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Students' Ethical Responses to the Normalization of Peer Behavior from the Perspective of Islamic Moral Education

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how junior high school students respond ethically to the normalization of negative peer behavior, particularly hurtful jokes, peer influence, and moral responsibility, through the perspective of Islamic Moral Education. A descriptive mixed-methods design was employed, involving questionnaire responses from 80 students, semi-structured interviews with 10 purposively selected students, and eight observation records. Questionnaire data were analyzed using frequencies, percentages, and mean scores, while interview and observation data were analyzed descriptively and compared with questionnaire findings. Harsh language was the most frequently encountered behavior (M = 3.84 on a five-point scale), with 62.50% of respondents reporting that they encountered it often or very often. Although 93.75% rejected unwanted nicknames as acceptable jokes and 86.25% rejected peer influence as a justification for negative behavior, judgments regarding perpetrators' responsibility were more varied: only 37.50% agreed or strongly agreed that perpetrators remained responsible when their behavior was framed as "just joking." Interviews indicated that students proposed constructive bystander responses, while observations documented varied reactions, including laughter, silence, requests to stop, and redirection. These findings suggest that frequent exposure to negative behavior does not necessarily indicate moral approval and that principled rejection does not always translate into consistent judgments of responsibility in specific situations. Qur'an Surah Al-Hujurat [49]:11 provides a normative lens for interpreting these patterns in relation to human dignity, responsible speech, and moral accountability. The findings highlight the importance of case-based reflection and bystander-response practice in Islamic Religious Education and character education.

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan mengkaji respons etis siswa sekolah menengah pertama terhadap normalisasi perilaku negatif teman sebaya, khususnya candaan yang menyakiti, pengaruh teman sebaya, dan tanggung jawab moral, melalui perspektif Pendidikan

		Moral Islam. Penelitian menggunakan desain mixed-methods deskriptif dengan melibatkan 80 siswa sebagai responden kuesioner, 10 siswa yang dipilih secara purposif sebagai informan wawancara semi-terstruktur, dan delapan catatan observasi. Data kuesioner dianalisis menggunakan frekuensi, persentase, dan skor rata-rata, sedangkan data wawancara dan observasi dianalisis secara deskriptif dan dibandingkan dengan temuan kuesioner. Kata-kata kasar merupakan perilaku yang paling sering dijumpai (M = 3,84 pada skala lima poin), dengan 62,50% responden melaporkan bahwa perilaku tersebut sering atau sangat sering terjadi. Meskipun 93,75% responden menolak julukan yang tidak disukai sebagai candaan yang dapat diterima dan 86,25% menolak pengaruh teman sebaya sebagai pembenaran perilaku negatif, penilaian mengenai tanggung jawab pelaku masih beragam. Hanya 37,50% responden setuju atau sangat setuju bahwa pelaku tetap bertanggung jawab ketika perilakunya dianggap "hanya bercanda". Wawancara mengungkapkan usulan respons saksi yang konstruktif, sedangkan observasi mencatat beragam reaksi, termasuk tertawa, diam, meminta pelaku berhenti, dan mengalihkan pembicaraan. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa keterpaparan terhadap perilaku negatif tidak selalu berarti persetujuan moral. QS. Al-Hujurat [49]:11 menjadi landasan normatif untuk menafsirkan temuan dalam kaitannya dengan penghormatan terhadap martabat manusia, tanggung jawab dalam bertutur, dan akuntabilitas moral. Hasil penelitian menegaskan pentingnya refleksi berbasis kasus dan latihan respons saksi dalam Pendidikan Agama Islam dan pendidikan karakter.
Page: 334-349		This is an open acces article under the CC-BY-SA lisence (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/)

A. Introduction

Early adolescence is an important period for developing moral judgment, social identity, and interpersonal relationships. Peer groups provide opportunities for friendship and social acceptance while shaping perceptions of which behaviors are considered normal or acceptable (Fahri & Supriadi, 2023). Social norms theory distinguishes descriptive norms, which concern what people commonly do, from injunctive norms, which concern what people approve of or consider appropriate (Cialdini & Trost, 1998). Accordingly, the prevalence of a behavior does not necessarily indicate its moral acceptability. However, when hurtful behavior recurs without objection, it may become perceived as tolerable. Research on peer aggression has shown that students' responses can reinforce harmful behavior, remain passive, or support targeted peers (Salmivalli & Voeten, 2004; Thornberg et al., 2020, 2022). Ethical issues in peer interactions therefore involve not only individual conduct but also the social norms through which that conduct is interpreted.

This issue becomes particularly complex when ridicule, harsh language, and unwanted nicknames are presented as humor. Expressions such as “just joking” may shift attention from the impact on the targeted person to the speaker’s intention, while “just following friends” may be used to explain participation without resolving questions of personal responsibility. Laughter, participation, and the absence of objections may also contribute to the perception that hurtful behavior is an ordinary part of friendship. Thornberg et al. (2020) highlighted the relevance of defending self-efficacy and classroom collective efficacy in responding to peer aggression, while Thornberg et al. (2022) associated perceived classroom antibullying norms with defending behavior and linked moral disengagement and perceived peer tolerance of bullying with passive bystander behavior. Nevertheless, hurtful joking should not automatically be equated with bullying. Its normalization warrants attention because humor and familiarity can obscure the boundary between acceptable interaction and conduct that demeans others.

Understanding students’ responses requires distinguishing moral judgment, moral sensitivity, and action. Moral judgment concerns evaluating whether conduct is right or wrong, whereas moral sensitivity involves recognizing the ethical dimensions of a situation and its potential consequences for others (Kohlberg & Kramer, 1969; Rest, 1986). These dimensions do not necessarily translate into consistent behavior: students may regard an offensive nickname as inappropriate yet laugh or remain silent when a friend uses it. Peer acceptance and the possibility of social rejection may complicate decisions to challenge such behavior. Research has examined the relevance of moral sensitivity, moral disengagement, and defending self-efficacy to bystander responses (Thornberg & Jungert, 2013), with subsequent longitudinal studies further investigating related constructs (Sjögren et al., 2024a, 2024b). Brehmer and Meyer (2025) also examined moral disengagement and moral sensitivity in relation to antisocial bystander intentions among university students. This literature provides a basis for examining ethical responses as involving related but distinct processes of evaluation, recognition, and action.

The question of action also raises the issue of moral responsibility. Social cognitive theory describes moral agency as the capacity to regulate behavior according to moral standards, while moral disengagement refers to cognitive mechanisms through

which individuals weaken moral self-regulation and justify harmful conduct (Bandura, 2014, 2016). In peer interactions, explanations based on humor or conformity may shift attention away from the consequences of one's actions. However, such explanations do not, by themselves, establish that moral disengagement has occurred. In this study, moral agency and moral disengagement serve as interpretive perspectives rather than directly measured psychological constructs. This distinction helps examine how students understand personal responsibility when hurtful behavior occurs under peer influence, without assuming that social pressure automatically removes individual accountability.

These concerns are also relevant to Islamic Moral Education, which emphasizes adab in speech, respect for human dignity, responsibility, and moral correction. Qur'an Surah Al-Hujurat [49]:11 prohibits mockery, disparagement, and offensive nicknames. Bakri and Faza (2025) discuss these provisions through the ethical principles of sukhriyyah (mockery), lamz (disparagement), and alqab (offensive nicknames), alongside repentance as a form of moral correction. This perspective is directly relevant to hurtful joking because an utterance does not become ethically acceptable merely because it is intended as humor or tolerated by a group. Its evaluation must also consider the dignity of the person addressed and the responsibility of those involved. Research on moral judgment in Islamic education has likewise highlighted the relevance of spiritual dispositions and social norms to students' moral evaluations (Mohd Yusoff et al., 2022). Accordingly, Islamic Moral Education provides a normative lens for interpreting students' responses rather than a measure for ranking their morality.

Previous studies have examined peer norms, moral sensitivity, moral disengagement, defending self-efficacy, and bystander responses to bullying (Thornberg & Jungert, 2013; Thornberg et al., 2020, 2022; Sjögren et al., 2024a, 2024b). Research on group processes has also highlighted how perceived norms and students' roles in peer interactions can contribute to the continuation or challenge of aggressive behavior (Salmivalli & Voeten, 2004). However, hurtful conduct normalized as joking requires attention to how students distinguish social prevalence from moral acceptability, attribute responsibility when behavior is justified as humor or conformity, and respond when witnessing such interactions. These questions are particularly relevant when ridicule, harsh language, or unwanted nicknames occur within friendships and are not

necessarily understood as bullying. The research gap addressed here is the need to examine these interconnected dimensions of students' ethical responses and interpret them through the perspective of Islamic Moral Education. This focus is important for character education because endorsing moral principles does not necessarily ensure consistent responses when ethical judgments conflict with the desire for peer acceptance.

Against this background, this study examines junior high school students' ethical responses to the normalization of peer behavior. It focuses on how students experience and evaluate negative peer interactions, particularly hurtful jokes and unwanted nicknames; how they attribute responsibility when such behavior is justified as "just joking" or "just following friends"; and how they respond, or report that they would respond, when witnessing such conduct. The study does not assume that every hurtful joke constitutes bullying or that passive bystanders share identical motivations. Its contribution lies in documenting patterns across students' evaluations, attributions of responsibility, and bystander responses, interpreted through social norms theory, moral judgment and moral sensitivity, moral agency, and Islamic Moral Education. In doing so, it seeks to contribute to scholarship on Islamic Religious Education and character education by clarifying how ethical principles are negotiated and expressed in everyday peer interactions.

B. Methods

This study employed a descriptive mixed-methods approach, integrating questionnaire data, semi-structured interviews, and observations to examine junior high school students' ethical responses to the normalization of peer behavior (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). The questionnaire was completed by 80 students and assessed the frequency of seven types of peer behavior, attitudes toward peer interactions, and judgments of five scenarios involving joking through nicknames and justifications based on following peers, using a five-point response scale. Supplementary data comprised semi-structured interviews with 10 purposively selected students and eight observation records. Interviews explored acceptable joking, peer influence, behavioral normalization, and moral responsibility. Participants were coded P1–P10 to maintain

confidentiality, and the data sources and their analytical treatment are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Data Sources and Analysis

Data source	Participants / units	Focus	Analysis
Questionnaire (primary)	80 junior high school students	Frequency of seven peer behaviors; attitudes toward peer interactions; five scenarios (nicknames framed as jokes, following peers)	Frequencies, percentages, and means (five-point scale)
Semi-structured interviews	10 purposively selected students (P1–P10)	Acceptable joking; peer influence; normalization of hurtful behavior; moral responsibility	Descriptive; compared with questionnaire findings
Observations	Eight observation records	Peer interactions involving jokes, nicknames, and responses of other students	Descriptive; compared with questionnaire findings

Questionnaire responses were analyzed descriptively using frequencies, percentages, and means. These statistics were used to summarize response patterns rather than establish causal relationships. In interpreting the five-point responses, the analysis considered the distinction between ordered response categories and the numerical summaries used to describe them (Sullivan & Artino, 2013). Interview accounts and observation records were examined descriptively and compared with questionnaire findings to identify convergences and differences in students' interpretations of hurtful jokes, peer influence, and responsibility. The integration of these sources supported a contextualized interpretation of the findings by examining how students' reported judgments related to their interview accounts and observed peer interactions. This procedure was consistent with the complementary use of quantitative and qualitative evidence in mixed-methods research (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). The study was conducted in accordance with the necessary ethical approval and permissions. Participants' identities were kept confidential, and the findings were reported without information that could identify individual participants.

C. Results and Discussion

This section integrates questionnaire data from 80 students, ten interviews, and eight observations into four themes. Findings are interpreted through social norms,

moral sensitivity, and moral agency, with Islamic Moral Education providing an ethical perspective on peer interactions and their educational implications.

1. Students' Experiences and the Normalization of Negative Behaviors in Peer Interactions

Harsh language was the most frequently reported behavior (M = 3.84; 62.50%), followed by mocking peers (31.25%), belittling them for amusement (30.00%), and social exclusion (26.25%). However, only 1.25% frequently joined teasing because of peer influence (Table 2). This contrast suggests that exposure to negative behavior was more common than reported participation, highlighting the need to distinguish between encountering harmful interactions and actively reinforcing them.

Table 2. Frequency of Negative Behaviors in Peer Interactions (n = 80)

Behavior	Mean (1–5)	Often / very often (%)
Harsh language among peers	3.84	62.50
Mocking shortcomings, mistakes, or appearance	2.85	31.25
Belittling peers to make others laugh	2.75	30.00
Excluding students from the group	2.70	26.25
Being called an unwanted nickname	2.64	18.75
Doing something because other peers do it	2.39	16.25
Joining in teasing because of peer influence	1.73	1.25

The interviews and observations suggest that repetition and limited social challenge can make negative behavior appear ordinary within peer interactions. All ten interviewees indicated that repeated behavior could become normalized when left unchallenged, while observations documented mocking and recurring nicknames accompanied by group laughter. In Observation 4, habitual use was invoked to justify a nickname, illustrating how familiarity may be used to defend a practice without resolving whether it respects the targeted person. However, laughter and silence alone do not establish approval or consent. The central issue is that social familiarity can make a behavior seem normal without making it ethically acceptable.

Social norms theory helps explain this distinction by separating descriptive norms, or perceptions of what people commonly do, from injunctive norms, or perceptions of what people approve of (Cialdini & Trost, 1998). The low reported participation in peer-influenced teasing and the relatively low mean scores for permissive attitudes (1.79–2.80) suggest that frequent exposure does not necessarily indicate explicit

endorsement. Nevertheless, negative interactions may continue when they become familiar or remain unchallenged. The findings therefore point to a distinction between the apparent normality of a behavior and its moral acceptability, rather than demonstrating that exposure directly causes normalization.

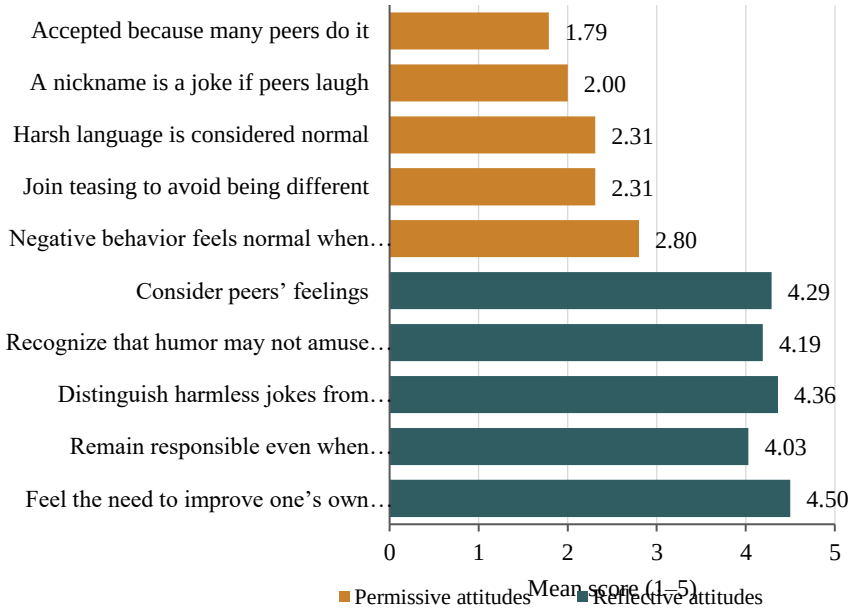
This distinction is also relevant to unwanted nicknames. Although 93.75% rejected the acceptability of an unwanted nickname merely because it was intended as a joke, 23.75% remained uncertain about the habitual use of derogatory nicknames. This difference suggests that an established practice may be evaluated less decisively than an explicitly identified unwanted joke. Such an interpretation is consistent with Observation 4, in which habitual use was offered as a justification, although the study did not directly test whether habituation influenced students' judgments.

Islamic Moral Education provides a normative basis for distinguishing customary behavior from ethical conduct. Qur'an Surah Al-Hujurat [49]:11 prohibits mockery, disparagement, and offensive nicknames, emphasizing that familiarity or humorous intent does not automatically justify speech that demeans others (Bakri & Faza, 2025). From the perspective of *adab*, the dignity of the person addressed remains central to evaluating peer interactions. In PAI, these findings support case-based discussions that help students distinguish between commonly practiced behavior and ethically acceptable conduct, particularly when a joke risks humiliating or degrading another person.

2. Attitudes toward Jokes, Moral Sensitivity, and Respect for Human Dignity

The questionnaire revealed stronger reflective than permissive attitudes toward peer interactions. Permissive statements scored below 3.00 (1.79–2.80), whereas reflective statements exceeded 4.00, particularly improving one's behavior (4.50), distinguishing acceptable from hurtful jokes (4.36), and considering peers' feelings (4.29). These findings indicate strong stated endorsement of ethical consideration, although such endorsement does not necessarily determine responses in actual interactions.

Figure 1. Mean Scores for Students' Permissive and Reflective Attitudes toward Peer Interactions (n = 80)



The interviews showed that participants evaluated humor not only through the speaker's intention but also through the recipient's experience. P2 and P3 identified silence or forced laughter as possible signs of discomfort, while P7 emphasized that a joke became unacceptable when the recipient felt uncomfortable or asked for it to stop. P1 noted that power imbalances could make refusal difficult, and P5 and P10 highlighted embarrassment and continued teasing despite objections. These accounts suggest that participants considered emotional impact relevant to judging the acceptability of humor.

Observations, however, documented varied responses to potentially hurtful interactions. Teasing continued amid laughter without immediate intervention in Observations 1, 2, and 4. In contrast, a request to stop in Observation 5 was followed by a change of subject, while a bystander redirected the conversation in Observation 8 after a student who had initially laughed became quieter. Another incident involved an apology following a peer's objection. These episodes illustrate that recognizing potentially hurtful conduct and responding to it are distinct aspects of peer interaction.

Moral sensitivity provides a useful interpretive lens for understanding how students recognize the ethical significance of others' experiences (Rest, 1986). The interviews suggest awareness of discomfort, embarrassment, and objections, while the

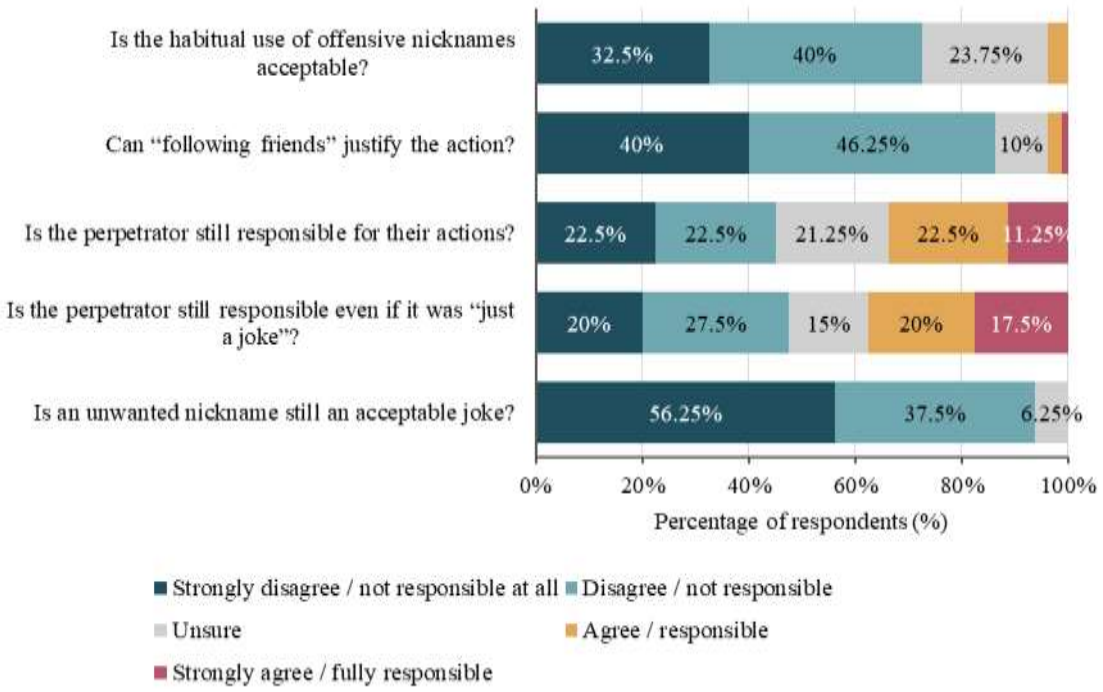
observations show variation in how students responded to such situations. Silence and laughter remain ambiguous and must be interpreted in context rather than treated as definitive evidence of approval or discomfort. The central finding is that recognizing the potential impact of a joke does not necessarily lead to intervention.

Islamic Moral Education reinforces the importance of evaluating humor in relation to human dignity. Qur'an Surah Al-Hujurat [49]:11 prohibits mockery, disparagement, and offensive nicknames, establishing ethical boundaries that cannot be determined solely by the speaker's intention or the group's amusement (Bakri & Faza, 2025). This does not mean every joke is harmful; rather, its acceptability also depends on whether it demeans the person addressed. In Islamic Religious Education (PAI), case-based discussion can help students distinguish intention from impact and consider appropriate responses, such as stopping hurtful remarks, apologizing, or redirecting the conversation. These implications follow from the findings but do not establish the effectiveness of particular instructional approaches.

3. Peer Pressure, the Attribution of Moral Responsibility, and Moral Accountability

Students' responses revealed a tension between recognizing the ethical problems of hurtful behavior and consistently attributing responsibility to those involved (Figure 2). Although 93.75% rejected unwanted nicknames as acceptable jokes and 86.25% rejected following peers as a justification for behavior, judgments became less consistent when personal accountability was addressed directly. Only 37.50% agreed or strongly agreed that a person remained responsible when the behavior was intended as a joke, while 47.50% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Similarly, agreement with the general statement on personal responsibility was 33.75%, compared with 45.00% disagreement. This pattern contrasts with the mean score of 4.03 for the reflective-attitude item concerning responsibility despite peer influence. Taken together, the findings suggest that rejecting harmful behavior in principle does not necessarily translate into consistent judgments about individual accountability in specific situations.

Figure 2. Distribution of Students' Responses to Scenarios on the Acceptability of Jokes, Justifications for Behavior, and Perpetrator Responsibility (n = 80)



The interviews help contextualize this tension by showing how peer relationships may complicate the exercise of personal responsibility. Eight participants (P1, P3–P8, and P10) maintained that individuals remained responsible even when following peers. P1 distinguished social influence as an explanation from responsibility for consequences, while P5 emphasized individual choice. However, six participants also described fear of exclusion or the desire for acceptance, and four referred to gaining respect, appearing dominant or courageous, or receiving recognition. These accounts suggest that students could acknowledge personal responsibility while also recognizing the social pressures surrounding peer behavior. The issue, therefore, was not simply whether students understood responsibility, but how that responsibility was negotiated within the need to belong and gain acceptance.

Observations illustrated how this tension could appear in actual interactions. In Observation 3, a student joined in mocking a peer after others laughed and did not explain the behavior when the targeted student objected. In Observation 7, a student attributed participation in mockery to following friends. In contrast, another incident involved a student apologizing, changing their speech, and acknowledging responsibility after recognizing that a remark had caused discomfort. These episodes

reflect contrasting responses to social influence: conformity was invoked to explain participation in one situation, whereas apology and behavioral correction indicated acknowledgment of personal responsibility in another. Considered alongside the interview accounts, the observations show why stated recognition of responsibility should not be treated as equivalent to its consistent enactment.

This relationship can be interpreted through the concepts of moral agency and moral disengagement. Moral agency emphasizes the capacity to evaluate and regulate one's conduct rather than simply follow social pressures (Bandura, 2014), while moral disengagement offers a perspective on how individuals may distance themselves from responsibility for harmful actions (Bandura, 2014, 2016; Thornberg et al., 2022; Brehmer & Meyer, 2025). In this study, these concepts help interpret the contrast between participants' stated recognition of responsibility and observed or reported instances of conformity. However, neither construct was directly measured, so the findings do not establish that moral disengagement caused these responses.

From the perspective of Islamic Moral Education, this tension underscores the distinction between explaining an action and morally justifying it. The desire for acceptance or the influence of friends may help explain participation in hurtful behavior, but neither automatically makes the behavior ethically acceptable or removes personal accountability. Qur'an Surah Al-Hujurat [49]:11 prohibits mockery and disparagement, providing a normative basis for evaluating conduct in terms of respect for human dignity (Bakri & Faza, 2025). Accordingly, moral responsibility involves not only recognizing that peer influence is insufficient justification, but also acknowledging one's role in hurtful interactions and correcting one's conduct when it harms others. The findings thus point to the importance of connecting ethical judgment with responsibility for action in peer situations.

4. Bystander Responses and Moral Action

Interview findings showed that eight participants (P1, P2, P4, and P6–P10) described constructive responses to hurtful jokes or unwanted nicknames, including explaining their impact, asking perpetrators to stop or apologize, supporting targeted peers, suggesting respectful alternatives, and reporting persistent behavior to teachers. P1 emphasized considering the targeted peer's needs before responding, while P8 highlighted peer support. P3 and P5 focused on acknowledging their own behavior by

apologizing and discontinuing unwanted nicknames. These accounts demonstrate that participants could identify several ways to respond to hurtful peer interactions, although interview responses alone do not establish how consistently these actions occur in practice.

Observations revealed contrasting patterns. In Observation 6, some students laughed while another asked the perpetrator to stop after noticing the targeted student's apparent discomfort. In Observations 1, 2, and 4, teasing continued without effective interruption, while another incident ended with the targeted student leaving the group. By contrast, requests to stop or conversational redirection in Observations 5 and 8 coincided with the end of the joking. These episodes illustrate how bystander responses may accompany either the continuation or interruption of hurtful interactions. However, laughter and silence are context-dependent and cannot, on their own, establish approval, indifference, or discomfort.

This variation can be interpreted in light of research linking bystander responses to perceived classroom norms and moral disengagement (Thornberg et al., 2022), defender and collective efficacy (Thornberg et al., 2020), and moral sensitivity (Sjögren et al., 2024a, 2024b; Thornberg & Jungert, 2013). Brehmer and Meyer (2025) also examined moral disengagement and moral sensitivity in relation to antisocial bystander intentions. These concepts help contextualize the range of responses in the present findings, but they were not directly measured in this study. The central distinction is between recognizing a potentially harmful interaction and choosing how to respond to it.

Unwanted nicknames illustrate this distinction. In the questionnaire, 18.75% of respondents reported often or very often being called an unwanted nickname (M = 2.64). P2 noted possible effects on confidence and emotional well-being, while P4 emphasized using a person's preferred name. In Observations 1 and 4, nicknames based on physical characteristics were accepted and repeated within the group; in one incident, the targeted student smiled before becoming silent. These findings do not mean that every nickname is harmful. Rather, acceptability depends partly on whether the name is welcome and how the person addressed experiences it. Familiarity, group amusement, or the absence of an explicit objection does not by itself establish consent.

Islamic Moral Education provides a normative basis for extending ethical responsibility beyond the person initiating a joke to those who witness it. Qur'an Surah Al-Hujurat [49]:11 prohibits mockery, disparagement, and offensive nicknames, challenging the normalization of degrading speech even when it becomes a group habit (Bakri & Faza, 2025). Bystander responsibility need not entail direct confrontation in every situation. Supporting the targeted peer, calmly asking the perpetrator to stop, redirecting the conversation, or seeking a teacher's assistance may offer proportionate alternatives. The ethical issue is whether witnesses respond in ways that uphold dignity rather than allow degrading conduct to continue unchallenged.

Table 3. Educational Implications for Islamic Religious Education and Character Education

Theme	Finding the implication responds to	Suggested learning practice
Normalization	Frequent exposure; repetition described as making behavior feel normal; silence and laughter not interpretable as consent	Reflection on repeated jokes; classroom norms that do not treat laughter as proof of acceptability or silence as consent
Jokes and dignity	Acceptability judged by the target's comfort; stated sensitivity not always matched by response in observed incidents	Case analysis distinguishing intention from impact; treating objections as legitimate reasons to reconsider
Peer influence and responsibility	Strong rejection of "following friends" but more dispersed judgments of a perpetrator's responsibility	Scenario-based decision-making; practice of stopping, apologizing, and repairing harm
Bystander responses	Constructive responses proposed in interviews; laughing and silence also observed	Guided practice of safe and proportionate responses; clear ways to express discomfort and to seek a teacher's help

Table 3 translates the four themes into pedagogical implications. Across the findings, the key educational concern is how students move from recognizing the ethical implications of peer behavior to selecting an appropriate response. PAI and character education can provide opportunities to practise this connection between moral judgment, respect for others, and responsible action.

D. Conclusion

This study shows that students generally reject hurtful jokes and the use of peer influence as a justification for negative behavior, although harsh language remains

frequently encountered (62.50%), and judgments regarding perpetrators' responsibility when behavior is framed as "just joking" remain varied (37.50% agreed or strongly agreed that perpetrators remain responsible). Interviews revealed constructive bystander responses, whereas observations documented a range of reactions, including laughter and silence. Theoretically, these findings highlight the divergence between descriptive and injunctive norms in everyday peer interactions and the relevance of QS. Al-Hujurat [49]:11 in emphasizing human dignity, responsible speech, and moral accountability. For Islamic Religious Education and character education, the findings support learning activities based on case analysis, reflection on behavioral intentions and impacts, decision-making under peer pressure, and practice in safe and respectful bystander responses. Future research could examine the implementation of Islamic Religious Education incorporating moral reflection and peer-interaction simulations to determine its potential to strengthen consistency between students' moral judgments and ethical responses and to prevent the normalization of degrading behavior.

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