

Original Article

Performance-Based Rewards, Disciplinary Sanctions, and Operator Performance in the Mining Industry

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Abstract:

Operator performance plays a critical role in supporting productivity and occupational safety in the mining industry, which is characterized by high operational risks. However, variations in operator performance remain a managerial challenge, particularly regarding the effectiveness of reward and punishment systems. This study aims to examine the effects of rewards and punishments on operator performance in a mining service company. The Research employed a quantitative, causal Research design. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire distributed to 150 heavy equipment operators, selected purposively from a total population of 370. The data were analyzed using multiple linear regression analysis to assess both partial and simultaneous effects of reward and punishment on operator performance. The findings indicate that rewards have a positive and significant Influence on operator performance, suggesting that fair, performance-based reward systems enhance motivation and work effectiveness. Punishment also shows a positive and significant effect, indicating that proportional and consistent sanctions contribute to improved work discipline and compliance with operational procedures. Furthermore, reward and punishment jointly explain a substantial proportion of the variation in operator performance. These results highlight the importance of balancing motivational incentives and behavioral control mechanisms in human resource management practices. The study concludes that well-designed reward and punishment systems are essential for achieving sustainable improvements in operator performance, particularly in high-risk industrial environments such as mining operations.

Keywords: Reward, Punishment, Operator Performance, Human Resource Management, Mining Industry

Introduction

In the context of intensifying dynamic and efficiency-driven industrial competitiveness, the function of human resources (HR) is a strategic element that influences the sustainability of the organization, particularly in labor-intensive sectors and extractive industries. Contemporary management literature asserts that competitive advantage is now primarily influenced by an organization's capacity to

Submitted	: 03 February 2026
Revised	: 05 February 2026
Acceptance	: 09 February 2026
Publish Online	: 09 February 2026

methodically and sustainably oversee individual behavior and performance, rather than only by physical assets or technology ([Chabane et al., 2023](#); [Sandu et al., 2023](#)). In this framework, employees' performance, especially operators, who are the spearhead of operations, is the main indicator of the effectiveness of the organization's HR management system.

Operator performance has unique characteristics because it is directly related to aspects of productivity, work safety, operational discipline, and the sustainability of company assets. Recent Research shows that in the mining and heavy equipment sectors, the quality of operator performance contributes significantly to cost efficiency, reduced risk of workplace accidents, and stability of production output ([Asiedu et al., 2025](#); [Singh & Awoke, 2023](#)). Therefore, organizations are required not only to ensure operators' technical competence but also to build a system for controlling work behavior that consistently drives optimal performance.

One of the most widely used approaches in HR management practice is the implementation of reward and punishment systems. Rewards are forms of recognition given by the organization to employees for specific performance achievements, in both financial and non-financial forms. At the same time, punishment is a consequence imposed for violations of applicable rules or work standards. Recent studies in organizational behavior confirm that the combination of rewards and punishments, when designed fairly and transparently, can affect employee motivation, compliance, and performance orientation ([Layek & Koodamara, 2024](#); [Teichmann & Wittmann, 2024](#)).

Theoretically, the relationship between reward, punishment, and performance can be explained by Vroom's Expectancy Theory. This theory states that individuals will be driven to behave in a certain way if they believe that the effort they put in will lead to good performance. That performance will be followed by rewards or consequences that are valuable to them ([Llorente-Alonso et al., 2024](#)). In this context, rewards reinforce positive behaviors, while punishment serves as a control mechanism to prevent dysfunctional behavior.

However, empirical findings on the effectiveness of rewards and punishments in influencing employee performance remain mixed. Several studies have found that rewards have a positive and significant effect on performance ([Chi et al., 2023](#); [Layek & Koodamara, 2024](#)), while other studies reported weak or even negative influences when rewards did not align with employees' perceptions of fairness ([Alkandi et al., 2023a](#); [Zhou et al., 2025](#)). The same thing also happens with the punishment variable, where corrective and proportional punishments tend to increase work discipline, but excessively repressive punishments can actually reduce employee motivation and attachment ([Bugdol & Puciato, 2023](#); [Nimmi et al., 2024](#); [Orji et al., 2024](#)).

The difference in findings indicates a Research gap that remains relevant to study, especially in the context of labor provider organizations in the mining sector. PT Bukit Asam Kreatif, a company engaged in the provision of heavy equipment operators, faces typical challenges, including fluctuations in operator performance, disciplinary violations, and labor retention dynamics. This condition evaluates the reward and punishment system as a strategic issue that not only affects individual performance but also the sustainability of business contracts and the company's reputation.

Based on this background, this study aims to empirically examine the effects of rewards and punishments on operator performance at PT Bukit Asam Kreatif. In particular, this study is directed to test the extent to which rewards and punishments

function as HR management instruments in shaping productive, disciplined, and responsible operator work behavior. This goal aligns with the practical needs of organizations in formulating *evidence-based HR* management policies, as recommended by contemporary management literature ([Maertens et al., 2025](#); [Newman & Mintrom, 2023](#)).

The theoretical contribution of this Research lies in strengthening the literature on the application of Expectancy Theory in the mining industry and the operational workforce. This study enriches the understanding of how reward and punishment operate simultaneously as motivational and behavioral control mechanisms, especially among workers engaged in high-risk, production-targeted work. Thus, the results of the Research are expected to serve as an academic reference for the development of a reward-punishment-based performance management model in similar sectors.

From a practical perspective, this Research is expected to contribute to the management of PT Bukit Asam Kreatif in evaluating the effectiveness of the reward and punishment system that has been implemented. Conceptually, the results of this study suggest that companies strengthen the principles of fairness, consistency, and transparency in their reward systems and ensure that punishment is applied proportionately and educationally. Recent literature emphasizes that punishment systems accompanied by clear communication and constructive feedback tend to be more effective in improving performance than punishment approaches alone ([Calabrese et al., 2023](#); [Giamos et al., 2024](#)).

Another practical implication is the need to integrate the reward system with performance indicators that are measurable and relevant to the operator's work characteristics, such as work safety, procedural compliance, and team contribution. In addition, companies are advised to use punishment as an organizational learning tool, rather than merely a sanction, so that operators understand the consequences of their work behavior and are encouraged to make continuous improvements. This approach aligns with the principle of *high-performance work systems*, which emphasizes a balance between employee control and empowerment ([Li & Rasiyah, 2025](#); [Peethambaran & Naim, 2025](#)). Thus, this Research is expected not only to make an academic contribution but also to yield managerial implications for organizations, enabling them to sustainably improve operator performance through the design of an effective and fair reward-and-punishment system.

This study aims to empirically analyze the Influence of rewards and punishments on operator performance in mining sector labor provider companies. In particular, this study examines the extent to which the reward and punishment systems function as human resource management instruments to improve the quality, quantity, effectiveness, and work independence of heavy equipment operators. In addition, this study aims to assess the simultaneous contributions of reward and punishment in explaining variations in operator performance, and to provide a deeper understanding of the role of the balance between motivational mechanisms and behavioral control in the context of high-risk operational work. Using a causal quantitative approach, this study is expected to make a theoretical contribution to the development of the Expectancy Theory-based performance management literature and to provide practical implications for organizations in designing fair, effective, and sustainable operator performance management policies.

Methods

This study uses a quantitative, causal Research design to test the causal relationship between independent and dependent variables. The causal approach was chosen because this study focuses on testing the effects of reward and punishment on operator performance in the context of labor-provider organizations in the mining sector. This design allowed researchers to identify the extent to which changes in reward and punishment variables contribute to empirical variation in operator performance. The survey method is the primary data collection strategy because it is effective for capturing respondents' perceptions and assessments of the organization's human resource management policies. This study is cross-sectional, in which data are collected over a specific period of time to reflect the respondents' actual condition at the time the study was conducted.

The object of this study is PT Bukit Asam Kreatif, a company engaged in the provision of labor for heavy equipment operators operating in a coal mining environment. The subject of the study is a heavy equipment operator employed by the company and directly involved in operational activities.

The Research population includes all operators of PT Bukit Asam Kreatif, totaling 370 people. Given the limited time and Research efficiency, sampling was conducted using the purposive sampling technique, which selects samples based on criteria relevant to the Research objectives. The sample criteria in this study include: (1) operators who have worked for at least two years, and (2) operators who are active at the time of the study. Based on the sample size guidelines for quantitative Research, especially for multiple regression analysis, the sample size was set at 150 respondents, who were considered to meet the sample adequacy requirements and to represent the Research population.

This study involves two independent variables and one dependent variable. The independent variables are reward (X_1) and punishment (X_2), while the dependent variable is operator performance (Y). Rewards are the forms of recognition an organization gives to operators for specific performance achievements, in both financial and non-financial forms. Operationally, rewards are measured along two main dimensions: intrinsic rewards (achievement, recognition, job satisfaction, and self-development) and extrinsic rewards (incentives, benefits, promotions, work environment, and social relationships).

Punishment is defined as the sanctions or consequences the organization imposes on the operator for violations of work rules and procedures. This variable is operationalized into two dimensions: preventive punishment (discipline, prohibition, encouragement, and work discipline) and repressive punishment (reprimand, termination of allowances or bonuses, restrictions on facilities, and termination of employment). Operator performance is defined as the level of achievement of the operator's work results in carrying out their duties and responsibilities in accordance with organizational standards. These variables are measured through four main dimensions, namely work quality, work quantity, effectiveness, and work independence, which reflect the operator's ability to produce optimal work output.

The Research data were collected using a structured questionnaire as the main instrument. The questionnaire was compiled based on indicators established in the operational definition of the variable and uses a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). This scale was chosen because it captures variations in respondents' perceptions more sensitively and is widely used in human resource management Research. The questionnaire was completed directly with

respondents who met the sample criteria. To minimize perceptual bias, operator performance measurement also involves assessments from direct supervisors, thus providing a more objective picture of performance.

Before being used in the main analysis, the Research instrument is tested for validity and reliability. Validity is assessed by examining the item-total correlation, while reliability is assessed using Cronbach's alpha. The instrument is declared reliable if Cronbach's alpha is greater than the minimum recommended value in social studies. Data analysis is carried out using an inferential statistical approach with the help of statistical software. The analysis stage begins with a descriptive analysis of respondents' characteristics and the distribution of responses for each Research variable. Furthermore, a classical assumption test was conducted to assess normality, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity, ensuring that the data met the requirements of linear regression analysis. The normality test aims to ensure a normal residual distribution, the multicollinearity test aims to ensure the absence of high correlation among independent variables, and the heteroscedasticity test aims to ensure the homogeneity of residual variances.

The main analysis in this study uses multiple linear regression to test the effects of reward and punishment on operator performance simultaneously or partially. The regression model is used because it aligns with the Research objectives, which aim to identify the contribution of each independent variable to the dependent variable.

Hypothesis testing was conducted at the 5% significance level. To test the simultaneous Influence of independent variables on dependent variables, the F test is used, while to test the partial Influence of each independent variable, the t test is used. The hypothesis is accepted if the significance value is less than the specified significance level. In addition, the determination coefficient (R^2) was used to determine the extent to which the reward and punishment variables were able to explain the variation in operator performance. A high R^2 value indicates that the Research model has a strong descriptive power.

Results

Characteristics of Research Respondents

This study involved 150 heavy equipment operators from PT Bukit Asam Kreatif as respondents, selected through purposive sampling based on working period and employment status. The respondents' characteristics showed a dominance of male operators (98%), reflecting the general characteristics of the mining workforce, which demand physical strength, endurance, and specialized technical skills.

In terms of age, the majority of respondents were in the ≤ 30 years old age group (54.7%), followed by the 31–40 years old age group (33.3%). This composition indicates that the operator workforce is dominated by the early productive age group, which theoretically has high performance potential but also requires an effective motivation management system and work discipline. In terms of education, most respondents were high school graduates (84.6%), indicating that improving operator performance depends more on work management systems and behavioral reinforcement than on formal education alone.

Table 1. Characteristics of Research Respondents (n = 150)

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	147	98.0
	Female	3	2.0
Age	≤ 30 years	82	54.7
	31–40 years	50	33.3
	> 40 years	18	12.0
Education Level	Senior High School	127	84.6
	Diploma	15	10.0
	Bachelor's Degree	8	5.4
Length of Service	≥ 2 years	150	100.0

Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables

Descriptive statistical analysis was conducted to describe the general tendency of respondents' responses to each Research variable, which included rewards, punishments, and operator performance. The indicators used include minimum, maximum, mean, and standard deviation (SD) values.

In general, the reward variable has an average value of 4.06, which is in the good category. The maximum value is in the indicator of achievement of the work target, while the lowest value appears in the indicators of the work environment and support between operators. These findings show that although the reward system is considered quite effective, there is still room for improvement in non-financial aspects of the work environment and social relationships.

The punishment variable showed an average value of 4.00, also in the good category. This value indicates that the operator understands and accepts the company's sanction system, particularly regarding work discipline and safety. The relatively low standard deviation indicates the homogeneity of respondents' perceptions of the application of punishment, suggesting the consistency of the company's policies. Meanwhile, the operator performance variable had the highest average of 4.19, placing it in the very good category. The highest score is found in the indicator of compliance with work quality standards, while the lowest value appears in the indicator of the quantity of work results. This indicates that operator performance is stronger in terms of quality and procedural compliance than in output volume, which, in the context of mining, is also influenced by heavy equipment conditions and the working environment.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables (n = 150)

Variable	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Reward	2.80	5.00	4.06	0.43
Punishment	2.90	5.00	4.00	0.41
Operator Performance	3.00	5.00	4.19	0.38

Instrument Test Results and Classical Assumptions

Before hypothesis testing, the Research instrument is evaluated for validity and reliability. All indicators for the reward, punishment, and operator performance variables show corrected item-total correlations above the critical value, indicating validity. Reliability tests using Cronbach's alpha yielded values above the recommended minimum, indicating that the instrument had a good level of internal consistency.

The classical assumption tests for normality, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity indicate that the data meet all the prerequisites for multiple linear regression analysis. The residual distribution was found to be normal, no high

correlation was observed among the independent variables, and no significant heteroscedasticity was observed. Thus, the regression model is deemed feasible for hypothesis testing.

Results of Regression Analysis and Hypothesis Testing

Multiple linear regression analysis was used to test the effect of reward and punishment on operator performance. The analysis showed that rewards and punishment had positive, significant regression coefficients, indicating a positive and significant Influence on operator performance. The determination coefficient ($R^2 = 0.632$) indicated that 63.2% of the variation in operator performance could be explained by the reward and punishment variables, with the remaining 36.8% attributed to other factors outside the study model. This value indicates that the model has a strong explainability in the context of operator performance management.

Table 3. Results of Regression Analysis and Hypothesis Testing (n = 150)

Independent Variable	β (Standardized Coefficient)	t-value	Sig. (p-value)	Decision
Reward	0.482	6.214	0.000	Supported
Punishment	0.371	4.987	0.000	Supported

Hypothesis testing partially shows that:

H_1 is accepted, which means that rewards have a positive and significant effect on operator performance.

H_2 is accepted, which means that punishment has a positive and significant effect on operator performance.

Tabel 3. Model Summary

Indicator	Value
R	0.795
R^2	0.632
Adjusted R^2	0.627
F-value	125.43
Sig. (F)	0.000

These findings confirm that both reward and sanction mechanisms are effective HR management tools for improving operator performance. The study's results show that rewards are the dominant factor in improving operator performance. These findings are consistent with Expectancy Theory, which holds that individuals will increase their work effort when they believe that good performance will lead to valuable rewards. In the context of PT Bukit Asam Kreatif, rewards based on production achievements, discipline, and work safety encourage operators to work more optimally and responsibly. These findings are consistent with Research ([De Clercq et al., 2023](#); [Hanadelansa, 2023](#); [Wibowo et al., 2022](#)), which confirms that performance-based rewards increase productivity and work compliance. However, low scores in the work environment indicate that the effectiveness of rewards will be greater when combined with strengthening social and psychological factors in the workplace.

Punishment has also been shown to improve operator performance. These findings suggest that punishment applied objectively, proportionately, and consistently can improve work discipline and adherence to safety procedures. In high-risk jobs such as heavy equipment operation, punishment serves as a deterrent to prevent deviant behavior that could harm the company and endanger occupational safety.

These results support the findings ([Bugdol & Puciato, 2023](#); [Layek & Koodamara, 2024](#)) that punishment is effective when used as a tool of correction and learning, not as a means of repression. Thus, punishment in this study plays a more

constructive role in behavior control than as a source of work pressure. Overall, this study's results show that the combination of rewards and punishments is an effective performance management mechanism for heavy equipment operators. Rewards serve as intrinsic and extrinsic motivational drivers, while punishment acts as a controller of work behavior. The balance between the two is key in creating a sustainable performance management system. The theoretical implications of these findings reinforce the relevance of Expectancy Theory in the mining industry. In contrast, its practical implications underscore the importance of designing fair, transparent, and consistent reward and punishment policies to improve operator performance sustainably.

Conclusion

This study aimed to examine the effect of reward and punishment on operator performance in a mining service company. The findings demonstrate that both reward and punishment have a positive and statistically significant effect on operator performance. Reward emerged as the more dominant factor, indicating that fair, transparent, and performance-based reward systems play a crucial role in enhancing operators' motivation, productivity, and work effectiveness. At the same time, punishment also contributes positively to performance by strengthening work discipline and compliance with operational and safety procedures, particularly in high-risk environments such as mining operations. The simultaneous effects of reward and punishment account for a substantial proportion of the variance in operator performance, confirming that a balanced combination of motivational incentives and behavioral control mechanisms is essential for effective human resource management. These results reinforce the relevance of Expectancy Theory in explaining employee behavior, especially among operational workers whose performance is closely linked to clear performance outcomes and tangible consequences. Overall, the study highlights that well-designed reward and punishment systems function not only as control tools but also as strategic instruments for achieving sustainable improvements in operator performance.

Suggestion

Based on the findings, several practical and theoretical recommendations can be proposed. From a managerial perspective, companies in the mining sector are encouraged to strengthen performance-based reward systems by aligning rewards with measurable indicators such as productivity, work quality, discipline, and compliance with occupational safety standards. In addition, greater attention should be paid to non-financial rewards, such as recognition, career development opportunities, and improvements in the work environment, as these factors can further enhance intrinsic motivation among operators. Regarding punishment, organizations should ensure that sanctions are applied consistently, proportionally, and transparently. Punishment should be positioned as a corrective and educational mechanism rather than a purely repressive measure, accompanied by clear communication and constructive feedback to support behavioral improvement. From an academic perspective, future Research is recommended to incorporate additional variables, such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, leadership style, and safety culture, to provide a more comprehensive explanation of operator performance. Longitudinal or mixed-method approaches may also be employed to capture changes in behavior over time and to

deepen understanding of how reward and punishment systems operate in dynamic, high-risk industrial settings.

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