



## **Strengthening Student Character Formation through Inclusive Pedagogical Practices in Islamic Religious Education**

Adistian

adistian@unismuh.ac.id

UIN Alauddin Makassar

### **Abstract**

This study examines how inclusive pedagogical practices in Islamic Religious Education (IRE) strengthen student character formation. The article responds to the need for Islamic education that does not stop at doctrinal transmission, but deliberately integrates spiritual, ethical, social, and emotional dimensions into classroom learning. Inclusive pedagogy is positioned as a value-centered approach that accommodates learner diversity, builds empathetic interaction, and enables students to internalize Islamic values through meaningful participation.

Using a quantitative correlational design, this study involved 75 students selected purposively. Data were collected through a validated Likert-scale questionnaire and analyzed using descriptive statistics, reliability testing, and simple linear regression with SPSS version 26. The findings indicate that inclusive IRE teaching methods were rated positively by students, with a mean score of 4.26. Student character formation was also categorized as very good, with a mean score of 4.30. Regression analysis shows a significant positive influence of inclusive IRE learning methods on student character development, with  $R^2 = 0.375$ , indicating that 37.5% of character formation can be explained by the pedagogical approach applied. These findings confirm that inclusive IRE practices strengthen responsibility, discipline, empathy, and social awareness in students while supporting the broader mission of Islamic education as character formation.

*Keywords: Inclusive Pedagogy, Islamic Religious Education, Character Formation, Student Engagement, Educational Strategy*

### **Introduction**

Islamic Religious Education (IRE) has a strategic role in shaping students into religious, ethical, and socially responsible individuals. In the context of globalization and digital transformation, IRE is pedagogical practices. This focus places inclusive pedagogy not only as a teaching technique, but as a comprehensive educational orientation. In IRE, inclusive pedagogy means that teachers design learning experiences that respect student diversity, provide equal opportunity for participation, and connect Islamic values with students' lived experiences. Through this approach, religious values are not merely memorized, but experienced, reflected upon, and practiced in daily behavior.

Various IRE learning models have been developed to improve the effectiveness of character education, including value-based learning, project-based activities, reflective

dialogue, empathy-based interaction, contextual teaching, and spiritual modeling. Tadabbur alam, for example, has been used to cultivate spiritual awareness and environmental empathy. Likewise, school culture and teacher exemplary conduct remain essential in ensuring that character formation is not separated from the daily moral climate of the school.

Despite these developments, character-based inclusive education in IRE still faces several obstacles. Teacher-centered pedagogy, limited instructional resources, insufficient teacher training, and the tendency to prioritize cognitive assessment often reduce the transformative function of IRE. These challenges create a gap between the curriculum's intention to shape religious character and classroom practices that still emphasize routine delivery of material.

Inclusive pedagogy offers an alternative by placing students as active moral agents in the learning process. Students are encouraged to discuss, reflect, collaborate, and express Islamic values through practical activities. This approach is consistent with Islamic educational principles that regard knowledge, faith, and action as inseparable. Therefore, the strengthening of character formation through inclusive IRE should be understood as an effort to integrate religious understanding with ethical behavior, social empathy, and disciplined practice.

Previous studies have shown that teacher-student relationships, empathy-based learning, community service, social-emotional learning, and value reinforcement contribute significantly to students' moral development. Positive teacher-student interaction strengthens empathy and prosocial behavior, while reflective and participatory pedagogy enables students to understand values emotionally and socially. In this sense, inclusive IRE supports not only intellectual comprehension but also the affective and behavioral dimensions of character.

### **Theoretical Orientation of Inclusive Pedagogy in IRE**

Inclusive pedagogy in Islamic Religious Education is grounded in the belief that every student has the right to meaningful religious learning. The classroom must be a safe and respectful space where students are guided to understand Islamic teachings while developing noble character. This approach aligns with value-centered Islamic character education, which emphasizes responsibility, discipline, honesty, empathy, cooperation, and spiritual awareness as outcomes of the learning process.

In practical terms, inclusive IRE involves several pedagogical principles. First, teachers provide differentiated learning experiences so that students with different abilities and learning styles can participate actively. Second, teachers encourage dialogue and reflection so that religious concepts are connected to real-life situations. Third, teachers model Islamic values through language, attitude, fairness, and care. Fourth, classroom activities promote

cooperation rather than competition alone, allowing students to learn ethical interaction through direct experience.

The strengthening of character formation also requires the integration of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. Students need to know Islamic teachings, feel the importance of those values, and practice them consistently. In this study, inclusive pedagogy is therefore understood as a bridge between Islamic knowledge and daily moral behavior. It helps students internalize values such as responsibility, discipline, tolerance, empathy, and social concern.

The study builds on the assumption that when IRE teachers apply inclusive, interactive, and value-centered methods, students' character formation improves. Inclusive pedagogy allows students to feel respected and involved, which increases their willingness to practice Islamic values. The learning environment becomes not only a place for receiving religious information, but also a formative space for developing moral identity.

Based on these considerations, this article aims to analyze the contribution of inclusive pedagogical practices in IRE to the strengthening of student character formation. The article retains the quantitative correlational design and principal findings from the original study while reframing the discussion to align more explicitly with the new title and the broader discourse on character development through inclusive Islamic education.

### **Research Methodology**

This study adopts a quantitative correlational design to analyze the influence of Islamic Religious Education teaching methods based on inclusive pedagogy on student character formation. The correlational design was selected because the research seeks to examine the relationship and influence between two variables: inclusive IRE learning methods as the independent variable and student character formation as the dependent variable.

The sample consisted of 75 students selected purposively. The selection considered student involvement in IRE learning activities and their ability to respond to the questionnaire items. Data were collected using a closed-ended questionnaire based on a Likert scale. The instrument was designed to measure students' perceptions of inclusive IRE learning methods and the extent to which character indicators were reflected in their learning experiences.

The instrument was tested for validity and reliability before being used in the main analysis. The reliability test produced Cronbach's Alpha ( $\alpha = 0.846$ ), indicating high internal consistency. This means that the questionnaire items were sufficiently reliable for measuring the research variables. Data analysis was conducted through descriptive statistics and simple linear regression using SPSS version 26.

The independent variable included aspects of inclusive pedagogical practice, such as teacher clarity, student participation, contextual learning, empathetic interaction, fairness, reflective activities, and opportunities for collaborative learning. The dependent variable included student character indicators such as responsibility, discipline, empathy, honesty, cooperation, respect, religious awareness, and social concern.

Descriptive statistics were used to identify the mean score and category of each variable. Simple linear regression was then used to determine whether inclusive IRE learning methods significantly influenced student character formation. The coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) was used to identify the extent to which student character formation could be explained by the inclusive pedagogical practices applied in IRE learning.

## **Research Findings and Discussion**

### **1. Inclusive IRE Learning Methods and Student Perceptions**

The findings show that inclusive pedagogical practices in Islamic Religious Education were perceived positively by students. The mean score of the IRE learning method variable was 4.26, which falls within the good to very good category. This score indicates that students experienced IRE learning as participatory, contextual, and supportive of character development.

The results also suggest that inclusive pedagogy helps transform IRE from a teacher-centered subject into a value-centered learning process. Students were not positioned merely as passive recipients of religious information, but as active participants who discuss, ask questions, reflect, cooperate, and apply Islamic values in relevant situations. This shift is important because character formation requires repeated opportunities to practice values, not only to understand them conceptually.

The positive mean score indicates that teachers were able to implement learning methods that encouraged student engagement. Students responded positively to learning situations in which teachers provided guidance, respected differences, used contextual examples, and encouraged reflection on Islamic values. These practices are essential for strengthening student character because they make religious learning more meaningful and applicable.

Inclusive pedagogy also supports classroom relationships that are more dialogical and empathetic. When students experience respect and fairness in the classroom, they are more likely to internalize values of respect, responsibility, and empathy. Thus, inclusive IRE contributes not only to learning engagement but also to the formation of moral habits.

### **2. Student Character Formation**

Student character formation achieved an average score of 4.30, categorized as very good. This result shows that students generally demonstrated strong character behaviors, especially responsibility and discipline. The high score confirms that inclusive IRE learning has a meaningful relationship with the development of students' religious and social character.

**Table 1. Frequency Distribution of Student Character Formation Variable**

Item	1 F	1 %	2 F	2 %	3 F	3 %	4 F	4 %	5 F	5 %	Mean
Y1	0	0	0	0	4	5.3	26	34.7	45	60	4.55
Y2	1	1.3	1	1.3	21	28	35	46.7	17	22.7	3.88
Y3	0	0	1	1.3	13	17.3	37	49.3	24	32	4.12
Y4	0	0	0	0	4	5.3	25	33.3	46	61.3	4.56
Y5	0	0	1	1.3	1	1.3	40	53.3	33	44	4.40
Y6	0	0	1	1.3	2	2.7	24	32	48	64	4.59
Y7	1	1.3	1	1.3	9	12	34	45.3	30	40	4.21
Y8	0	0	1	1.3	7	9.3	35	46.7	32	42.7	4.31
Y9	2	2.7	6	8	7	9.3	32	42.7	28	37.3	4.04
Y10	2	2.7	2	2.7	11	14.7	43	57.3	17	22.7	3.95
Y11	0	0	0	0	3	4	30	40	42	56	4.52
Y12	0	0	1	1.3	11	14.7	37	49.3	26	34.7	4.17
Y13	0	0	0	0	8	10.7	39	52	28	37.3	4.27
Y14	0	0	3	4	7	9.3	28	37.3	37	49.3	4.32
Y15	0	0	1	1.3	16	21.3	29	38.7	29	38.7	4.15

*Source: Primary Data Processed, 2025*

The first fifteen indicators show that most students selected the high response categories. This pattern illustrates that inclusive IRE learning supports the emergence of responsibility, discipline, positive attitude, and social awareness. It also suggests that character formation becomes stronger when learning activities allow students to participate, reflect, and relate Islamic values to daily behavior.

The distribution further implies that inclusive pedagogy should be read as a classroom process that strengthens habits through repeated interaction. Students are exposed to practices of listening, responding, cooperating, and evaluating behavior through religious values. In this condition, character formation is not treated as an additional outcome, but as an integral part of the learning experience.

The high responses also indicate that students recognize the teacher's role in creating a supportive religious learning environment. When teachers provide opportunities for questions, respect differences in student responses, and connect the lesson with daily moral problems, students are more likely to see Islamic values as relevant to their personal and social lives.

**Table 1. Frequency Distribution of Student Character Formation Variable (Continued)**

Item	1 F	1 %	2 F	2 %	3 F	3 %	4 F	4 %	5 F	5 %	Mean
Y16	0	0	3	4	9	12	35	46.7	28	37.3	4.17
Y17	0	0	1	1.3	14	18.7	34	45.3	26	34.7	4.13
Y18	0	0	0	0	5	6.7	30	40	40	53.3	4.47
Y19	0	0	4	5.3	7	9.3	35	46.7	29	38.7	4.19
Y20	0	0	0	0	0	0	29	38.7	46	61.3	4.61
Y21	0	0	1	1.3	4	5.3	35	46.7	35	46.7	4.39
Y22	0	0	0	0	3	4	36	48	36	48	4.44
Y23	0	0	2	2.7	9	12	27	36	37	49.3	4.32
Y24	3	4	1	1.3	8	10.7	43	57.3	20	26.7	4.01
Y25	0	0	1	1.3	5	6.7	32	42.7	37	49.3	4.39
Y26	0	0	0	0	10	13.3	24	32	41	54.7	4.41
Y27	0	0	0	0	13	17.3	44	58.7	18	24	4.07
Y28	0	0	1	1.3	9	12	32	42.7	33	44	4.29
Y29	0	0	2	2.7	3	4	14	18.7	56	74.7	4.65
Y30	1	1.3	0	0	3	4	24	32	47	62.7	4.55
<b>Total</b>											<b>129.1</b>

**Mean Score of the Variable: 4.30**

*Source: Primary Data Processed, 2025*

The complete distribution shows that the character formation variable achieved a very good category. The strongest indicators show high student agreement with statements related to responsibility, discipline, and social awareness. This indicates that inclusive learning practices can strengthen values that are central to Islamic character education.

Several indicators with very high mean scores reveal that character formation becomes visible in students' behavioral readiness to obey rules, fulfill learning responsibilities, and maintain positive interaction with peers. These behaviors are essential in IRE because the subject aims to form students who not only understand religious doctrines but also live ethically in school and society.

The table also shows that some indicators scored lower than others, although still within a positive category. This suggests that inclusive character education should be continuously strengthened through classroom reflection, teacher modeling, peer collaboration, and consistent reinforcement from the school culture.

### 3. Influence of Inclusive IRE Learning Methods on Character Formation

Simple linear regression was used to determine whether inclusive pedagogical practices in IRE significantly influenced student character formation. The regression analysis produced the following results.

**Table 2. Simple Linear Regression**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
(Constant)	54.686	-	11.289	.000
IRE Method	1.165	0.176	.612	.000

The resulting regression equation is:  $Y = 54.686 + 1.165X$

**Table 3. Coefficient of Determination (R2 Test)**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of Estimate
1	.612	.375	.366	7.597

The regression results confirm that inclusive pedagogical IRE learning methods have a significant positive influence on student character formation. The coefficient of determination shows that 37.5% of character formation is explained by the inclusive IRE learning method, while 62.5% is influenced by other factors not examined in this study. This confirms that pedagogy is a meaningful contributor to character strengthening, even though family, peer interaction, school culture, and digital environment also remain influential.

The regression equation also indicates that each increase in the quality of inclusive IRE learning contributes to an increase in student character formation. Thus, the better the implementation of inclusive pedagogy, the stronger the tendency for students to demonstrate responsible, disciplined, empathetic, and socially aware behavior.

### Discussion

The findings confirm that inclusive pedagogical practices in Islamic Religious Education are effective in strengthening student character formation. The strong average scores for both teaching methods and character outcomes indicate that inclusive pedagogy successfully

extends IRE beyond cognitive instruction. It enables students to develop spiritual maturity, ethical awareness, social empathy, and disciplined behavior.

The results validate the view that Islamic Religious Education should not be limited to the transmission of religious knowledge. Instead, IRE must function as a transformative learning process in which students actively engage with Islamic values. Inclusive pedagogy creates this possibility by encouraging participation, dialogue, reflection, collaboration, and contextual application. Such practices help students understand values not as abstract concepts but as principles for everyday conduct.

The integrative nature of inclusive pedagogy aligns with the framework of value-based Islamic character education. Students learn more effectively when Islamic values are embedded in activities that are meaningful to their lives. When teachers use empathetic communication, fair treatment, reflective questioning, and cooperative tasks, students experience Islamic values directly in the classroom climate. This experience strengthens character formation because students encounter values both in the content of learning and in the way learning is conducted.

The regression finding that 37.5% of character formation is explained by inclusive IRE methods is important. It shows that pedagogical practice is not a peripheral factor in character education, but a central mechanism through which values are internalized. At the same time, the remaining 62.5% indicates that student character is also influenced by broader variables such as family involvement, peer culture, school leadership, religious habituation, and digital media exposure.

This means that the strengthening of student character through inclusive IRE should be supported by a broader educational ecosystem. Teachers need institutional support, relevant resources, and professional development. Schools need a culture that reinforces discipline, responsibility, worship, empathy, and social care. Parents also need to be involved so that values taught in the classroom are reinforced at home.

### **Educational Implications**

The findings have several implications for Islamic Religious Education teachers and schools. First, IRE teachers should design learning activities that include all students and allow them to participate meaningfully. Inclusive pedagogy requires teachers to recognize differences in student ability, background, learning pace, and emotional readiness. By doing so, IRE becomes more responsive and effective in shaping character.

Second, character formation should be assessed not only through written tests but also through observable behavior. Responsibility, discipline, honesty, empathy, and cooperation

need to be monitored through classroom participation, peer interaction, reflective assignments, and daily religious practice. This makes assessment more aligned with the holistic goals of IRE.

Third, teacher professionalism must be strengthened through training in inclusive pedagogy, social-emotional learning, and value-based instructional design. Teachers need the ability to translate Islamic values into learning experiences that are contextual, dialogical, and transformative. Professional development should therefore include strategies for differentiated instruction, reflective dialogue, project-based learning, empathy-based teaching, and ethical classroom management.

Fourth, schools need to build a culture that supports inclusive character education. School culture should reflect Islamic values through teacher modeling, respectful communication, collaborative activities, worship habituation, social service, and consistent discipline. Inclusive pedagogy will be more effective when supported by a school environment that embodies the same values.

### **Practical Framework for Inclusive IRE**

A practical framework for strengthening student character through inclusive IRE may include five stages: identifying student diversity, planning value-centered learning, implementing participatory activities, facilitating reflection, and evaluating character growth. In the first stage, teachers identify students' needs, interests, and learning conditions. In the second stage, teachers prepare materials that connect Islamic values with real-life issues. In the third stage, students are involved in discussion, role play, problem-solving, collaborative projects, or community-based tasks. In the fourth stage, teachers guide students to reflect on the meaning of values. In the final stage, teachers evaluate both cognitive understanding and character behavior.

### **Conclusion**

This study demonstrates that inclusive pedagogical practices in Islamic Religious Education significantly contribute to the strengthening of student character formation. By applying value-centered, interactive, contextual, and empathetic learning methods, teachers can foster cognitive growth, spiritual maturity, ethical awareness, and social responsibility among students. The findings show that inclusive IRE learning methods achieved a mean score of 4.26, while student character formation achieved a mean score of 4.30, categorized as very good.

The regression analysis confirms that inclusive pedagogical practices have a significant positive influence on character formation, with  $R^2 = 0.375$ . This means that 37.5% of student character development is explained by the inclusive IRE learning method. The finding reinforces the argument that pedagogy is a crucial instrument for character formation in Islamic education. Through inclusive pedagogy, students are not only taught Islamic values but are also guided to experience and practice them.

The study also indicates that character formation is a shared responsibility. Although inclusive pedagogy contributes significantly, other factors such as family environment, school culture, peer relationships, and digital media also shape students' character. Therefore, strengthening student character requires collaboration among teachers, school leaders, parents, and the wider community.

Future research may explore the longitudinal effects of inclusive pedagogy on character stability, investigate the role of parental involvement, and examine how digital learning environments support or hinder inclusive Islamic character education. Further studies may also compare inclusive pedagogical practices across different school contexts to identify best practices for strengthening student character formation in Islamic Religious Education.

### **Limitations**

This study is limited by its correlational design, which identifies influence but does not fully explain causal mechanisms. The data were collected using questionnaires, so the findings depend on students' self-reported perceptions. Future research may include classroom observation, interviews, and longitudinal tracking to provide deeper insight into how inclusive pedagogy shapes student character over time.

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