URBAN MUSLIM CHARACTER FORMATION: AN ANALYSIS OF GUS DUR'S HUMANISM AND AMIEN RAIS'S POLITICAL MORALITY

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Urban Muslim Character Formation: an Analysis of Gus Dur's Humanism and Amien Rais's Political Morality Licensed Under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License

Abstract

The formation of Muslim character in urban society faces increasingly complex moral, social, and political challenges. Previous studies have largely examined Gus Dur's humanism and Amien Rais's political thought separately, while comparative studies that connect their ideas specifically to the formation of urban Muslim character remain limited. This study aims to analyze and compare Gus Dur's humanism and Amien Rais's political morality as conceptual foundations for understanding the formation of Muslim character in contemporary urban society. This study employs a qualitative approach with a literature review method. Data were obtained from primary and secondary sources, including books, scholarly articles, speeches, and writings related to the thoughts of Gus Dur and Amien Rais. The data were analyzed through comparative analysis by identifying the central values, similarities, differences, and relevance of both perspectives to urban Muslim character formation. The findings show that Gus Dur's humanism emphasizes pluralism, tolerance, respect for diversity, and the recognition of universal human dignity, while Amien Rais's political morality emphasizes integrity, moral responsibility, critical awareness, justice, and ethical participation in public life. The comparative analysis indicates that these perspectives provide complementary dimensions of Muslim character formation: Gus Dur's humanism strengthens interpersonal and social character in a diverse urban environment, whereas Amien Rais's political morality strengthens ethical and civic character in the public sphere. This study contributes a conceptual framework that integrates humanistic and political-moral dimensions in understanding the formation of urban Muslim character.

Keywords: Urban Muslim Character; Gus Dur; Humanism; Amien Rais; Political Morality

A. Introduction

Character education constitutes an essential dimension of Islamic education because education is not limited to the transfer of knowledge but also involves the formation of personality, morality, and behavior based on Islamic values (Riani et al., 2024). Within the Indonesian education system, character education has become a priority in developing individuals who are academically competent while possessing strong moral values (Yusuf et al., 2025). From the perspective of Islamic education, this orientation emphasizes the integration of knowledge and morality so that educational processes contribute to the development of individuals who are religiously grounded and ethically responsible.

The need for character formation becomes particularly significant among Muslims living in urban environments. Urban society is characterized by pluralism, globalization, rapid social change, political contestation, and increasingly complex patterns of social interaction. These conditions influence religious expression, ethical orientation, and civic responsibility (Mujahid, 2021). Consequently, Islamic character education needs to respond to urban realities by developing Muslim identities that maintain religious commitment while demonstrating tolerance, inclusiveness, humanistic attitudes, and responsibility in social and public life (Rohman, 2022). This context requires Islamic educational thought that is not confined to normative theological discourse but is also capable of addressing social, cultural, and political realities.

In Indonesia, the development of such a framework can be examined through the intellectual traditions of prominent Muslim thinkers. Among them, Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur) and Amien Rais are particularly relevant because both represented influential Islamic intellectual traditions while actively engaging with social and political issues during the Reform era (Yusuf et al., 2024). Gus Dur emerged from the Nahdlatul Ulama tradition, while Amien Rais developed within the Muhammadiyah tradition. Their intellectual trajectories therefore provide two distinct perspectives for examining how Islamic values can be translated into social and public ethics. Gus Dur is associated with humanism, pluralism, tolerance, and respect for human dignity, whereas Amien Rais emphasized political morality, justice, integrity, and social responsibility (Zayadi, 2023).

The relevance of comparing these two figures lies not simply in their different organizational backgrounds but in the complementary dimensions of character formation represented by their ideas. Gus Dur's humanism places interpersonal relations, respect for diversity, and universal human dignity at the center of Islamic social ethics. In contrast, Amien Rais's political morality extends Islamic ethics into the public sphere by emphasizing political awareness, justice, trustworthiness, opposition to corruption, and responsibility in governance (Siregar et al., 2024). Thus, their perspectives provide different entry points for understanding Muslim character: one emphasizes humanistic and social relations, while the other emphasizes ethical participation and responsibility in public life. Comparing these perspectives makes it possible to examine Muslim character formation as encompassing both interpersonal ethics and responsibility in the wider social and political community.

Previous studies have discussed Gus Dur's humanistic thought, particularly in relation to pluralism, tolerance, and inclusive Islamic values, while other studies have examined Amien Rais's political thought in relation to political ethics, justice, and social transformation. Studies on Islamic character education have also emphasized the importance of integrating moral, religious, and social values in educational practice (Ammar et al., 2025). However, these discussions have generally treated the two

intellectual traditions separately. A comparative analysis that brings Gus Dur's humanism and Amien Rais's political morality into a shared framework of Islamic character formation, particularly in relation to the social realities of urban Muslim life, remains insufficiently developed in the literature reviewed for this study. The unresolved issue, therefore, is not merely what each figure thought about morality, but how their different ethical orientations can be conceptually compared and understood as complementary foundations for Muslim character formation in urban society.

This gap underpins the present study. Rather than presenting Gus Dur and Amien Rais primarily through their biographical and political histories, this research focuses on the substantive values underlying their respective ideas and examines their implications for Islamic character formation. The comparative perspective is important because the two thinkers developed within different Islamic intellectual traditions but operated in a similar historical context of Indonesia's Reform era, when questions of democracy, pluralism, political ethics, and the social role of Islam became increasingly prominent. Their ideas can therefore be examined not only as individual intellectual positions but also as resources for constructing a broader conceptual understanding of Muslim character in a changing urban society.

The novelty of this study lies in integrating two dimensions that are often discussed separately: Gus Dur's humanistic character orientation and Amien Rais's political-moral orientation. The study proposes that the formation of urban Muslim character can be understood through the interaction of these two dimensions. Gus Dur's humanism provides a foundation for developing tolerance, respect for diversity, social empathy, and inclusive interaction, while Amien Rais's political morality provides a foundation for integrity, justice, critical awareness, and ethical responsibility in public life. This integration offers a conceptual perspective that connects personal-social morality with civic and political morality within Islamic character education. Rather than treating the two orientations as interchangeable, this framework examines how they may complement one another in addressing different but related dimensions of Muslim character.

This perspective is particularly relevant to contemporary urban Muslim life, where religious identity interacts with diverse social groups, rapid cultural change, digital communication, and complex public debates. Islamic character education consequently requires a framework that addresses both how Muslims relate to others and how they exercise responsibility as members of society (Zainiyati et al., 2021). The humanistic and political-moral dimensions represented by Gus Dur and Amien Rais provide a basis for examining these two aspects without reducing Islamic character education to individual piety alone. Their ideas can also contribute to discussions concerning the development of Islamic education that is contextual, socially responsive, and oriented toward ethical citizenship (Saputra et al., 2021). In this way, Islamic character education can be approached as a process that connects personal moral development with participation in a pluralistic society and responsibility for the public good.

Accordingly, this study aims to analyze and compare Gus Dur's humanism and Amien Rais's political morality in relation to the formation of Muslim character in urban society. Specifically, the study examines the principal character values contained in each perspective, identifies their similarities and differences, and analyzes how the two perspectives can contribute to a conceptual framework for Islamic character education among urban Muslims. Through this approach, the research contributes to Islamic character education by connecting humanistic values with political and civic

morality, thereby expanding the discussion of Muslim character beyond individual religious conduct toward social and public responsibility.

B. Methods

This study employs a qualitative approach using a library research design to analyze and compare the thoughts of Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur) and Amien Rais regarding Muslim character formation in urban society. Library research is used because the study focuses on written works and relevant documentary sources (Haryono, 2020). An intellectual biography approach is also applied to understand the ideas of both figures within their intellectual and socio-political contexts (Jaya, 2020). These approaches enable the study to examine the ethical principles underlying their ideas and consider their implications for Islamic character education.

The data consist of primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include books, articles, speeches, interviews, and other writings by Gus Dur and Amien Rais. Secondary sources include scholarly books, journal articles, and previous studies related to humanism, political morality, Islamic character education, and urban Muslims. Secondary sources include scholarly books, journal articles, and previous studies related to the two thinkers, Islamic character education, humanism, political morality, and urban Muslim life. Sources were selected based on their relevance to the research questions, credibility, and substantive contribution to understanding the concepts under investigation. Recent scholarly publications from 2021 to 2026 were prioritized for contemporary academic discussion, while earlier publications were retained when they constituted primary sources or foundational works relevant to the study. The analysis distinguishes the thinkers' own documented ideas from interpretations advanced by secondary scholarship.

Relevant literature was identified using relevant keywords, including *"Gus Dur humanism," "Abdurrahman Wahid humanism," "Amien Rais political morality," "Amien Rais political ethics," "Islamic character education,"* and *"urban Muslim character."* Relevant sources were recorded, screened, and classified according to the research themes. Data were analyzed through content analysis by identifying, coding, and categorizing statements and ideas related to humanism, political morality, and character formation (Kuckartz & Rädiker, 2023).

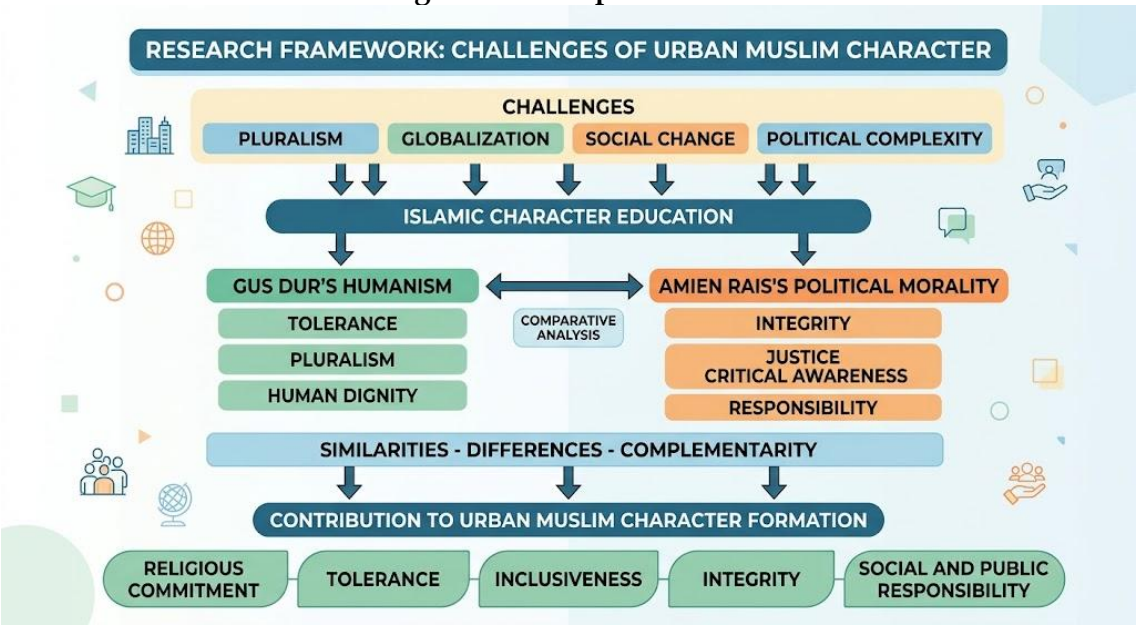
The analysis was guided by eight dimensions established in the Introduction. Gus Dur's humanism was examined through respect for human dignity, tolerance and respect for diversity, empathy and solidarity, and inclusive social relations. Amien Rais's political morality was examined through justice, integrity, accountability and opposition to corruption, and critical civic awareness. These dimensions functioned as analytical categories developed for this study; they were not assumed to be classifications explicitly formulated by either thinker. Textual passages were interpreted in relation to their surrounding arguments and socio-political contexts to avoid reducing complex ideas to isolated statements. Relevant ideas that did not fit neatly into the initial categories were also considered where they contributed to understanding the thinkers' positions.

Following content analysis, a comparative analysis was conducted to identify similarities, differences, and potential areas of complementarity between the two thinkers. The comparison used three criteria: (1) their underlying ethical principles; (2) their primary orientations, particularly human dignity and inclusive social relations in Gus Dur's thought and justice, political integrity, and public responsibility in Amien Rais's thought; and (3) the implications of their ideas for Islamic character education, including interpersonal conduct, social responsibility, and ethical citizenship. The

analysis then considered how these perspectives might inform a conceptual framework for Muslim character formation in urban society. Because the study relies on textual analysis rather than empirical research with urban Muslim communities, its conclusions concern the potential educational implications of the two thinkers' ideas, not their demonstrated effects on individuals or communities.

Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework guiding the analysis. It connects Gus Dur's humanism and Amien Rais's political morality with two related dimensions of character education: interpersonal-social ethics and civic-political ethics. The framework serves as an analytical guide for comparing the thinkers' ideas and deriving their potential implications for Islamic character education in urban society.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework



C. Findings and Discussion

1. Findings

The findings of this study were derived from a comparative analysis of written works, speeches, public interviews, and documented ideas of Abdurrahman Wahid and Amien Rais related to character education, humanism, and political ethics as they pertain to the formation of urban Muslim character (Barton, 2003). The presentation of the findings is structured according to thematic categories developed by Siregar, Alwizar, and E. Hulawa, namely: (1) philosophical foundations of thought, (2) value orientations in character education, (3) approaches to the implementation of character education, (4) the role of religion in moral formation, (5) conceptions of an ideal society, (6) contributions to contemporary Islamic education, and (7) the relevance of their ideas in the modern urban context (Siregar, et al., 2024).

Based on the results of the analysis, the ideas of Abdurrahman Wahid and Amien Rais can be understood as two complementary approaches to the development of Islamic character education aimed at shaping urban Muslims in Indonesia. The humanism and pluralism emphasized by Abdurrahman Wahid provide a value-based foundation centered on humanity, tolerance, and respect for diversity within urban society, while the political ethics articulated by Amien Rais strengthen the dimensions of moral responsibility, justice, and critical engagement with power in public life. The integration of these perspectives demonstrates that Islamic character education is not

solely oriented toward the formation of personal morality, but also toward fostering social awareness, civic responsibility, and national commitment among urban Muslim communities.

a. Philosophical Foundations of Thought

The comparative analysis identified different philosophical foundations in the thoughts of Abdurrahman Wahid and Amien Rais. In the case of Abdurrahman Wahid, the analysis of his writings identified human dignity, pluralism, tolerance, and rejection of discrimination as recurring themes. In Islamku, Islam Anda, Islam Kita, Wahid, (2000) presents religious understanding as something that can be experienced and interpreted differently, as reflected in the distinction between "Islamku," "Islam Anda," and "Islam Kita." This textual pattern indicates that Gus Dur's philosophical orientation does not place religious uniformity as the basis of social relations, but instead emphasizes recognition of differences and respect for other people's religious experiences.

This orientation is consistent with the intellectual background of Gus Dur in the pesantren and Nahdlatul Ulama tradition, which developed an adaptive relationship between Islamic teachings, local culture, and social realities (Arroisi, 2020). The analysis also identified a connection between religious understanding and concrete moral conduct. The Qur'an is presented not only as a normative source but as a guide whose values should be manifested in everyday behavior. The exemplary conduct of the Prophet Muhammad therefore becomes important because Qur'anic values are realized through moral action (Yusuf & Zainuddin, 2022). From the analyzed sources, the dominant philosophical pattern in Gus Dur's thought can consequently be summarized as Islamic values, recognition of human dignity, acceptance of diversity, humane social relations.

The analysis of Amien Rais's thought produced a different dominant pattern. His philosophical orientation is associated with rationality, reformism, tajdīd, social responsibility, and justice. His intellectual background in the Muhammadiyah tradition provides an important context for this orientation, particularly its emphasis on rational and reformist Islamic thought (Wahyunanto et al., 2021). In his conception of Islamic morality, religious commitment is not confined to individual piety but extends to social and political life. Islam is positioned as a moral foundation for addressing injustice and developing a social and political order characterized by justice, accountability, and democracy (Hasballah & Suyanta, 2025).

The comparative analysis therefore reveals a clear difference in the starting point of the two thinkers. Gus Dur's philosophical foundation emphasizes human dignity, pluralism, and the ethical management of diversity, whereas Amien Rais's foundation emphasizes the translation of Islamic values into justice, social responsibility, and ethical public life. At the same time, both share a common pattern: Islamic values are understood as principles that must be manifested in social life rather than remaining at the level of personal belief. This similarity provides the basis for comparing their respective contributions to character education in the subsequent themes.

b. Value Orientation in Character Education

The comparative analysis identified different value orientations in the thoughts of Abdurrahman Wahid and Amien Rais, although both relate Islamic values to the formation of moral character. In Abdurrahman Wahid's thought, the recurring values identified from the analyzed sources were humanity, respect for diversity, tolerance, social solidarity, and openness. These values are closely associated with the principle of rahmatan lil 'ālamīn, which positions Islamic morality in relation to peaceful

interaction with people from different religious, cultural, and social backgrounds (Hawari et al., 2023).

The analysis indicates that Gus Dur's value orientation emphasizes the quality of social relationships. Character is demonstrated through the ability to respect differences, avoid discrimination, and maintain harmonious relations within a pluralistic society. This orientation is also relevant to the broader challenges of Islamic character education, particularly the need to maintain moral values amid technological development, social change, and the increasing complexity of contemporary educational environments (Syafi'i & Yusuf, 2021). Thus, the dominant pattern identified in Gus Dur's thought can be summarized as humanity, tolerance, respect for diversity, peaceful social relations.

In Amien Rais's thought, the analysis identified moral integrity, ethics of power, justice, truth, and political responsibility as dominant values. Character is not restricted to individual piety but is connected with the responsibility to respond to social injustice, corruption, abuse of power, and unethical political practices. This orientation places moral character within the public sphere and requires individuals to maintain ethical principles when participating in social and political life (Azca et al., 2021).

The comparison reveals a common foundation as well as a difference in emphasis. Both Gus Dur and Amien Rais view Islamic character as requiring the internalization of moral values into actual social behavior. However, Gus Dur's values are primarily oriented toward humanitarian and interpersonal relations, particularly tolerance and respect for diversity, whereas Amien Rais's values are more strongly oriented toward public and civic morality, particularly integrity, justice, and responsibility in relation to power.

The findings therefore indicate that the two value orientations address different dimensions of character formation. Gus Dur emphasizes the character needed to live peacefully with others in a diverse society, while Amien Rais emphasizes the character needed to act ethically and responsibly in public life. This distinction provides a basis for the subsequent analysis of how these values are expressed through approaches to character education.

c. Approaches to the Implementation of Character Education

The comparative analysis identified different approaches to the implementation of character education in the thoughts of Abdurrahman Wahid and Amien Rais. In Gus Dur's thought, the analysis identified dialogue, social interaction, habituation, freedom of thought, and exemplary behavior as the main elements of character formation. Character education is not primarily understood as the transfer of rigid doctrines, but as a process that develops through interaction, experience, and social role modeling. This orientation indicates that moral values are expected to be internalized through everyday practice rather than imposed through coercion or indoctrination (Efendi, 2016).

The analysis also shows that Gus Dur's approach places the learner within a social environment in which differences can be encountered and discussed openly. Respect for human dignity, tolerance, and social justice therefore become values that are practiced through relationships and behavior. This is consistent with the broader conception of Islamic character education as a process of internalizing Islamic values through cognitive, attitudinal, and behavioral dimensions (S. I. Yusuf Dzulkifli Hadi, 2020). The dominant pattern identified in Gus Dur's approach can be summarized as dialogue, social interaction, habituation, exemplary behavior, internalization of character values.

In Amien Rais's thought, the analysis identified a stronger emphasis on explicit moral guidance, ethical responsibility, and the application of Islamic values to public life. Character education is viewed as a means of preparing individuals to respond appropriately to political power, social problems, and pragmatic interests. In this approach, Islamic moral principles function as normative guidelines for determining ethical behavior in social and political contexts (Agung, 2023).

The comparison indicates that both figures emphasize the transformation of moral values into actual behavior, but they differ in their preferred mode of implementation. Gus Dur emphasizes a dialogical, cultural, and social approach, in which character develops through interaction and example. Amien Rais emphasizes a more normative approach, in which explicit Islamic moral principles guide behavior in dealing with social and political realities.

The findings consequently show that the difference between the two approaches is primarily located in the process through which character is formed. Gus Dur places greater emphasis on the social experience and internalization of values, whereas Amien Rais places greater emphasis on moral guidance and the application of ethical principles to public life. These findings provide the basis for examining the different roles assigned to religion in moral formation.

d. The Role of Religion in Moral Formation

The comparative analysis identified different roles assigned to religion in the moral formation of Abdurrahman Wahid and Amien Rais. In Gus Dur's thought, religion was identified primarily as a source of moral values that should be manifested through humanitarian action. The analysis shows recurring emphasis on respect for human dignity, social relations, and the rejection of religious interpretations that encourage exclusion, radicalism, or social division. Religion is therefore positioned not merely as a set of doctrines, but as a moral orientation that shapes how individuals treat others and respond to differences (Zulfandika & Wulandari, 2024).

A recurring pattern in Gus Dur's thought is the connection between religious understanding and everyday social behavior. Religious values become meaningful when they are reflected in respect, tolerance, and recognition of the rights of others. The analysis consequently identified the pattern religion, respect for human dignity, tolerance, inclusive social behavior. This orientation also indicates that religious education should provide space for diversity of thought and freedom of conscience rather than rely solely on rigid or exclusive interpretations (Waid, 2017).

In Amien Rais's thought, the analysis identified religion as an ethical force for social and political transformation. Religious values are connected to responsibility in maintaining social order, justice, and legal integrity. Religion therefore functions not only as a source of personal morality but also as a guide for responding to problems in public life. The analysis shows a recurring relationship between religious commitment and responsibility in the exercise of social and political roles (Irsyad et al., 2025).

The dominant pattern identified in Amien Rais's approach can be summarized as religious values, moral responsibility, social justice, ethical public life. Religious education is consequently directed toward forming Muslims who understand their role as *khalīfat al-arḍ* and who are responsible for contributing to an orderly, just, and morally accountable society (Bakri & Abdullah, 2004).

The comparison indicates that both figures position religion as an important foundation of moral formation, but they emphasize different spheres of application. Gus Dur emphasizes the manifestation of religion in interpersonal relations, tolerance, and respect for human dignity, whereas Amien Rais gives greater emphasis to the

application of religious morality to social responsibility, justice, and public life. Thus, the findings show two complementary dimensions of religious moral formation: Gus Dur's emphasis on humane and inclusive social relations and Amien Rais's emphasis on ethical responsibility within broader social and political structures.

e. Views on the Ideal Societ

The comparative analysis identified different conceptions of an ideal society in the thoughts of Abdurrahman Wahid and Amien Rais. In Gus Dur's thought, the analysis identified harmony, inclusiveness, pluralism, and protection of minority rights as recurring elements of an ideal social order. An ideal society is not defined by religious or cultural uniformity, but by the ability of different groups to live together while respecting one another. This orientation places peaceful coexistence and recognition of diversity at the center of character formation (Andrianto, 2025).

The thematic pattern identified in Gus Dur's conception can be summarized as recognition of diversity, mutual respect, peaceful coexistence, inclusive society. Within this framework, character education has a social function because it prepares individuals to interact with people of different religious, cultural, and social backgrounds without developing suspicion or hostility. Thus, the findings indicate that Gus Dur connects the formation of individual character with the creation of a harmonious and multicultural social environment (Shohib, 2020).

In Amien Rais's thought, the analysis identified social justice, moral democracy, clean governance, and leadership integrity as the main elements of an ideal society. The ideal social order is therefore closely connected to the ethical use of authority and the responsibility of leaders to promote justice and prevent abuse of power. The principle of *amar ma'rūf nahi munkar* is positioned within the public sphere as a moral orientation for responding to social and political problems (Syaifudin & Syafi'i, 2025).

The dominant pattern identified in Amien Rais's conception can be summarized as moral values, responsible leadership, social justice, ethical governance. This indicates that character formation extends beyond personal piety and includes the capacity to participate responsibly in public life. Individuals are expected not only to possess moral values but also to apply them when responding to issues of justice, leadership, and social responsibility (Setiawan, 2017).

The comparison shows that both figures associate an ideal society with the actualization of Islamic moral values, but they emphasize different dimensions. Gus Dur places greater emphasis on pluralism, social harmony, and the protection of diversity, whereas Amien Rais places greater emphasis on justice, moral leadership, and ethical governance. The findings therefore indicate two interconnected dimensions of an ideal Muslim society: an inclusive social order that respects diversity and a public order characterized by justice and moral responsibility.

f. Contributions to Islamic Education

The comparative analysis identified different contributions of Abdurrahman Wahid and Amien Rais to the development of contemporary Islamic education. In Gus Dur's thought, the analysis identified a broader understanding of Islamic education that extends beyond the formation of individual religious piety. Islamic education is connected to social awareness, respect for diversity, tolerance, and the development of a peaceful social environment. Character formation therefore includes the ability of learners to understand differences and participate constructively in a pluralistic society.

The thematic pattern identified in Gus Dur's contribution can be summarized as

Islamic learning, humanistic values, social awareness, tolerance, peaceful coexistence. This indicates that Islamic education is not limited to the transmission of religious knowledge, but also functions as a means of developing social attitudes and responsible relationships with others. Such an orientation is consistent with the view that character-based Islamic education should integrate religious values with the social realities experienced by learners (Abdurrohman & Syamsiar, 2017).

In Amien Rais's thought, the analysis identified a stronger contribution in connecting Islamic education with political and public ethics. Islamic education is expected to form individuals who are not only personally religious but also possess moral courage and social responsibility. The findings indicate that religious knowledge should provide an ethical foundation for responding to issues of justice, power, leadership, and public responsibility.

The dominant pattern identified in Amien Rais's contribution can be summarized as Islamic learning, moral integrity, social responsibility, ethical participation in public life. This orientation expands the function of Islamic education from personal character formation toward preparation for responsible participation in social and political life (Wargiani et al., 2023).

The comparison shows that both figures contribute to an understanding of Islamic education that goes beyond cognitive mastery of religious knowledge. Gus Dur emphasizes the formation of socially sensitive, tolerant, and peace-oriented individuals, whereas Amien Rais emphasizes moral integrity, responsibility, and ethical courage in public life. The findings consequently identify two complementary contributions to contemporary Islamic education: the development of humanistic and inclusive social character and the development of morally responsible participation in society.

g. Shaping Urban Muslims with Character: Integrating Humanism and Political Morality

The comparative analysis identified several conditions that make the thoughts of Abdurrahman Wahid and Amien Rais relevant to contemporary urban Muslim life, particularly religious and social pluralism, political contestation, social fragmentation, and moral challenges in public interaction. These conditions require character formation that is able to connect religious commitment with responsible social behavior. The findings indicate that the relevance of the two figures lies in their different but complementary responses to these challenges (Karimullah & Mahbubi, 2023).

In Gus Dur's thought, the analysis identified inclusiveness, tolerance, respect for diversity, and social dialogue as the main values relevant to urban communities. Urban social environments bring individuals from different religious, cultural, ethnic, and social backgrounds into frequent interaction. Gus Dur's emphasis on accepting differences and maintaining social relationships therefore provides a character orientation for preventing intolerance and religious exclusivism. The thematic pattern identified is diversity, dialogue, tolerance, inclusive social relations (Haq, 2025).

In Amien Rais's thought, the analysis identified integrity, justice, moral courage, and public responsibility as the dominant values relevant to urban social and political life. Urban communities are not only characterized by cultural diversity but also by complex relations involving institutions, political interests, and public authority. In this context, character formation requires individuals to critically respond to the exercise of power, reject corruption and abuse of authority, and maintain democratic values. The pattern identified is public challenges, moral awareness, ethical responsibility,

responsible civic participation (Al-Kassimi et al., 2025).

The comparison indicates that Gus Dur and Amien Rais address different dimensions of the urban Muslim context. Gus Dur's contribution is more closely associated with managing social and religious diversity through tolerance, dialogue, and inclusive interaction, while Amien Rais's contribution is more closely associated with responding to public issues through integrity, justice, and moral responsibility. The findings therefore suggest that urban Muslim character formation requires both interpersonal-social and public-ethical dimensions.

The synthesis of these findings produces a complementary framework in which religious commitment is expressed through respect for diversity, social sensitivity, ethical participation, and responsibility toward the wider community. In this sense, Gus Dur's humanistic orientation and Amien Rais's emphasis on public morality can be read as two analytical dimensions for understanding character formation among Muslims living in increasingly plural and socially complex urban environments.

h. Relevance of Their Thought in the Modern Era

The comparative analysis identified several contemporary issues that strengthen the relevance of the thoughts of Abdurrahman Wahid and Amien Rais for Muslim character formation. The issues identified include intolerance, political polarization, religious radicalism, and ethical problems in public leadership. These conditions demonstrate that character formation requires not only personal religious commitment but also the ability to interact responsibly with others and respond ethically to social realities (Arroisi, 2020).

In Gus Dur's thought, the analysis identified peace, tolerance, pluralism, and civil society as the main responses to contemporary social challenges. His orientation emphasizes the importance of maintaining social relations across differences and preventing religious understanding from becoming a source of exclusion or conflict. The thematic pattern identified is religious commitment, recognition of diversity, tolerance, peaceful social relations.

In Amien Rais's thought, the analysis identified ethical responsibility, democratic values, and moral conduct in public life as important responses to contemporary challenges. His orientation connects religious morality with the responsibility to address problems involving power, justice, and public leadership. The thematic pattern identified is religious morality, ethical responsibility, justice, responsible public participation.

The comparison indicates that the two perspectives provide different emphases in character formation. Gus Dur's thought primarily addresses the challenge of social and religious diversity through humanistic and inclusive values, while Amien Rais's thought addresses the ethical dimensions of public and political life. These findings indicate that the two orientations can be examined as complementary dimensions rather than as identical approaches (Azkia et al., 2026).

The overall synthesis of the findings shows that contemporary Islamic character education requires an integration of interpersonal, social, and public dimensions. The humanistic orientation identified in Gus Dur's thought emphasizes respect for human dignity, tolerance, and peaceful coexistence, while the public-ethical orientation identified in Amien Rais's thought emphasizes integrity, justice, responsibility, and ethical participation. In the context of urban Muslim communities, these findings provide an analytical basis for understanding character formation as the integration of religious commitment, social sensitivity, and public moral responsibility.

Thus, the findings of this study confirm that although the thoughts of

Abdurrahman Wahid and Amien Rais have different orientations, they complement each other as models of Islamic character education relevant to the character development of urban Muslims in Indonesia. Gus Dur offers a foundation of humanistic and pluralistic values, while Amien Rais emphasizes public morality and political responsibility. The integration of these two perspectives has the potential to produce a comprehensive model of Islamic character education in shaping urban Muslims who are tolerant, democratic, morally integrated, and socially and politically responsible.

2. Discussion

This study focuses on a comparative analysis of the thoughts of Abdurrahman Wahid and Amien Rais regarding character education from an Islamic perspective, emphasizing its relevance to shaping the character of urban Muslims in Indonesia. The findings indicate that, despite their differing organizational backgrounds, scholarly traditions, and socio-political orientations, both figures share the view that character education is a strategic element in building the Muslim community and strengthening Indonesian national life. The differing approaches they propose do not lead to conflict; instead, they open a space for constructive intellectual dialectic. This dialectic contributes to the development of an Islamic character education model that is contextual and relevant to the realities of Indonesia's pluralistic, democratic, and dynamic society particularly in addressing the complexities of urban life.(Aditya, 2025).

a. Abdurrahman Wahid's Islamic Humanism in Character Educatio

Previous studies emphasize that Abdurrahman Wahid's Islamic humanism places tolerance, respect for human rights, and peaceful coexistence at the center of character education (Ammar et al., 2025). The present findings extend this perspective by showing that these values are developed through dialogue, social interaction, exemplary behavior, and freedom of thought rather than rigid instruction. Its strength lies in addressing religious and cultural diversity, particularly in urban Muslim communities. However, humanistic openness may provide limited normative direction when learners confront corruption, injustice, or abuse of power. Therefore, Gus Dur's perspective is particularly important for inclusive social relations but requires complementary public-ethical guidance.

b. Political Morality in Amien Rais's Perspective on Character Education

Previous research associates Amien Rais's thought with integrity, honesty, moral courage, and *amar ma'rūf nahi munkar* in public life (Husnaini, et al., 2024). The present findings show that this orientation strengthens the normative dimension of character education by preparing learners to evaluate corruption, injustice, and misuse of authority. Its strength is clear moral direction; however, if applied rigidly, normative guidance may reduce dialogue and openness toward differing perspectives. Thus, Amien Rais's approach is particularly relevant to public ethics but benefits from a humanistic and dialogical orientation.

c. Points of Convergence and Intellectual Dialectic

The findings confirm the distinction between Gus Dur's cultural-humanistic orientation and Amien Rais's normative-political orientation (Maimunah, 2022). Nevertheless, both connect religious commitment with social responsibility. Their main difference concerns the starting point of moral formation: Gus Dur emphasizes how Muslims relate to diverse others, whereas Amien Rais emphasizes how Muslims act

within public structures. The conceptual tension lies between openness and normative judgment. Integration is therefore possible when dialogue and respect for diversity are combined with clear ethical standards for evaluating injustice and abuse of power.

d. Implications for the Islamic Education System in Indonesia

The findings suggest that integration should be implemented through complementary pedagogical stages: understanding differences, engaging in dialogue, evaluating social issues through Islamic ethical principles, and practicing responsible action. This approach moves character education beyond personal piety toward social and civic responsibility, consistent with the broader orientation of contemporary Islamic education (Agustini & Sofa, 2025). In practice, classroom discussions, case analysis, reflection, and community activities can connect Gus Dur's humanistic values with Amien Rais's emphasis on integrity and public ethics.

e. Shaping Urban Muslims with Character: Integrating Islamic Humanism and Political Morality

The urban Muslim context requires character formation that responds not only to religious commitment but also to social diversity and public responsibility. Ibrahim (2022) highlights the importance of developing Muslim character within changing urban social conditions, while Haron et al. (2020) emphasize the role of Islamic values in addressing contemporary social challenges. Based on the comparative analysis in this study, Gus Dur's humanism contributes values of tolerance, dialogue, inclusivity, and respect for diversity, whereas Amien Rais's political morality contributes integrity, justice, responsibility, and ethical participation in public life. The integration of these dimensions provides a conceptual framework that connects interpersonal tolerance with responsible social and civic conduct. However, this synthesis remains a conceptual proposition and requires empirical testing to determine its applicability and effectiveness in different urban Islamic educational settings.

D. Conclusion

This study concludes that Gus Dur's humanism and Amien Rais's political morality offer two complementary perspectives on Islamic character formation. Gus Dur's thought emphasizes human dignity, tolerance, empathy, inclusivity, and respect for diversity, whereas Amien Rais's thought highlights justice, integrity, accountability, and ethical responsibility in public life. Bringing these perspectives together provides a conceptual framework that connects interpersonal and social ethics with civic and political responsibility. In the context of urban Muslim life, this framework broadens the understanding of Islamic character education beyond individual piety to include respectful social relationships, social solidarity, and responsible participation in public life. However, the proposed framework remains conceptual, as this study examines the two thinkers' ideas through textual analysis rather than empirically evaluating their educational application or outcomes. Future research should therefore examine how these dimensions can be translated into educational practices and assess their relevance and effectiveness across diverse urban Muslim communities

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F. Author Contributions Statement

This research was collaboratively conceptualized and designed by Rizky Firnanda and Syaifulloh Yusuf. Rizky Firnanda was primarily responsible for data collection and the preparation of the initial manuscript draft. Syaifulloh Yusuf led the analytical process, including data analysis and interpretation of the findings. Both authors were actively involved in developing the theoretical framework, conducting comparative analysis, and discussing the research results. The final manuscript was prepared jointly, with both authors contributing to revisions and editing to ensure academic rigor and coherence.

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