RELIGIOUS CHARACTER-BASED INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN GENERAL COURSE FOR DIFABEL STUDENTS AT UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

This study addresses the need for a character-based inclusive education model that accommodates students with disabilities in higher education, particularly within the Indonesian context. The objective is to design a values-oriented educational framework that integrates moral and religious principles into inclusive teaching practices. Employing a Research and Development (R&D) approach, the study involved general course students at an Indonesian university, with data gathered through interviews, observations, and a review of relevant literature. The findings reveal a hierarchical structure of character values comprising basic values (tolerance, sympathy, empathy), instrumental values (self-awareness and cooperation), and ultimate values centered on sincere service (*lillahi Ta'ala*). Additionally, the implementation of character education in Islamic and Civic Education courses must be responsive to the unique challenges faced by students with disabilities, requiring curriculum adjustments in terms of learning media, instructional materials, and assessment strategies. The study contributes to the field by emphasizing *ta'awun* (mutual assistance) as a core religious value that underpins inclusive relationships among faculty, students with disabilities, their peers, and families, thereby promoting a more compassionate and supportive academic environment.

Keywords: Disabled Students, Inclusive Education Model, Religious Character, *Ta'awun*

INTRODUCTION

Higher education has long emphasized the principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion. Despite these institutional commitments, students with disabilities continue to face systemic disadvantages when compared to their non-disabled counterparts (Brewer, Urwin, & Witham, 2023). These disparities manifest in various ways, such as difficulties accessing lecture content (e.g., challenges with note-taking), participating in collaborative classroom activities (e.g., group discussions), and completing assessments (e.g., oral presentations and written exams) (Fuller et al., 2004; Nieminen, 2023). Furthermore, research has shown that students of color with disabilities are disproportionately excluded from mainstream classrooms, compounding their marginalization within educational environments (Cartledge & Dukes, 2009; Ruppar et al., 2017; Sullivan, 2011; Morgan et al., 2022).

In support of these findings, a substantial body of literature has contributed to a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of students with disabilities, as well as the types of support systems required to address their unique needs (Brantlinger, Jimenez, Klingner, Pugach, & Richardson, 2005). These barriers to equitable learning occur across both physical and digital learning environments, including limited access to essential academic resources such as libraries and information technology services (Fuller et al., 2004). Additionally, some academic and professional programs enforce specific requirements, such as mandatory attendance or physical fitness standards, that can further constrain students with disabilities. Educational inclusion is an approach that seeks to ensure that all students have access to quality education, regardless of

their social, cultural, ethnic, linguistic, or other differences. Students with disabilities have the right to get access to primary, secondary, and higher education as best fits their individual desires, and accommodations are a part of that 'best fit' (Abdella, 2017).

Educational inclusion remains a central objective for many schools; however, its implementation is still evolving and incomplete in numerous contexts. The process of establishing inclusive practices is complex, multifaceted, and highly dependent on institutional context and the availability of resources (Fernandez et al., 2023). Although strides have been made in fostering more inclusive learning environments, significant structural and cultural barriers continue to impede full realization.

Achieving genuine inclusion requires a more substantial transformation of pedagogical approaches. As Armstrong and Tsokova (2019) noted, educators must cultivate a critical awareness of the broader social, cultural, and political forces that shape educational practices and influence students' experiences. This entails recognizing power imbalances within educational institutions and society and committing to the disruption of exclusionary and oppressive structures. Over the past two decades, considerable scholarly attention has been directed toward understanding how teacher attitudes and beliefs impact the success of inclusive education.

Students with disabilities are often eligible for accommodations such as assistive technologies or extended time on exams, which can significantly enhance their academic participation (Dong & Lucas, 2016). However, accessing these supports frequently requires students to disclose their disability, engage with disability support services, or apply for external assistance. This process can be emotionally taxing, time-consuming, and burdensome, posing substantial challenges for many students with disabilities (Goode, 2007; Grimes et al., 2019).In addition, the lack of disabled service units formed by universities signifies the low commitment of universities in Indonesia to inclusive education and the limited access of tertiary institutions to persons with disabilities, making the number of persons with disabilities a minimal degree. All of them are forms of discrimination experienced by persons with disabilities in exploring access to higher education for persons with disabilities.

National and institutional data regarding students with disabilities in higher education, such as enrollment, academic performance, and graduation statistics, are available through various archival sources. However, such quantitative data often fail to capture the nuanced, lived experiences of students with disabilities. While qualitative studies provide deeper insights into these experiences, they are frequently limited in scope, focusing on individual institutions (Rodriguez et al., 2021), specific academic disciplines (Shaw & Anderson, 2018), or narrowly defined issues such as disability disclosure (Thompson-Ebanks & Jarman, 2018). Although informative, these studies may offer only a partial understanding of the challenges students with disabilities face, and they often overlook whether these challenges are consistent across teaching practices or academic fields or if there are shared patterns in their educational experiences.

Inclusive education refers to the practice of educating students with disabilities alongside their non-disabled peers in the same learning environments (Smith, 2008). In Indonesia, the implementation of inclusive education, particularly at the tertiary level, remains a subject of ongoing debate. A significant gap persists between the number of universities that accept students with disabilities and those that admit only non-disabled students. Furthermore, teaching practices and educational environments often lack the collaborative culture necessary to support inclusive learning. Indonesia has adopted UNESCO's four pillars of education, learning to know, learning to do, learning to be, and learning to live together, as a national framework (Aspin & Chapman, 2007). Within this framework, inclusive education aims to ensure equal opportunities and access to high-quality learning experiences tailored to students'

individual needs while promoting a supportive environment where all learners can fully develop their potential (Kustawan, 2012).

General education courses in higher education are expected to play a pivotal role in advancing inclusive education by promoting the development of character values among students. Rahardja (2010) found that inclusive classrooms contribute to fostering positive attitudes such as tolerance, acceptance of diversity, and helpfulness. Additionally, the presence of students with disabilities in inclusive academic settings provides meaningful learning opportunities for educators, particularly in recognizing the importance of individualized instruction within traditional teaching environments. Furthermore, the provision of educational services for students with disabilities in inclusive schools has prompted the development of institutional programs that integrate students with special needs into school-wide activities alongside their non-disabled peers.

Similarly, Meiyani (2000) identified several key educational values, such as perseverance, resilience, shared experiences, tolerance, and a sense of community, that emerge within inclusive classroom environments. However, her study also revealed persistent challenges in the implementation of inclusive practices in higher education. These include: (1) limited understanding among lecturers regarding the specific learning characteristics of students with disabilities; (2) instructional methods, pedagogical approaches, and assessment strategies that fail to accommodate individual needs; (3) minimal participation of students with disabilities in collaborative learning activities and extracurricular engagements; and (4) inadequate accessibility to institutional facilities.

These issues highlight the ongoing disconnect between inclusive policy goals and practical application in the classroom. Instructional approaches often overlook the specific needs of students with disabilities, and there remains a significant gap in their active involvement in inclusive, community-based learning experiences such as group work and extracurricular programs. In this study, we adopt the term "students with needs (SWN)" rather than "students with disabilities," as the latter is often associated with deficit-oriented or medicalized interpretations. In contrast, the term "students with needs" emphasizes functional diversity and acknowledges the tacit knowledge individuals develop to navigate and overcome disability-related challenges (Fernandez et al., 2023). This terminology affirms the inherent value of diversity and supports a more inclusive educational discourse.

The cultivation of character values plays a crucial role in enhancing the participation of students with disabilities in cooperative learning environments, both within classroom instruction and in extracurricular activities. Promoting joyful learning and fostering a sense of community are essential strategies for encouraging greater inclusion. Given this context, critical questions emerge concerning the extent to which religious character values are embedded within inclusive education, particularly in general education courses. Smith (2008) conceptualizes inclusion as the acceptance of learners who face barriers related to curriculum access, school environment, social interaction, and self-concept. Similarly, Indonesia's Ministry of National Education Regulation No. 70 of 2008 defines inclusive education as an educational system that ensures all students, including those with disabilities, exceptional intelligence, or unique talents, can learn alongside their peers in the same educational setting. As for Indriawati (2013), the success of inclusive education largely depends on educators' willingness and ability to provide accommodations that meet the specific needs of students with disabilities.

The distinctive contribution of this study lies in its identification of the significance of engaging students with needs (SWN) in general education learning while simultaneously internalizing the religious value of *ta'awun*, mutual cooperation, as a means of character formation. This research highlights *ta'awun* not only as a core religious value but also as a foundational principle for inclusive education in higher education contexts. It underscores the

value of fostering cooperative relationships among lecturers and students with disabilities, between students themselves, and between students and their families, thereby promoting a more inclusive and spiritually grounded educational environment.

METHOD

This study adopts a Research and Development (R&D) approach aimed not only at producing a specific educational intervention but also at evaluating its effectiveness within authentic educational contexts (Creswell, 2018; Sugiyono, 2008). The research design is based on the foundational R&D model proposed by Borg and Gall (1988, p. 784), which emphasizes a cyclical process involving analysis, design, validation, and refinement. To suit the specific aims and contextual needs of this study, the original model was adapted and modified accordingly. The revised framework includes the following stages: preliminary investigation, product design, expert validation, limited-scale trials, iterative revisions, and final implementation. Figure 1 presents a visual overview of these stages, illustrating the systematic development process employed throughout the study.
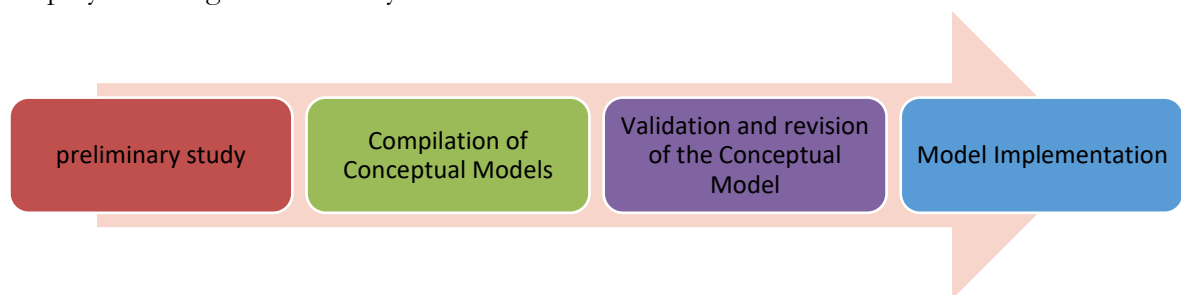

Figure 1. Flowchart of Research And Development (R&D) Method

Figure 2 presents a conceptual framework illustrating the role of character values development as a foundational element of inclusive education in higher education. This diagram offers a systematic representation of how character education supports and informs the implementation of inclusive practices at the university level, highlighting its essential function in fostering an equitable and values-based academic environment.
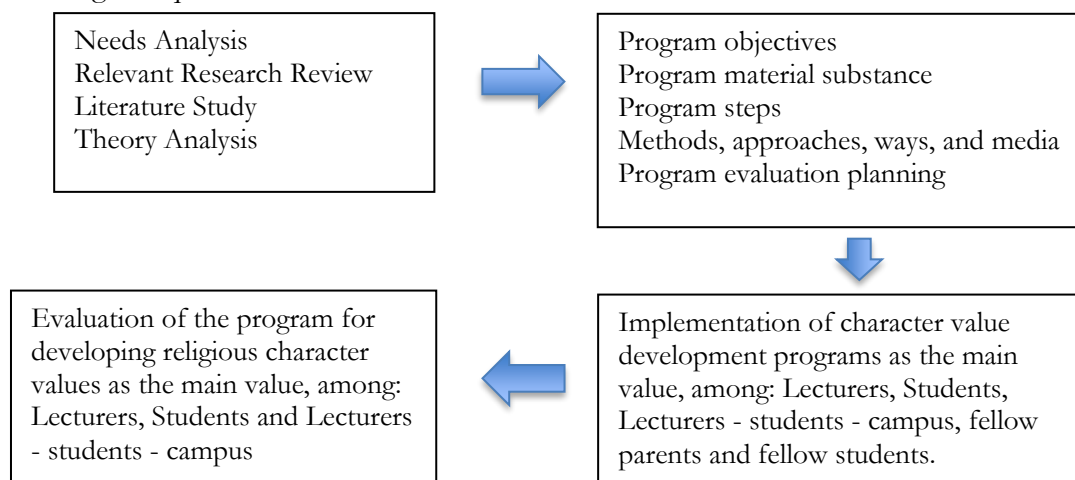

Figure 2. Flowchart the Study of The Character Values Development Program

The data collection methods employed in this study consisted of (1) interviews, (2) observations, and (3) document analysis. The interviews were conducted through a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) involving lecturers of General Education courses, as well as selected lecturers from Islamic Religious Education (*PAI*) and Civic Education (*PKn*) within the relevant learning cluster. Students also participated in the FGD to provide additional perspectives. Document analysis was utilized to gather data from non-human sources, including various forms of institutional records and archived materials such as written documents and audio-visual recordings.

The participants in this study comprised eight students with special needs who were enrolled in Islamic Religious Education and Civic Education courses offered by the Department of General Education within the Faculty of Social Sciences Education (*FPIPS*) at the Indonesian University of Education. To obtain more in-depth perspectives, structured interviews were conducted with two of these students, referred to as RV and IS. These individuals were part of a specialized class designated for students with disabilities, a program implemented across multiple faculties at the university. In total, eight students with disabilities were identified and included in the research sample. Table 1 presents detailed demographic and contextual information, offering an overview of students with disabilities at the Indonesian University of Education.

Table 1. Disabled Students in the Indonesian Educational University Environment

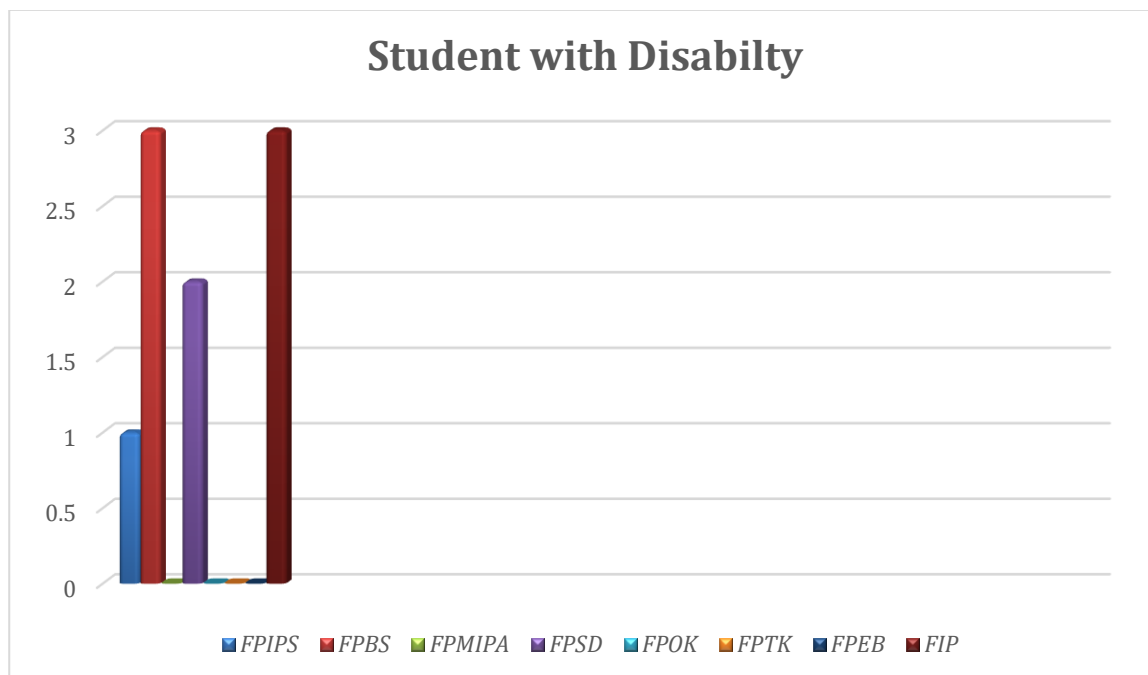| No	Faculty	Students Names	Major	Space	Total
1.	*FIP*	LB	*Pendidikan Masyarakat*	A	3
		ED	*Psikologi*	D	
		AN	*Teknologi Pendidikan*	B (Ham Komunikasi)	
2.	*FPEB*	-	-	-	0
3.	*FPIPS*	-			0
4.	*FPSD*	RV U	*Pendidikan Seni Rupa*	B	2
5.	*FPTK*				0
6.	*FPBS*	IS	*Seni Musik*	A	3
		YR	*Seni Musik*	A	
		AT	*Seni Rupa*	B	
7.	*FPOK*	-	-	-	
8.	*FPMIPA*	-	-	-	

Figure 3. Disabled Students in the Indonesian Educational University Environment

As illustrated in Figure 3, the majority of students with special needs (SWD) at the Indonesian University of Education are enrolled in the Faculty of Language and Literature. Three SWD are registered in programs such as Music Arts and Fine Arts. Additionally, three students with special needs are enrolled in the Faculty of Education, specifically in the Community Education, Psychology, and Educational Technology programs. The Faculty of Art and Design Education also accommodates students with special needs. In contrast, five other faculties at the university currently have no enrolled SWD. To gain further insight, interviews were conducted with students with hearing impairments and students with visual impairments, particularly those studying in the Music Arts program.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The interview findings reveal that students with disabilities (SWD) exhibit character values that are on par with those of their non-disabled peers. They display strong attributes such as responsibility, creativity, and independence. For example, when given academic assignments, these students proactively seek clarification from classmates, demonstrating an awareness that completing coursework is their individual responsibility. Observations conducted in this research indicated that SWD did not show any significant limitations in carrying out academic tasks. On the contrary, they displayed ingenuity in leveraging available tools and resources to complete their work efficiently.

Despite these strengths, certain challenges persist. In particular, the cases of students RV and IS highlight the critical influence of family background in shaping key character traits, especially perseverance and responsibility. These familial foundations have played a pivotal role in supporting the development of character values within the university context. However, the cultivation of such values is a continuous and gradual process rather than one that occurs instantaneously.

Figure 4. Interview with the student with a disability (deaf)

Figure 4 captures an interview session with a student with a hearing impairment. During the discussion, one participant shared that she had experienced social isolation during her middle and vocational school years, which contributed to feelings of self-blame. This account reflects findings from previous research indicating that students with disabilities often fear becoming 'invisible' when requesting academic accommodations (Goode, 2007). Such students frequently face challenges, including social isolation, heightened self-consciousness, fear of stigma, intimidation, and exclusion from peer interactions (Shaw & Anderson, 2018). These insights highlight the critical role of educators and institutional leaders in understanding and addressing the complex social and emotional realities faced by students with disabilities, particularly in efforts to cultivate inclusive, empathetic, and supportive learning environments.

The importance of the educator's role and institutional leaders in better understanding and addressing the complexity of SWD's complex social and emotional realities can be galvanized by the data obtained from the research participant, as follows: *I was born normal. But when I was little I fell out of bed and hit my hearing nerve. I carry out tasks independently using existing technology* (Personal communication, RV, 2018).

A key factor contributing to the informant's heightened self-awareness was the presence of a supportive family environment. Additionally, she reported forming a strong emotional bond with other Deaf peers through online communication platforms, which played a significant role in alleviating the emotional strain associated with her experiences. This observation aligns with Lipham's theory on the development of core universal values, which posits that certain values are inherently present and divinely endowed, requiring no elaborate learning process. Such innate moral strength may help explain the informant's resilience in facing and navigating the challenges related to her condition.

Lickona (1999) conceptualizes character development as encompassing three interconnected dimensions: moral cognition, moral emotion, and moral behavior. According to this framework, a well-developed character involves three essential capacities: knowing what is good (moral knowing), desiring what is good (moral feeling), and doing what is good (moral behavior). These elements, when consistently practiced, become internalized as habitual ways of thinking (habits of the mind), feeling (habits of the heart), and acting (habits of action).

The way students with disabilities (SWD) respond to challenges plays a foundational role in shaping an adaptive environment that fosters resilience and reduces the psychological burden associated with their limitations. Many of the difficulties they encounter, such as instances of bullying or daily social obstacles, stem from societal misunderstandings of their conditions. These lived experiences highlight the importance of embedding cultural and character education into inclusive higher education practices to support SWD more effectively.

One of the primary challenges identified through interviews with participants, particularly those who are Deaf, is communication. A recurring concern is that many individuals, including educators, are unfamiliar with effective communication strategies for interacting with Deaf students. During lectures, for example, some students struggle to follow content when instructors speak too rapidly or fail to use clear articulation. To address these issues, lecturers must be encouraged to design and deliver instructional materials in an inclusive manner. This includes using accessible tools such as PowerPoint slides and maintaining a well-paced, organized speaking rhythm. However, the successful implementation of these strategies requires collaborative support from institutional stakeholders. Higher education institutions offering inclusive programs must prioritize faculty training and organize seminars focused on inclusive teaching practices.

This aligns with the core principle of mutual assistance, a key component of character education. From the interview data, it is evident that the participant, one of the Deaf informants, has come to accept her condition and has developed strategies to navigate it effectively. She engages in oral communication by reading lips, although this requires her conversational partners to speak slowly and enunciate clearly to ensure mutual understanding.

Figure 5. Interview with a student with a disability (blind)

Figure 5 presents the results of interviews with a student with visual impairment. The findings were largely consistent with those gathered from Deaf students with disabilities (SWD). A key distinction, however, lies in the nature of their impairments: the blind student was born with the condition, while the deaf students acquired their disability later in life, one due to an accident in early childhood that resulted in permanent hearing loss.

The character development of students with disabilities is closely tied to their educational journey, which, for many, begins in inclusive settings from basic to higher education. Access to education is a fundamental right for all individuals capable of reasoning, regardless of physical limitations. Thus, higher education institutions offering inclusive programs must reject discriminatory practices and ensure that students with disabilities receive character education and value formation on par with their non-disabled peers.

Educators play a crucial role in assessing the competencies that students acquire throughout the learning process. After each instructional unit or series of lessons, teachers should be able to evaluate student progress and make informed decisions regarding the necessary interventions, whether reinforcement, remediation, or adjustments to instructional materials and strategies. Furthermore, teachers must understand how to foster learning motivation among students, as this is essential to cultivating strong character traits and academic success (Abdillah, 2016).

Lickona (1991) emphasizes that the fundamental challenge facing educational institutions is moral in nature, asserting that many other school-related issues stem from this core concern. He argues that even academic reform efforts are ultimately dependent on prioritizing character development. Cultivating character is a central responsibility of educators and involves three interrelated dimensions: moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral behavior. A well-formed character, therefore, encompasses three essential competencies, understanding what is good (moral knowing), having the desire to pursue what is good (moral feeling), and acting upon that good (moral behavior). Over time, these competencies evolve into ingrained patterns of thought, emotion, and conduct, and it refers to as habits of the mind, habits of the heart, and habits of action.

From these three indicators of character formation, it becomes evident that character does not develop spontaneously. Instead, it is cultivated through a progressive process of internalizing moral competencies. An individual first recognizes what is morally right, then develops an intrinsic motivation to pursue it, and ultimately engages in consistent moral action. This process, through repetition and reflection, leads to the formation of enduring character habits across cognitive, emotional, and behavioral domains.

The cultivation of character values within the framework of inclusive education at Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia has been a gradual and ongoing process, shaped through years of iterative development since the university was designated as an inclusive education provider in the Bandung area. Initially, many students with disabilities confidently chose the university as their academic institution of choice. However, in recent years, there has been a noticeable decline in the enrollment of students with disabilities. According to several informants, this trend may be attributed to increasingly stringent admissions criteria. University stakeholders have expressed concerns regarding the institution's ability to accommodate students with disabilities, particularly given that many graduates are expected to pursue careers in education, which demand high levels of performance and exemplary conduct. These expectations are often perceived as difficult to fulfill by students with disabilities, thereby limiting their access to higher education.

This long-standing institutional experience underscores the need for clear policies tailored to support students with disabilities who meet admission criteria. For those already

enrolled, an inclusive educational approach must be systematically implemented through an adapted curriculum, inclusive teaching methods, accessible learning media, trained instructors, and appropriate support services. Moreover, the development of character values should be a central component of this inclusive model. These values, ranging from tolerance, sympathy, empathy, and independence to collaboration, should be intentionally fostered to shape the personal and moral character of students with disabilities. The pinnacle of this character formation process is the internalization of the value of *ta'awun* (mutual assistance), which reflects the spirit of cooperation and shared responsibility.

Ta`awun (help) and caring for fellow human beings is a priority in the teachings of Islam. The help command helps in *QS. Al-Maidah* [5] verse 2. Hamka (1984: 114) describes the sentence *ta'awanu* derived from the main word (*mashdar*) *Mu'awanah*, which means helping to help, helping to help. Ordered to live with help in fostering *al-Birru*, which is all kinds of good and functional purposes based on upholding piety, which is to strengthen relations with God. Furthermore, being denied help for sinning, causing hostility, and hurting fellow human beings is decisively detrimental to others. Az-Zuhaili (2014) states that helping create goodness for both parties prevent distress that might befall both of them and prevents them from collisions that might have a bad impact. Job embeddedness and organizational identification can improve *ta'awun* behavior (Sudarti et al., 2021).

Research indicates that *ta'awun* (mutual assistance) and human resource practices are significant supporting factors in institutional and social development, even though *ta'awun* may not exert a direct influence. Nonetheless, the presence of *ta'awun* as a value has demonstrated a positive impact (Sulhaini et al., 2023). In Islamic teachings, acts of sharing and cooperation are regarded as meaningful expressions of worship. According to Imam Jalaluddin al-Mahalli and Jalaluddin as-Suyuti (2008), acts of assistance must be grounded in moral integrity, promoting what is divinely commanded and avoiding support for wrongdoing or immoral behavior. Al-Qurthubi (2008) further clarifies that the concepts of virtue and *taqwa* (piety) are essentially synonymous, with the Qur'an reinforcing their significance through repetitive expression for emphasis. Every act of virtue reflects piety, and all pious behavior constitutes virtue.

Shihab (2002) elaborates on this by stating that mutual assistance encompasses all actions aimed at promoting both material and spiritual well-being (*ukhrawi*). In his Ahkam, Al-Qurthubi (2008) highlights those expressions of virtue and piety can take various forms depending on one's capacity, those with knowledge contribute through teaching, while those with wealth offer financial support. Within this framework, mutual support is considered a fundamental social obligation, and Muslims are encouraged to extend a helping hand to one another in all circumstances.

Drawing on Lipham's typology of values, core, secular, and operational values, Figure 6 presents a conceptual framework that categorizes *ta'awun* into fundamental values, instrumental values, and their practical application in everyday life.
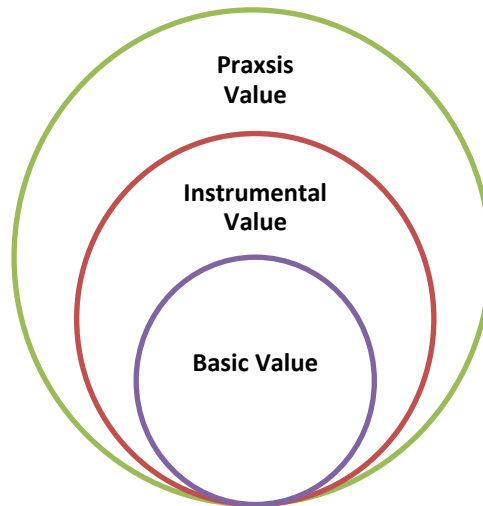
Figure 6. Core Values, Secular Values, And Operational Values from *Ta'awun*

Basic Value

Although values are inherently abstract and cannot be perceived through the human senses, they are fundamentally connected to human behavior. Every individual possesses core values that reflect the essential nature or deep meaning underlying these principles. These foundational values are considered universal, as they pertain to the fundamental realities of existence, such as the nature of God, humanity, and other living beings.

Instrumental Values

Instrumental values serve as practical guidelines for implementing foundational or basic values. While basic values represent core principles, they require clear, concrete formulations and measurable parameters to be fully meaningful. When instrumental values are applied to individual behavior in everyday life, they take the form of moral norms. However, when applied within the context of organizations or nations, instrumental values function as guiding policies, strategic directions, or operational frameworks derived from core principles. In this sense, instrumental values can be viewed as the applied or functional expressions of fundamental values.

Praxis Value

Praxis values represent the tangible, lived expression of instrumental values in daily life. They serve as the practical manifestation of both foundational and instrumental values. In the context of *ta'awun* (mutual assistance), praxis values are evident when non-disabled students actively support their peers with disabilities, for example, by helping them navigate campus, reviewing learning materials, or assisting with classroom activities.

According to the primary informant, a lecturer in Citizenship Education, the realization of *ta'awun* as a core character value depends on the development of a set of interrelated and foundational values. The informant elaborated on these supporting values as follows:

First, *ta'awun* must be grounded in tolerance. Mutual assistance cannot be meaningfully practiced without a spirit of acceptance and respect. Within an inclusive campus environment,

ta'awun must encompass the ability of non-disabled students to accept and support students with disabilities, and vice versa. Tolerance prohibits discriminatory attitudes and behaviors that often marginalize students with disabilities. According to the informant, tolerance is the essential foundation upon which *ta'awun* in inclusive education must be built. Without it, the presence of students with disabilities may be socially rejected, even if they are formally admitted to the university.

Second, *ta'awun* entails sympathy. Practicing *ta'awun* requires a sincere emotional connection, an ability to recognize and emotionally respond to the challenges others face. In inclusive settings, this means non-disabled students must be able to acknowledge and relate to the difficulties experienced by students with disabilities. Similarly, students with disabilities should also be sympathetic toward the struggles of their non-disabled peers. The informant emphasized that this reciprocal sense of sympathy is essential for fostering genuine mutual understanding and solidarity within inclusive education.

Third, *ta'awun* includes empathy, the capacity not only to recognize another's difficulties but also to be moved to act in alleviating them. Empathy goes beyond sympathy by motivating compassionate action. In an inclusive educational setting, this means that both non-disabled and disabled students should be emotionally attuned to one another's struggles and be willing to help address them. Without empathy, the process of inclusive education cannot effectively foster a supportive and collaborative environment.

Fourth, *ta'awun* implies offering assistance. This instrumental value requires that non-disabled students be willing to offer concrete help to their peers with disabilities. Although some may question whether such support is always mutual, the informant argued that the essence of *ta'awun* lies in the willingness to help, even when the reciprocity may not be equal. Nevertheless, students with disabilities often bring their own strengths and can contribute meaningfully to the learning community.

Fifth, *ta'awun* embodies the value of cooperation. Beyond individual acts of assistance, inclusive education must promote sustained collaboration between all students. The informant acknowledged that the idea of mutual cooperation between disabled and non-disabled students may be underestimated, especially when assistance is viewed as one-directional. However, students with disabilities also possess unique strengths. Some excel in the arts, take initiative in maintaining cleanliness on campus, and display generosity and social engagement. While non-disabled students may be perceived as physically and mentally more capable, they have limitations as well that highlight the need for cooperation. Therefore, in inclusive educational environments, *ta'awun* must foster a culture of mutual collaboration. Without this cooperative spirit, inclusive education cannot function effectively. In this context, the character value of cooperation becomes indispensable.

The informant's perspective is highly relevant in emphasizing that the full realization of *taʿawun* as an advanced instrumental value depends on the prior development of foundational values such as tolerance, sympathy, and empathy. Once these core values are established, the next essential step involves cultivating instrumental values, providing inclusive assistance, and fostering cooperation. Without these two components being actively demonstrated by non-disabled students, the presence of students with disabilities in inclusive schools may resemble their experience in segregated special education settings. In such cases, while students with

disabilities are physically present in inclusive classrooms, their social and psychological experiences may remain isolated, mirroring those of specialized institutions.

The strength of *taʿawun* in inclusive education lies in the holistic integration of foundational values (tolerance, sympathy, empathy) with instrumental values (offering assistance and engaging in collaboration). These values are not independent of one another; rather, they form an inseparable continuum. Providing assistance and cooperation must be understood as interconnected and mutually reinforcing elements essential to creating a truly inclusive and supportive educational environment.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that character values are essential to inclusive education and can be hierarchically structured into basic values (tolerance, sympathy, empathy), instrumental values (independence, cooperation), and praxis values, culminating in *taʿawun*, mutual assistance performed with sincere intent (*lillahi Ta'ala*). Effective character education in Islamic Religious and Civic Education must address the specific needs of students with disabilities through inclusive curricula, accessible learning resources, and responsive assessment methods. The implementation of *taʿawun* at Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia involves collaborative efforts across stakeholders: among lecturers, lecturers, and parents, among students, and between parents of both disabled and non-disabled students. This multi-layered approach demonstrates that inclusive education requires not only structural support but also the active internalization of shared values to foster an equitable and compassionate academic environment.

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