

Mindfulness Therapy in Learning to Reduce Aggressive Behavior among Children at TKN 01 Dompu

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received: February 7, 2026

Accepted: July 19, 2026

Available online on:

July 19, 2026

Keywords:

Hypnoteaching, Interactive Learning, Emotional Intelligence, Early Childhood Education

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe the implementation of mindfulness therapy within the learning process as a strategy for addressing aggressive behavior among children at TKN 01, Dompu District. Aggressive behavior in early childhood may interfere with children's social interactions, emotional regulation, and participation in classroom learning. Therefore, learning activities that encourage self-awareness and emotional regulation are considered important in supporting children's socio-emotional development. This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach involving 12 participants, consisting of 10 children and 2 classroom teachers at TKN 01, Dompu District. Data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews with teachers, and documentation of learning activities. The data were analyzed using the stages of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing to identify patterns related to the implementation of mindfulness therapy in classroom learning.

The findings indicate that mindfulness therapy was integrated into daily learning through breathing exercises, relaxation activities, focused attention, and guided emotional reflection. Teachers consistently facilitated these activities to help children recognize, express, and regulate their emotions in appropriate ways. Based on teachers' observations and classroom documentation, children demonstrated improved emotional awareness, greater self-control, more positive peer interactions, and fewer observable incidents of aggressive behavior during learning activities. These findings suggest that the implementation of mindfulness therapy within classroom learning provides a supportive approach for fostering emotional regulation and promoting positive social behavior among young children in early childhood education settings.

Introduction

Early childhood education plays a fundamental role in shaping children's cognitive, social, emotional, and moral development, which influences their adjustment and future academic success (Rice et al., 2023). Besides acquiring early literacy and numeracy skills, children are expected to develop emotional regulation, empathy, and positive social behavior that enable them to participate effectively in classroom activities. However, aggressive behaviors such as hitting, pushing, verbal hostility, and disruptive outbursts remain common challenges in early childhood settings because they interfere with peer relationships,

classroom harmony, and children's emotional well-being (Franco et al., 2016). Despite this importance, many early childhood institutions continue to prioritize academic readiness, while behavioral and emotional development is often addressed only after problems emerge rather than through preventive educational practices (Lahak & Asadi, 2021). One approach that has gained increasing attention for promoting socio-emotional development is mindfulness therapy. Mindfulness encourages individuals to focus attention on present-moment experiences with acceptance and nonjudgmental awareness, thereby strengthening emotional regulation, self-control, and reflective responses to challenging situations (Pinazo et al., 2020). Previous studies have demonstrated that mindfulness-based interventions can reduce anger, hostility, impulsivity, and aggressive behavior while improving children's emotional competence and classroom behavior (Milani et al., 2013). Within early childhood education, simple practices such as mindful breathing, relaxation exercises, and guided reflection have been introduced as developmentally appropriate strategies to foster emotional awareness and positive social interaction. Integrating mindfulness therapy into daily classroom learning enables teachers to support children's emotional development through routine educational activities rather than relying solely on disciplinary measures. Classroom practices such as breathing exercises before learning, guided relaxation after conflicts, and reflective discussions about emotions create opportunities for children to recognize feelings, regulate emotional

responses, and interact more positively with peers (Faraji et al., 2019). Consequently, mindfulness-based learning is considered a practical pedagogical approach for promoting a calm and emotionally supportive classroom environment. Although the effectiveness of mindfulness-based interventions has been widely reported, the existing literature is dominated by studies involving older children, adolescents, or clinical settings, with relatively limited attention given to regular early childhood education environments (Shokri, 2021). Moreover, most previous studies have adopted experimental or quasi-experimental designs that emphasize outcome measurement, whereas fewer studies have explored how mindfulness therapy is implemented as part of everyday classroom learning. Research conducted in public kindergartens within local cultural and institutional contexts also remains limited, even though environmental and socio-economic factors may influence children's aggressive behavior and the implementation of educational interventions (Loftus et al., 2023). Based on these gaps, this study investigates the implementation of mindfulness therapy in learning activities at TKN 01, Dompus District. Unlike previous studies that primarily evaluate intervention effectiveness quantitatively, this research provides an in-depth qualitative description of how mindfulness practices are integrated into classroom learning, the strategies employed by teachers, and children's responses throughout the implementation process. The study also explores observable changes in children's aggressive behavior,

emotional awareness, self-control, and social interaction within the natural classroom setting, thereby extending the contextual evidence reported by Loftus et al. (2023). The findings are expected to enrich the literature on mindfulness-based interventions in early childhood education by providing evidence from a public kindergarten context in Indonesia, where such studies remain limited (Ihlas et al., 2025). Practically, the study offers insights for teachers, school leaders, and policymakers in designing classroom routines that integrate mindfulness practices to support socio-emotional development and manage aggressive behavior through developmentally appropriate educational approaches.

Methods

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach to examine the implementation of mindfulness therapy within learning activities as an effort to reduce aggressive behavior in children. The research was conducted at TKN 01, Dompu District, involving teachers and children who directly participated in mindfulness-based learning sessions and were selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through classroom observations, interviews, and documentation to capture the learning process, teacher-child interactions, and children's behavioral responses particularly manifestations and changes in aggressive behavior during instructional activities.

The research instruments were developed based on established

indicators of aggressive behavior and socio-emotional competence in early childhood, encompassing physical aggression, verbal aggression, emotional regulation, empathy, and positive social interaction. The development of these instruments was aligned with the research objectives and informed by theoretical and empirical frameworks on early childhood socio-emotional development and aggressive behavior (Denham et al., 2003; Coplan & Rubin, 2010; Tremblay, 2010). These references provide conceptual guidance for identifying observable behavioral indicators and interpreting children's emotional and social responses within natural classroom settings. The instruments were subsequently adapted to the context of the study to ensure their relevance to the implementation of mindfulness therapy in daily learning activities.

Data analysis was carried out using an interactive model consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The credibility of the data was ensured through source and technique triangulation by comparing findings from observations, interviews, and documentation. Indicators of research success were determined based on the extent to which the implementation of mindfulness therapy reflected positive behavioral changes observed throughout the learning process. These indicators were established from the study objectives and relevant literature on aggressive behavior and socio-emotional development in early childhood. They included: (1) children's active engagement in mindfulness-based learning activities, reflected in their willingness to

participate in breathing exercises, relaxation activities, and guided emotional reflection; (2) reductions in aggressive behavior, identified through decreased occurrences of physical aggression, verbal hostility, and disruptive actions recorded in classroom observations and confirmed through teacher interviews; and (3) improvements in social interaction, indicated by increased cooperation, empathy, appropriate emotional expression, and positive peer communication during classroom activities. The achievement of these indicators was assessed through continuous classroom observations, field notes, semi-structured interviews with teachers, and documentation. Data from these sources were triangulated to ensure the credibility and consistency of the findings rather than to quantify behavioral change.

Result and Discussions

Classroom observations indicated that the implementation of mindfulness therapy within learning activities at TKN 01 Dompu District was conducted in a calm, enjoyable, and emotionally supportive atmosphere. Teachers initiated each learning session by establishing emotional closeness through warm greetings, consistent eye contact, a gentle tone of voice, and reassuring verbal expressions that encouraged children to feel safe and accepted in the classroom. To strengthen emotional readiness, short mindfulness routines, including breathing exercises and brief moments of quiet reflection, were incorporated at the beginning of lessons and during transitions between activities. These practices helped children regulate their emotions, become more focused,

and respond to classroom situations in a calmer manner. Throughout the learning process, children actively participated in the mindfulness activities by following the teacher's instructions, paying attention to their breathing, and expressing their feelings through both verbal and non-verbal responses. Observational records further showed that children gradually became more attentive, emotionally composed, and willing to engage positively with teachers and peers during classroom activities. These classroom interactions demonstrate how mindfulness practices were naturally integrated into daily learning routines and supported an emotionally supportive learning environment, as illustrated in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Teacher–Child Interaction in Mindfulness-Based Learning to Manage Aggressive Behavior

Observation results showed that children actively participated in mindfulness-based learning activities throughout the implementation process. They demonstrated sustained attention during breathing exercises, willingly engaged in guided reflection, and responded

positively to teachers' prompts regarding their emotions. Classroom observations and teacher interviews further indicated that these activities encouraged children to express their feelings more appropriately, remain attentive during learning, and interact positively with their peers. These findings describe the observable characteristics of children's participation during the implementation of mindfulness-based learning without implying comparisons with other instructional approaches. Children appeared enthusiastic in following breathing instructions, imitating calming movements modeled by the teacher, and participating in simple reflection activities about their daily experiences. Interactions between teachers and children, as well as among peers, occurred in a more orderly and harmonious manner (Zare et al., 2016). Children increasingly demonstrated the ability to wait for their turn, comply with rules, and express displeasure or disappointment in more controlled ways rather than through hitting, shouting, or pushing. These changes indicate an improvement in children's emotional awareness and self-control related to aggressive impulses.

Interviews with teachers supported the observational findings (Loftus et al., 2023). Teachers reported that the implementation of mindfulness practices during learning helped create a calmer, more focused classroom climate and reduced the frequency and intensity of aggressive incidents. They stated that children became easier to guide when conflicts arose, were more willing to listen to instructions to "stop,

breathe, and calm down,” and were increasingly able to talk about what made them angry instead of immediately acting out physically (S. Singh, 2016). Teachers also explained that the consistent use of gentle reminders, validation of children’s feelings, and guided breathing made children feel heard and respected, which in turn reduced oppositional behavior and increased their readiness to engage in learning. These statements suggest that mindfulness therapy plays a role not only in reducing aggressive behavior but also in fostering empathy and more positive social responses among children.

Documentation data in the form of children’s behavioral records, anecdotal notes, and recordings of learning activities showed positive changes in patterns of aggressive behavior during the research period. Children who previously tended to hit, push, or shout when faced with frustration began to display improved emotional regulation, such as pausing to take a breath, seeking help from the teacher, or verbally expressing discomfort (Fix & Fix, 2013). In addition, there was an increase in prosocial behaviors, such as offering help to friends, sharing learning materials, and comforting peers who were upset. These observations reflect an improvement in indicators of reduced aggression, enhanced empathy, and more constructive social interaction.

To clarify the research findings, observation data on indicators of aggressive behavior and socio-emotional competence were recapitulated in a table illustrating changes in children’s behavior

throughout the mindfulness-based learning process. Table 1 presents the observed changes in children's aggressive behavior and socio-emotional competencies during the implementation of mindfulness-based learning. As shown in Table 1, most children demonstrated fewer observable incidents of physical and verbal aggression, while exhibiting improved emotional regulation, empathy, and cooperative behavior throughout the learning process. These findings are based on classroom observations and teacher documentation collected during the study and provide descriptive evidence of behavioral changes observed during the implementation of mindfulness therapy. These findings confirm that the consistent application of mindfulness therapy within daily learning activities supports the decrease of aggressive behavior in children at TKN 01 Dompu District. A conducive learning atmosphere, characterized by emotional closeness and structured calming routines, is evident in the interaction between teachers and children during learning activities, as depicted in Figure 2.



Figure 2. A Conducive Learning Atmosphere in Reducing Children's Aggressive Behavior

Furthermore, analysis of children's engagement in learning activities indicates that children became more focused and able to sustain attention for longer periods (Shen et al., 2025). Children not only followed the teacher's instructions during mindfulness sessions but also began to initiate calming strategies independently, such as taking deep breaths when feeling upset or moving away briefly from stimulating situation. This active engagement was closely related to a more stable emotional condition and a sense of security constructed through the mindfulness approach. Learning activities that combined interactive instruction with mindfulness practices thus contributed to improving both the behavioral and emotional quality of children's participation in class (Shokri et al., 2020).

Overall, the research findings indicate that the implementation of mindfulness therapy within learning activities at TKN 01 Dompu District had a positive impact on reducing children's aggressive behavior. Children showed noticeable developments in emotional awareness, self-regulation, empathy, and prosocial interaction, accompanied by a decrease in physical and verbal aggression. Data obtained from observations, interviews, and documentation consistently suggest that mindfulness functions not only as a therapeutic complement but also as an instructional and emotional approach that supports early childhood development. These findings reinforce the view that learning approaches which emphasize emotional

regulation, self-awareness, and positive interaction can enhance the quality of children's holistic development and contribute to the creation of a safer, more harmonious early childhood learning environment.

Classroom observations indicated a gradual reduction in observable physical and verbal aggressive behaviors during the implementation of mindfulness-based learning activities. Children who initially displayed behaviors such as hitting, pushing, shouting, or interrupting peers were increasingly able to regulate their emotional responses through guided breathing exercises, relaxation activities, and opportunities for emotional reflection. Teachers reported that children became more capable of pausing before reacting, expressing their feelings verbally, and resolving minor conflicts in a calmer manner. These behavioral changes were consistently documented through classroom observations, teacher interviews, and learning documentation, suggesting that mindfulness practices supported the development of more adaptive emotional and social responses within the classroom environment. The observed changes were accompanied by improvements in children's cooperation, empathy, and willingness to participate positively in classroom interactions, as presented in Table 1.

The findings of this study indicate that the implementation of mindfulness therapy within classroom learning at TKN 01 Dompu District contributed to a clear decrease in both physical and verbal aggressive behaviors among children. Children who previously tended

to respond to frustration by hitting, pushing, grabbing objects, or shouting began to show more controlled behavioral patterns during and after the intervention period. This change was reflected in observational records showing fewer incidents of overt aggression and shorter duration of conflict episodes in the classroom.

These results are in line with empirical studies demonstrating that mindfulness-based programs can significantly reduce physical and verbal aggression by helping children and youth regulate anger and aggressive impulses more effectively (Clark, 2020). The reduction in aggressive behavior in this study can be understood through the mechanisms of mindfulness that have been widely discussed in the literature. Mindfulness practices such as focused breathing, paying attention to bodily sensations, and pausing before reacting strengthen children's ability to recognize early signs of anger or tension and to interrupt automatic aggressive responses. Research shows that mindfulness training reduces impulsivity and enhances inhibitory control, which directly impacts the likelihood of children engaging in reactive aggression in the classroom (Shogren & Singh, 2022).

Meta-analytic and intervention studies also report that higher levels of mindfulness are associated with lower levels of externalized anger expression (Anger Out), including shouting and physical acting out, supporting the interpretation that the behavioral changes observed at TKN 01 are consistent with known emotion regulation pathways. In practical terms, the mindfulness activities implemented at TKN 01 such

as short breathing exercises before activities, guided calming after conflicts, and reflective prompts about feelings functioned as concrete tools that children could use when they began to feel angry or upset.

Teachers reported that children increasingly followed instructions to “stop and breathe” when conflicts arose and became more able to verbalize their displeasure instead of immediately resorting to hitting or yelling, echoing findings from school-based mindfulness programs that document similar improvements in classroom behavior (Roeser et al., 2022) . The shift from physical and verbal aggression toward more controlled, communicative responses suggests that mindfulness therapy does not simply suppress aggressive behavior, but helps children develop alternative, more adaptive ways of expressing negative emotions. This supports the view that integrating mindfulness into daily learning is a promising pedagogical strategy for systematically reducing aggressive behavior in early childhood education settings (Espelage et al., 2023) .

The findings of this study also show that the implementation of mindfulness therapy in classroom learning is associated with an increase in children’s empathy and prosocial behavior. Children began to demonstrate greater sensitivity toward the feelings and needs of their peers, for example by offering help, sharing learning materials, and comforting friends who were sad or upset. This shift indicates that mindfulness practices not only help reduce negative behaviors such as aggression, but also strengthen positive social dispositions that support

harmonious interactions. When children are guided to notice their own emotions and to reflect on how others might feel, they become more capable of responding with care rather than hostility.

These behavioral changes are consistent with theoretical perspectives that link mindfulness to enhanced social awareness and compassion. By cultivating present-moment attention and nonjudgmental awareness, mindfulness encourages children to observe emotional cues in themselves and others, which forms the basis of empathic understanding. In the context of TKN 01, routine mindfulness activities created repeated opportunities for children to pause, recognize their feelings, and listen to those of their peers during class discussions or conflict resolution.

This process helped children to see conflicts not merely as occasions to “win” or “retaliate”, but as situations in which others also experience hurt or disappointment, thereby supporting the emergence of more prosocial responses. From a pedagogical standpoint, teachers played a crucial role in translating mindfulness principles into concrete classroom practices that foster empathy and cooperation (Garro et al., 2023). Through modeling calm behavior, validating children’s emotions, and facilitating dialogues such as “How do you think your friend feels?” or “What can we do to make this situation better?”, teachers helped children connect internal awareness with outwardly caring actions.

Over time, the combination of mindfulness routines and emotionally responsive teacher–child interactions contributed to the

formation of a classroom climate where helping, sharing, and mutual respect were increasingly normalized (Ihlas & Edwita, 2019). Thus, the enhancement of empathy and prosocial behavior observed in this study can be understood as an integral outcome of mindfulness-based learning, which simultaneously targets emotional self-regulation and the quality of children's social relationships.

The findings of this study emphasize that teacher child interaction is a central factor in the success of mindfulness therapy in reducing aggressive behavior at TKN 01 Dompu District. Teachers do not only act as facilitators of learning materials, but also as models of emotional regulation and calm behavior for children. (N. N. Singh et al., 2011) Through warm greetings, gentle tone of voice, and patient responses when conflicts arise, teachers demonstrate how emotions can be managed without resorting to anger or aggression.

This consistent modeling helps children internalize calmer behavioral patterns and perceive the classroom as a safe space to express emotions and practice self-control . In guiding mindfulness activities, teachers also play a key role in providing clear, simple, and repetitive instructions that are appropriate to the developmental level of early childhood. By routinely inviting children to “pause, breathe, and calm down” before solving problems, teachers translate abstract mindfulness concepts into concrete steps that children can follow. Teachers' sensitivity in recognizing early signs of children's frustration or anger allows them to intervene promptly with mindfulness prompts,

preventing escalation into more serious physical or verbal aggression (N. N. Singh et al., 2007). At the same time, teachers' emotional validation acknowledging children's feelings while redirecting behavior strengthens children's sense of being heard and respected, which further reduces resistance and oppositional reactions.

These interactions indicate that mindfulness therapy in early childhood education cannot be separated from the quality of relational engagement between teachers and children (Zare et al., 2016). A teacher who is emotionally attuned, responsive, and capable of applying mindfulness in his or her own behavior is more likely to successfully guide children through calming practices and reflective dialogue. Thus, the role of the teacher extends beyond delivering techniques; it encompasses building an emotionally secure relationship that supports children in learning new ways to manage aggression and interact positively with others.

Conclusion

The findings indicate that mindfulness therapy was successfully integrated into classroom learning at TKN 01 Dompu District through breathing exercises, quiet reflection, and emotionally responsive teacher-child interactions. These learning activities created a calm and supportive classroom environment in which children demonstrated improved emotional awareness, greater self-control, more positive social interactions, and fewer observable aggressive behaviors during the learning process. This study provides a qualitative description of

how mindfulness therapy can be implemented in everyday early childhood learning to support children's socio-emotional development. The findings offer practical insights for teachers and schools seeking to incorporate mindfulness-based activities into classroom routines as part of developmentally appropriate approaches to managing aggressive behavior and fostering positive social behavior in early childhood education.

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