

Factors Triggering Aggressive Behavior in 3 Year Old Children and Their Implications for Fitrah Based Parenting

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Abstract. The emergence of challenging behaviors in 3-year-old children, such as hitting, pushing, and shouting, requires a comprehensive analysis of both home and school determinants. This study aims to identify factors triggering aggressive behavior in a 3-year-old boy and to formulate parent/facilitator guidance strategies through the PIRAMIDA FITRAH Model (Peer-Informed Regulation & Adaptive Modeling in Fitrah-Based Environment). Employing a qualitative descriptive case study design, empirical data were gathered through in-depth parental interviews and participatory observations in the preschool setting. The findings indicate that internal family factors include consistent co-parenting, closely monitored digital media consumption, and affectionate co-regulation through hugging and a calming presence. The child's physical aggression was not rooted in hostility, but was associated with playful impulsivity, territorial conflict during toy sharing, and a high imitative propensity toward peer behavior in the classroom. These findings align with Islamic theological principles that view a child's foundational fitrah as inherently pure while recognizing that social environments can shape emerging behavior. This study highlights the practical value of the PIRAMIDA FITRAH Model through positive peer modeling, environmental restructuring, and non-violent emotional redirection.

Keywords: 3-year-old child, aggressive behavior, Fitrah-based parenting, peer imitation, piramida fitrah model, triggering factors.

INTRODUCTION

Socio-emotional development during the early childhood golden age plays a foundational role in shaping lifelong personality, social adaptation, and interpersonal interaction patterns [3], [4]. At the age of three, children undergo rapid sensory and cognitive growth, with observational learning and social imitation serving as important mechanisms for understanding their surrounding environment [5], [6]. Nevertheless, a high imitative propensity that is not yet accompanied by mature emotional self-regulation may increase psychosocial vulnerability when children engage extensively with preschool peer groups [7], [8].

This dynamic was empirically observed in the primary subject of this study, a 3-year-old boy, at a preschool in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. Upon initial enrollment, the subject demonstrated cooperative and adaptive social behavior. However, subsequent classroom observations documented a pronounced behavioral shift characterized by impulsive hitting, pushing, shouting, and diminished responsiveness to verbal reminders from educators. Preliminary assessments indicated that these challenging actions were not fueled by malicious intent or innate hostility, but were predominantly associated with rapid peer imitation and spontaneous territorial defense during toy-sharing disputes [9], [10].

The discourse on early childhood aggression within conventional developmental psychology has extensively utilized frameworks such as Social Learning Theory, the Pyramid Model, and Peer-Mediated Intervention [11], [12]. While these approaches offer useful empirical tools for examining microsystemic factors and peer-modeling dynamics [13], [14], they generally do not integrate theological and spiritual dimensions. Conversely, Islamic early childhood education studies in Indonesia remain largely focused on normative religious curricula and have rarely contextualized internal and external triggering factors of aggression within

an integrated fitrah paradigm [15], [16], [17].

From an Islamic theological standpoint, children are born upon an innate state of natural goodness and moral purity (fitrah; Sahih al-Bukhari No. 1385 [1]), while behavioral shifts may be shaped by environmental and social exposure [18], [19]. Consequently, behavioral interventions should avoid harsh or punitive measures that may suppress a child's intrinsic learning drive (Surah Ali 'Imran: 159; Surah An-Nahl: 125) [20], [21].

Addressing these theoretical and empirical gaps, this study aims to systematically identify the domestic internal determinants (parental consistency, digital media boundaries, affectionate tactile co-regulation) and school external determinants (peer imitation velocity, toy disputes) triggering the subject's aggressive behaviors. Furthermore, it seeks to formulate an adaptive guidance framework via the PIRAMIDA FITRAH Model (Peer-Informed Regulation & Adaptive Modeling in Fitrah-Based Environment) to nurture self-regulation and restore prosocial behaviors without compromising the child's exploratory fitrah.

METHODS

Study area

This study employed a qualitative explanatory-descriptive case study design [22], [23] and was conducted at a fitrah-based preschool in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. The primary participant was a 3-year-old boy selected purposively because of an observed behavioral shift from initially cooperative conduct to impulsive aggressive actions, including hitting, pushing, and shouting, alongside a high imitative propensity toward classroom peers. Key informants included the participant's mother, representing the home microsystem (internal factors), and the lead classroom facilitator, representing the peer-learning environment (external factors).

Procedures

Internal Factor Assessment (In-Depth Parental Interview)

Empirical data regarding home dynamics were gathered through a semi-structured interview with the mother. The interview protocol comprised ten core indicators addressing parental communication patterns, screen-time regulations, emotional co-regulation routines (affectionate physical touch and embracing), and the child's verbal affective expressions.

External Factor Assessment (Facilitator Questionnaire & Classroom Observation)

Data on the school environment were collected using a structured questionnaire with a 5-point Likert scale, supplemented by a section for notes. This questionnaire measures fifteen observational items, covering the child's active social interaction, closeness to a dominant peer figure, speed of verbal or physical imitation, responsiveness to verbal instructions, and the effectiveness of a calm physical approach in alleviating the child's tension.

The PIRAMIDA FITRAH Intervention Framework

To provide holistic guidance, the study integrated the PIRAMIDA FITRAH Model (Peer-Informed Regulation & Adaptive Modeling in Fitrah-Based Environment). This framework synthesizes environmental restructuring, positive peer pairing through Peer-Mediated Intervention, and Qur'anic-Hadith principles of fitrah to foster emotional regulation without coercive measures (Surah An-Nahl: 78; Sunan Abi Dawud No. 4833 [2]) [11], [16], [13].

Data analysis

Qualitative data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Miles et al. [24], consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Data trustworthiness was strengthened through source triangulation by cross-verifying parental interview data with facilitator observational ratings, as well as theoretical triangulation integrating social learning theory with the Islamic concept of fitrah [23].

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The exploration of triggering factors contributing to aggressive behaviors in a 3-year-old child and their implications for fitrah-based guidance is elaborated across the following thematic sub-sections:

Internal Factors: Domestic Parenting Dynamics and Home Co-Regulation Patterns

In-depth semi-structured parental interviews revealed that the domestic microsystem maintains structured, supportive, and harmonious co-parenting practices [14]. Digital media regulations are strictly enforced: television viewing is confined to the interval between Asr and Maghrib prayers, while smartphone use is restricted to Sundays during family outings. Although the child shows enthusiasm for fictional creatures such as Godzilla and occasionally imitates fictional movement patterns in imaginative play, no direct unmonitored exposure to prolonged violent digital media was identified [19], [21].

Regarding emotional reactivity, the participant displays no malicious or revenge-driven aggression. During instances of fatigue or unfulfilled desires, distress is manifested primarily through crying and seeking proximity to the mother for comfort. Affectionate physical co-regulation, particularly gentle embraces and rhythmic patting, is reported to be effective in soothing the child before dialogic, non-punitive explanations

are provided. These findings suggest that the family environment functions as a supportive base for emotional regulation rather than as the primary trigger of aggressive behavior [15].

External Factors: Classroom Peer Dynamics and Imitative Vulnerability at School

Facilitator observational questionnaire data (Table 1) confirm that Nakula is an active participant in peer playgroups within the preschool environment.

Table 1. Distribution of Facilitator Observational Ratings on Subject Classroom Behaviors

No.	Observational Indicator	Rating Scale	Specific Facilitator Notes
1.	Active interaction in peer playgroups	Strongly Agree (SS)	Actively engages and initiates collaborative play with peers.
2.	Proximity to dominant peer figures	Strongly Agree (SS)	Frequently pairs with dominant playmates whose actions he observes.
3.	Aggressive triggers during toy sharing	Strongly Agree (SS)	Triggered during toy disputes or overcrowded play areas (territorial defense).
4.	Rapid imitation of peer physical/verbal cues	Strongly Agree (SS)	Demonstrates high imitative propensity toward observed peer actions.
5.	Responsiveness to initial verbal reminders	Disagree (TS)	Frequently ignores or exhibits delayed responses to distal verbal reprimands.
6.	Efficacy of calm physical approaches	Strongly Agree (SS)	Highly responsive to gentle physical proximity and soothing touches.
7.	Availability of classroom calming corner	Strongly Disagree (STS)	No designated calming corner facility exists in the school environment.

As detailed in Table 1, the emergence of physical and verbal aggression (hitting, pushing, and shouting) does not appear to stem from hostile intent, but rather from rapid observational learning and a high imitative propensity influenced by classroom peers, alongside spontaneous defensive impulses during toy conflicts [10], [12]. The subject did not consistently display physiological signs of anger; instead, the behavior was observed as part of imitative social interaction within the play environment [5], [8]. Distal verbal reprimands were less effective, whereas calm physical proximity and gentle tactile contact by the facilitator were more effective in de-escalating the situation.

Discussion: Social Learning Integration and the PIRAMIDA FITRAH Model

These empirical findings support an integration of Social Learning Theory [25] with the paradigm of fitrah-based education [6]. At age three, imitation can be understood as part of the child's developing sensory learning processes (Surah An-Nahl: 78). The observed aggressive behavior therefore should not be interpreted as evidence of an innate moral defect; rather, it reflects the child's absorption of social stimuli from the peer environment. This interpretation is consistent with Islamic teachings concerning the formative influence of close companionship (Sahih al-Bukhari No. 5534 [1]; Sunan Abi Dawud No. 4833 [2]) [18].

Within the PIRAMIDA FITRAH Model (Peer-Informed Regulation & Adaptive Modeling in Fitrah-Based Environment), intervention operates through two complementary pillars:

1. **Positive Peer Mediation (Peer-Mediated Intervention):** The facilitator strategically pairs the child with prosocial and calm peer models. This strategy uses the child's strong imitative tendency as a pathway for repeated exposure to cooperative behavior and is consistent with peer-mediated and observational-learning approaches in early childhood settings [11], [13]. Observational data in this case indicated fewer aggressive impulses when the child engaged with cooperative peer models.

2. **Non-Violent Emotional Redirection (Redirecting):** Facilitators and parents avoid harsh verbal reprimands that could inadvertently become additional aggressive models (Surah Ali 'Imran: 159; Surah An-Nahl: 125). Given the documented absence of a structured classroom calming corner, emotional regulation is supported through calm physical presence, gentle touch, and redirection toward safe kinesthetic activities [20], [16].

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the behavioral shift in a 3-year-old boy, manifested through sudden hitting, pushing, and shouting, was primarily associated with high peer-imitative susceptibility and situational territorial disputes over toys in preschool rather than with dysfunctional family parenting or an assumption of corrupted innate fitrah. The PIRAMIDA FITRAH Model offers an adaptive guidance framework through strategic prosocial peer modeling, affectionate co-regulation, and non-violent behavioral redirection to support cooperative social behavior without suppressing the child's natural exploratory learning drive.

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