger Evidence Base for Harm Than Digital Sanctions

The evidence is most consistent for physical punishment. Across meta-analysis, prospective review, school-focused review, and public-health synthesis, corporal punishment is associated with harmful or non-beneficial outcomes and lacks a defensible educational advantage (Gershoff & Grogan-Kaylor, 2016),(Gershoff, 2017),(Gershoff et al., 2018),(Heilmann et al., 2021),(Heekes et al., 2022),(Organization, 2025). This conclusion is stronger than the evidence available for many other disciplinary strategies and supports an unambiguous rejection of physical, cruel, humiliating, and degrading punishment. Immediate behavioural interruption should not be conflated with moral internalization. A learner may comply in the presence of authority without understanding harm, acquiring an alternative skill, or accepting the reason for a rule. The revised analysis therefore distinguishes three dimensions that can overlap: behavioural function (does the response reduce a behaviour?), ethical acceptability (does it respect safety and dignity?), and educational purpose (does it teach, repair, or protect learning?). A logical or restorative consequence can reduce future misconduct while still being educative and ethically acceptable; the categories are not treated as mutually exclusive.



Digitally Mediated Discipline Introduces Risks of Exclusion, Surveillance, and Data Error

Digital sanctions can be embedded in software through access restrictions, attendance flags, automatic deductions, behavioural dashboards, public status indicators, or persistent records. Learning-analytics research shows that students may have concerns about data access, privacy, and secondary use, while educational-technology ethics highlights profiling, surveillance, and the tendency to convert complex behaviour into simplified indicators (Ferguson et al., 2016),(Ifenthaler & Schumacher, 2016),(Regan & Jesse, 2019),(Kimmons, 2021),(Andrejevic & Selwyn, 2020). AI-ethics reviews add concerns about opacity, bias, accountability, and the need for meaningful human oversight (Gouseti et al., 2025),(Papakostas, 2025). The evidence base here is uneven. These sources directly support privacy and governance concerns, but they do not by themselves establish the causal motivational effect of every automated warning or access restriction. The revised synthesis therefore treats claims about digital punishment as evidence-informed extrapolations unless a source directly studies a disciplinary outcome. The minimum protections supported across the literature are data minimization, limited visibility, explainable criteria, correction of inaccurate records, reasonable accommodation, and human review before serious consequences. Temporary restriction may be justified for immediate safety only when an alternative learning pathway, defined duration, and review mechanism are provided.

Restorative and Islamic Educational Perspectives Reorient Discipline Toward Learning, Justice, and Repair

Restorative school research shifts attention from suffering or exclusion toward accountability, relationships, repair, and reintegration. Reviews report promising outcomes for school climate, conflict management, relationships, and exclusionary discipline, but they also note heterogeneous implementation and limits in causal evidence (Lodi et al., 2022),(Samimi et al., 2023). Restorative practice should therefore be presented as a promising educational approach rather than as a universally superior intervention. Classroom-management and autonomy-supportive teaching evidence further indicates that prevention, explicit expectations, structure, rationale, and relational feedback can reduce reliance on reactive punishment (Korpershoek et al., 2016),(Reeve & Cheon, 2021). Islamic educational scholarship contributes a normative interpretation of why these practices matter. Adab, moral responsibility, teacher example, and faithful praxis imply that the method of discipline is itself part of what students learn (Al-Attas, 1980),(Halstead, 2004),(Memon, 2011),(Memon, Alhashmi, Abdalla, et al., 2024),(Memon,



Alhashmi, & Abdalla, 2024). Contemporary studies of Islamic education support the importance of reflective pedagogy, value internalization, and relational character formation (Assalihee et al., 2024),(Jusubaidi et al., 2024),(Sholehuddin & Abdul, 2024),(Syafri & Budin, 2025). These sources do not empirically validate RAHMAH, they provide the ethical vocabulary against which empirical findings are interpreted.

Table 2. Evidence-to-theme matrix and calibrated interpretation

Theme	Principal supporting evidence	Contradictory/limiting evidence	Calibrated interpretation
Reward and motivation	SDT and motivation meta-analysis; gamification meta-analyses/reviews.	Effects vary by design, duration, outcome, and learner; isolated elements may not raise intrinsic motivation.	Moderate-to-strong evidence for conditional effects; avoid universal claims.
Digital visibility and social comparison	Gamification taxonomies/reviews; privacy and learning-analytics research.	Direct causal evidence on public rewards or digital shaming is uneven.	Moderate evidence for design/privacy risks; direct motivational effects require context-specific testing.
Physical/humiliating punishment	Meta-analysis, prospective review, school review, WHO synthesis.	Heterogeneity in settings does not reveal positive developmental benefit.	Strong evidence supporting rejection of physical and degrading punishment.
Digitally mediated sanctions	Learning analytics, surveillance, AI ethics, policy guidance.	Few studies isolate automated sanctions as interventions, especially in Islamic settings.	Low-to-moderate direct evidence; recommendations framed as safeguards and cautious extrapolations.
Restorative discipline	School restorative-practice reviews; classroom-management and autonomy-	Implementation varies; many studies are nonexperimental or context dependent.	Promising, moderate evidence; not treated as universally superior.



	supportive teaching.		
Islamic educational ethics	Foundational and contemporary Islamic education/teacher-education scholarship.	Normative scholarship does not establish intervention effectiveness.	Normative/conceptual contribution; used to interpret, not to prove causal effects.

2. Discussion

The integrated findings reject the idea that educational quality can be reduced to a numerical balance between reward and punishment. Rewards can sometimes operate as constructive feedback, while physical and humiliating punishment carries qualitatively different risks. The more useful decision question is whether a response supports learning, protects dignity, is proportionate, is understandable, and increases the learner's capacity for responsible action beyond immediate supervision.

The evidence is also asymmetrical in strength. Gamification has a comparatively large review literature but heterogeneous findings, physical punishment has strong convergent evidence of harm; restorative practice is promising but implementation dependent; and digitally mediated sanctions remain under-researched as a distinct intervention category. The revised manuscript therefore avoids presenting every recommendation as an empirical finding. Instead, it distinguishes (a) relatively established evidence, (b) cautious extrapolation from adjacent digital-ethics and learning-analytics research, and (c) normative recommendations derived from Islamic educational aims.

The Indonesian policy context is consistent with this calibrated approach. Regulation Number 6 of 2026 defines safe and comfortable school culture broadly enough to include psychological well-being and digital civility/safety, providing a current legal foundation for nonviolent and digitally responsible practice (Kementrian Pendidikan, 2026). Policy alignment, however, does not constitute evidence that a particular framework is effective; it establishes relevance and minimum institutional obligations.

The RAHMAH framework is proposed as an interacting decision checklist rather than a rigid sequence or algorithm. All six principles should be considered together because ethical tensions can arise. Privacy is the default, but necessary disclosure may be required to protect a harmed student, meet safeguarding duties, or prevent continuing risk. Consistency matters, but meaningful proportionality can require reasonable accommodation. Reintegration is desirable after accountability, but it must not override the safety of others or compel a harmed learner to participate in unwanted reconciliation. Human judgment is therefore a constitutive feature of the framework, not merely a final check.



Table 3. Derivation of the proposed RAHMAH framework

Review finding or risk	Islamic ethical lens	RAHMAH element	Status of proposition
Public exposure, persistent records, profiling, and surveillance can threaten dignity and privacy.	<i>Rahmah, satr, amanah</i>	R – Respect dignity and privacy	Evidence-informed ethical safeguard, privacy may yield to necessary safeguarding disclosure.
Rewards and consequences can become detached from the educational purpose and turn into control or retaliation.	<i>Hikmah, adab</i>	A – Align with learning purposes	Integrates motivation evidence with formative educational aims.
Platform indicators can be incomplete, biased, or context blind.	<i>‘Adl, amanah</i>	H – Human review of digital data	Strongly supported as a governance safeguard; not an effectiveness claim.
Severity, duration, and unequal impact shape fairness.	<i>‘Adl, tadarruj</i>	M – Meaningful proportionality	Normative requirement informed by child protection, equity, and educational purpose.
Controlling feedback can weaken autonomy; rationale and learner voice can support internalization.	<i>Hikmah, tarbiyah</i>	A – Autonomy-supportive feedback	Supported by SDT and autonomy-supportive teaching evidence.
Exclusion and stigma can persist after misconduct; accountability should include repair and re-entry.	<i>Rahmah, islah</i>	H – Healing through restoration	Promising evidence plus normative synthesis, restoration must be voluntary for harmed parties.

The RAHMAH Framework for Ethical Digital Motivation and Discipline

RAHMAH translates the synthesis into six practical questions. It is evidence-informed and conceptually derived; it has not yet been validated as a package, scale, intervention, or implementation protocol. Its originality lies primarily in integrating motivational quality, digital-data safeguards, restorative accountability, and Islamic educational ethics in a single decision structure rather than in claiming that each component is individually novel.



Table 4. The proposed RAHMAH framework

Element	Core question	Recommended practice	Safeguard / practice to avoid
R – Respect dignity and privacy	Does the response protect the learner and others from unnecessary exposure?	Use private feedback, limited data visibility, respectful language, consent-based public recognition, and proportionate retention.	Avoid shaming, permanent labels, or unnecessary disclosure. Privacy does not prevent limited disclosure required for safety, safeguarding, or law.
A – Align with learning purposes	How does the response improve knowledge, skill, adab, safety, or responsibility?	Recognize meaningful progress and use consequences directly connected to learning, repair, or protection.	Avoid arbitrary deductions, retaliatory penalties, or rewards that displace the value of learning.
H – Human review of digital data	Has a competent educator examined context before a consequential decision?	Verify connectivity, accessibility, disability, device and situational factors; allow correction and appeal.	Do not impose serious sanctions solely from dashboards, attendance logs, automated scores, or algorithmic flags.
M – Meaningful proportionality	Is the response necessary, time-limited, equitable, and no more restrictive than required?	Use the least restrictive effective response, explain duration, review effects, and provide reasonable accommodation.	Avoid collective punishment, indefinite exclusion, excessive loss of learning access, or formally equal rules that produce avoidable inequity.
A – Autonomy-supportive feedback	Does the learner understand the rationale and have	State boundaries clearly, explain reasons, hear the learner's account,	Avoid threats, controlling language, reward bargaining, or

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	a constructive next step?	offer bounded choices, and support self-monitoring.	learner “voice” that is purely symbolic.
H – Healing through restoration	How will harm be repaired while protecting all affected persons?	Use reflection, restitution, skill practice, restorative dialogue when appropriate, and renewed inclusion after accountability.	Do not force reconciliation, require harmed students to participate, or prioritize reintegration over protection from continuing harm.

Implications for Educational Practice and Policy

At classroom level, teachers can audit reward systems by asking whether metrics correspond to meaningful competencies, whether criteria are transparent, whether progress is visible only to appropriate audiences, whether students can recover after mistakes, and whether feedback increasingly supports self-assessment. Illustrative disciplinary scenarios in this article should be read as proposed applications of the framework rather than evaluated interventions. For example, repairing a damaged shared document or removing an offensive post can be educationally related consequences, but their appropriateness depends on context, proportionality, safety, and human review.

At institutional level, schools and madrasahs need policies that address both physical and digital discipline. Violence prevention should be paired with rules on behavioural data, public ranking, platform exclusion, automated flags, correction of records, appeal, and safeguarding. Indonesian Regulation Number 6 of 2026 provides a current policy reference for safe school culture, including digital civility and safety. UNESCO’s technology guidance adds an international emphasis on human agency, equity, governance, and educational purpose (UNESCO, 2023).

Teacher professional development should combine motivation design, nonviolent classroom management, restorative competence, and digital ethics. Educators need to distinguish informative from controlling rewards, use process-focused feedback, de-escalate conflict, facilitate repair when appropriate, recognize when restorative dialogue should not be used, and understand how platform design can create privacy or equity problems. In Islamic institutions, these competencies can be connected explicitly to adab,



rahmah, hikmah, 'adl, and amanah without treating religious concepts as substitutes for empirical evaluation.

Future research should validate RAHMAH in stages rather than assume effectiveness. Initial work should examine conceptual clarity, expert and student acceptability, feasibility, and implementation fidelity. Subsequent studies should test outcomes such as autonomous motivation, classroom climate, perceived fairness, digital safety, disciplinary incidents, access to learning, and possible unintended effects. Designs should include different learner ages and settings madrasahs, Islamic schools, pesantren, universities, and online religious education and should report subgroup differences rather than assume uniform effects. Comparative work should also separate motivation, engagement, achievement, compliance, and moral internalization because these outcomes are related but not interchangeable(Vu et al., 2022),(Zeng et al., 2024),(Zhang et al., 2022).

CONCLUSION

The reviewed evidence supports a conditional rather than binary account of rewards. Rewards can support learning when they function as informative feedback, recognize meaningful progress, preserve learner agency, and remain aligned with educational goals. Gamification research is substantial but heterogeneous, so average positive effects do not justify universal prescriptions for particular points, badges, rankings, or competitive features. The evidence is stronger and more consistent against physical, cruel, humiliating, and degrading punishment. Digitally mediated discipline introduces additional concerns about visibility, persistence, exclusion, data error, profiling, and surveillance, but direct causal evidence on digital sanctions remains comparatively limited. Recommendations in this area should therefore be understood as evidence-informed safeguards and ethical propositions rather than proven effect estimates.

From an Islamic educational perspective, the central purpose of discipline is formation of adab, responsibility, justice, and self-regulation rather than immediate compliance alone. RAHMAH is proposed as an interacting ethical decision framework that integrates dignity/privacy, alignment with learning, human review, proportionality, autonomy-supportive feedback, and restoration. It is not a validated intervention package, and its applicability should not be generalized uncritically across all Islamic educational institutions or learner groups. The next research priority is empirical validation: feasibility, acceptability, implementation fidelity, outcomes, subgroup variation, and unintended effects should be examined in diverse settings. Until such



evidence is available, the framework is best used as a transparent structure for professional judgment—one that makes explicit which recommendations are supported by established evidence, which are cautious extrapolations, and which express the normative commitments of Islamic education.

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