

Women's Islamic education in Kartini's and Rahma El Yunusiah's thought: A comparative analysis

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Abstract:

Although Islam accords women a dignified position, unequal access to education, gender discrimination, and limited opportunities for women's empowerment remain persistent challenges, highlighting the need to strengthen the paradigm of Islamic education. This study comparatively examines the educational thought of Raden Ajeng Kartini and Rahma El Yunusiah on Islamic education for women to formulate a model for developing Islamic education in Indonesia. This study employed a qualitative, descriptive-analytical design based on library research. Data were collected from primary and secondary documents through documentary analysis and examined using content analysis, reflexive thematic analysis, and qualitative comparative analysis. Trustworthiness was ensured through source triangulation, peer debriefing, and repeated document review. The findings indicate that both Kartini and Rahma El Yunusiah regarded education as the primary instrument for women's empowerment, but adopted different strategies. Kartini emphasized the transformation of consciousness through social critique, moral education, and spirituality, whereas Rahma El Yunusiah implemented this vision through Islamic educational institutions focused on strengthening religious faith, moral character, leadership, and the development of female educators. Despite these differences, both pursued the common objective of enhancing women's dignity, capacities, and social participation. The study concludes that their educational thought represents two complementary empowerment strategies, conceptual and institutional transformation, that together form an inclusive, character-based, and gender-equitable paradigm of Islamic education. It contributes to the literature by proposing an integrative model of women's empowerment and by providing a conceptual framework for developing policies, curricula, and educational practices that promote inclusivity, character formation, and gender justice.

Keywords:

Women's Islamic Education; Islamic Educational Thought; Kartini; Rahma El Yunusiah.



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INTRODUCTION

Women's education constitutes a fundamental foundation for the development of families, societies, and civilization. Although women's access to education in Indonesia has continued to improve, several challenges still hinder its optimization. The persistent prevalence of early marriage, the relatively low educational attainment of women in certain regions, and the increasing incidence of sexual violence indicate that the problems extend beyond educational access to include limited public awareness of the importance of women's education (Rahmayani, 2021; Valentina, 2022). These conditions underscore the need to strengthen an Islamic educational paradigm that is oriented not only towards formal educational institutions but also towards the family as the primary and foundational site of education (Al-Hawary et al., 2023; Sabic-El-Rayess, 2020). Within this context, the educational thought of Raden Ajeng Kartini and Rahma El Yunusiah offers complementary conceptual foundations. Kartini regarded education as an instrument for women's emancipation, whereas Rahma El Yunusiah integrated Islamic education, moral development, and women's empowerment within a systematic educational framework. Therefore, a comparative examination of their intellectual contributions is essential for advancing an inclusive, gender-equitable, and contextually relevant model of Islamic education in Indonesia.

Based on a review of previous studies, scholarship on women's education can be classified into three major strands. The first strand examines R.A. Kartini's thought as a pioneer of women's emancipation through education, with particular emphasis on equal access and social transformation (Muthoifin et al., 2017; Pratiwi & Hudaidah, 2021; Putri & Hudaidah, 2021). The second strand focuses on Rahma El Yunusiah as a reformer of Islamic education for women through the establishment of Diniyah Puteri, curriculum modernisation, and the cultivation of Muslim women's character (Abdullah, 2017; Rodin & Huda, 2020; Yusutria et al., 2021). The third strand compares prominent figures in women's education by highlighting both similarities in their educational visions and differences in their approaches, shaped by distinct social, cultural, and religious contexts (Najmi & Ofianto, 2016; Maulid, 2022). However, most existing studies have examined the two figures separately or have been limited to descriptive comparisons. This study therefore offers a novel contribution by employing a thematic analysis of primary-source documents to reconstruct and compare their educational thought and to examine its implications for the development of Islamic education in Indonesia.

Building on the argument that the educational thought of Raden Ajeng Kartini and Rahma El Yunusiah represents two complementary paradigms of Islamic education for women, an emancipatory paradigm and an institutional paradigm, this study contends that a synthesis of these paradigms can provide a foundation for developing women's education that promotes gender justice while simultaneously emphasizing character formation. Both figures shared the common objective of empowering women through education, yet they developed distinct strategies in response to the social, cultural, and religious contexts of their respective periods. To examine this argument, the study employs reflexive thematic analysis of primary and secondary documents, followed by comparative analysis to identify the similarities, differences, and implications of their educational thought for the development of Islamic education in Indonesia.

Building on the preceding argument, this study aims to comparatively analyze the educational thought of Raden Ajeng Kartini and Rahma El Yunusiah concerning Islamic education for women and to construct a model of women's education relevant to the development of Islamic education in Indonesia by identifying the similarities, differences, and empowerment strategies reflected in their respective perspectives. The study addresses three

principal research questions: (1) How did Raden Ajeng Kartini conceptualise Islamic education for women? (2) How did Rahma El Yunusiah conceptualise Islamic education for women? and (3) What are the similarities, differences, and implications of comparing their educational thought for the development of Islamic education in Indonesia? Theoretically, this study proposes a comparative framework for Islamic education for women that integrates gender equality, spirituality, character education, and women's leadership into a coherent conceptual model. Practically, the findings are expected to inform the development of policies, curricula, and educational practices that are more inclusive, gender-responsive, and oriented towards women's empowerment.

METHOD

Research Approach

This study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive-analytical design grounded in an interpretivist paradigm (Wiesner, 2022). This approach was selected because the study seeks to develop an in-depth understanding of the meanings, values, and conceptual constructions underlying the educational thought on women developed by Raden Ajeng Kartini and Rahma El Yunusiah, as reflected in historical documents and relevant supporting literature. The study adopts a library research design, in which all data are derived from relevant written sources without direct field intervention (Nahotko et al., 2023). This approach enables a comprehensive examination of the educational ideas of both figures by analyzing available historical documents and scholarly studies.

Data Sources and Data Collection

The data sources comprised both primary and secondary materials. The primary sources included Raden Ajeng Kartini's collected letters published in *Door Duisternis tot Licht (Habis Gelap Terbitlah Terang)* and historical documents concerning the establishment and development of Diniyah Puteri by Rahma El Yunusiah. The secondary sources consisted of scholarly books on women's emancipation, biographies of Indonesian Muslim women, literature on Islamic education for women, peer-reviewed journal articles, and policy documents, including Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System. The sources were purposively selected based on their relevance, credibility, and alignment with the research focus (Bergman, 2012). Data was collected through documentary analysis involving the systematic identification, selection, inventory, and categorization of relevant documents. Subsequently, units of meaning relating to women's education, morality, spirituality, Islamic creed, social roles, and gender injustice were identified. The accuracy and credibility of the interpretations were strengthened through cross-verification across multiple sources.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted through three integrated stages. First, Krippendorff's (2019) content analysis was employed to identify and organize the data by determining the units of analysis, selecting relevant materials, coding, reducing, and interpreting the data. The data were subsequently classified into the following conceptual categories: gender injustice, character education, Islamic creed, spirituality, family roles, and women's empowerment. Second, the coded data were examined using Braun and Clarke's (2006) reflexive thematic analysis, which involved identifying patterns of meaning, developing categories, reviewing themes, defining themes, and interpreting themes. This process generated five major themes regarding Kartini's educational thought and five regarding Rahma El Yunusiah's perspectives on Islamic education for women. Third, a qualitative comparative analysis adapted from the principles developed by Charles C. Ragin was employed to compare the two figures in terms

of their sociocultural contexts, intellectual orientations, educational strategies, and contributions to Islamic education in Indonesia. This comparative stage was intended to identify the similarities, differences, and complementary relationships between their educational perspectives (Mendel & Korjani, 2012).

Trustworthiness

Data trustworthiness was ensured through source triangulation by comparing information across multiple documents and scholarly sources to establish interpretive consistency (Natow, 2020). In addition, peer debriefing was conducted through critical discussions with colleagues possessing expertise in the history of Islamic education and educational thought (Figg et al., 2009). The researchers also undertook repeated reviews of the documents to ensure data completeness and maintain consistency throughout the interpretive process. Through these procedures, the study sought to produce findings characterized by credibility and confirmability while making a meaningful academic contribution to scholarship on Islamic education for women.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Raden Ajeng Kartini's perspective on Islamic education for women

An analysis of the primary documents, consisting of Raden Ajeng Kartini's letters, using reflexive thematic analysis generated five major themes concerning her conceptualization of Islamic education for women. Relevant scholarly literature was used as a supporting source to strengthen the interpretation of the identified themes.

Table 1

Content Analysis of R.A. Kartini's Thought on Islamic Education for Women

Main Theme	Initial Codes	Thematic Interpretation	Representative Evidence	Supporting References
Theme 1. Education as Women's Liberation from Gender Inequality	Gender discrimination, feudal culture, female seclusion, limited educational access	Education is viewed as a means of liberating women from restrictive social structures and promoting equality.	Kartini's letters criticise female seclusion and unequal educational opportunities.	Ulum (2015); Nurcahyo (2016); Setiawati & Lessy (2022)
Theme 2. Moral Education as the Foundation of Women's Character	Moral education, virtue, social responsibility, character	Women's education should integrate intellectual development with moral and character formation.	Kartini emphasises virtue and social responsibility as educational goals.	Sutrisno (2014)
Theme 3. Spirituality and Faith as the Basis of Women's Education	Faith, religious values, inner peace, relationship with God	Spiritual development is an essential component of women's education and personal growth.	Kartini's writings highlight faith and inner education as foundations of character.	Sutrisno (2014)
Theme 4. Women as Family Educators and Builders of Civilization	Motherhood, child education, family education, female teachers	Women are positioned as primary educators shaping future generations and society.	Kartini portrays mothers as the first educators of children's moral and intellectual development.	Sutrisno (2014)
Theme 5. Contemporary Relevance of	Educational equality, Islamic character	Kartini's ideas remain relevant for promoting equitable,	Her educational vision aligns with national education	Mulia (2022); National Education

Kartini's Educational Thought	education, women's empowerment	character-based, and empowering Islamic education.	goals and Islamic education principles.	System Act No. 20/2003
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Source: Authors' analysis (2023).

The first theme, education as a means of liberating women from gender injustice, was constructed from codes relating to gender discrimination, feudal culture, experiences of seclusion, and limited access to education. An analysis of Kartini's letters demonstrates that the practices of seclusion and restrictions on women's education reflected women's subordination within Javanese society's feudal social structure. For Kartini, education constituted an instrument of liberation through which women could attain independence, enhance their dignity, and participate in society on an equal basis (Ulum, 2015; Nurcahyo, 2016; Setiawati & Lessy, 2022).

The second theme, moral education as the foundation of women's character development, was derived from codes concerning moral education, ethical conduct, social responsibility, and character formation. Kartini viewed education as being concerned not merely with intellectual development but also with the cultivation of morality, social awareness, and virtuous character. This perspective is consistent with the principles of Islamic education, which position *akhlāq al-karīmah*, or noble character, as one of its principal educational objectives (Sutrisno, 2014).

The third theme, spirituality and faith as the foundations of women's education, was developed from codes relating to faith, religious values, inner tranquility, and the relationship between human beings and God. Education was understood not only as a means of intellectual development but also as a process of cultivating spirituality, which provides the foundation for the formation of strong and dignified female personalities (Sutrisno, 2014).

The fourth theme, women as agents of family education and civilizational development, was constructed from codes concerning maternal roles, children's education, the family as an educational environment, and women's roles as teachers. Kartini positioned women as the first educators responsible for shaping the morality, character, and intellectual development of future generations. Consequently, women's education has strategic implications for the quality of family life and the advancement of society and civilization (Sutrisno, 2014).

The fifth theme, the relevance of Kartini's thought to contemporary Islamic education, was derived from codes concerning educational equality, Islamic character education, and women's empowerment. Kartini's ideas remain relevant to contemporary education through expanded access to education for women, strengthened character education, the cultivation of spirituality, and the empowerment of women. These principles are consistent with the objectives of Indonesia's national education system and the foundational principles of Islamic religious education in Indonesia (Mulia, 2022).

Rahma El Yunusiah's perspective on Islamic education for women

A thematic analysis of various primary documents on Rahma El Yunusiah's educational thought, supported by relevant secondary literature, identified five major themes that represent her conceptualization of Islamic education for women. These themes comprise: (1) equal access to education as the foundation of women's empowerment; (2) education in Islamic creed as the basis for the formation of Muslim women; (3) moral education as a means of developing women's character and leadership; (4) women as family educators and agents of social transformation; and (5) the relevance of Rahma El Yunusiah's thought to the development of Islamic education in Indonesia.

Table 2*Content Analysis of Rahma El Yunusiah's Thought on Islamic Education for Women*

Main Theme	Initial Codes	Thematic Interpretation	Representative Evidence	Supporting References
Theme 1. Equal Access to Education as the Basis of Women's Empowerment	Educational opportunities, limited access, critique of co-education, women's schools	Women's empowerment begins with Islamic education that develops women's intellectual, spiritual, and social capacities.	Rahma's experience at Diniyah School and the establishment of Diniyah Putri as a women's educational institution.	Subadio (1994); Sukri et al. (2009)
Theme 2. Islamic Faith Education as the Foundation of Muslim Women's Formation	Faith, worship, devotion to Allah, Qur'an and Hadith	Women's education aims to develop faithful, pious, and socially responsible Muslim personalities.	Diniyah Putri's educational vision placing faith as the foundation of learning.	Burhanuddin (2002)
Theme 3. Moral Education as the Foundation of Women's Character and Leadership	Morality, role models, resilience, social responsibility	Moral education shapes women who are ethical, independent, resilient, and capable of leadership.	Rahma's exemplary struggle and leadership in developing Diniyah Putri.	Burhanuddin (2002)
Theme 4. Women as Family Educators and Agents of Social Transformation	Motherhood, family education, women cadres, social leadership	Women are positioned as primary educators and agents of social change through Islamic knowledge and educational leadership.	The establishment of Kulliyatul Mu'allimat Islamiyah (KMI) and boarding education to prepare female educators and leaders.	Sukri et al. (2009); Burhanuddin (2002)
Theme 5. Contemporary Relevance of Rahma El Yunusiah's Educational Thought	Inclusive education, gender equality, Islamic education, women's empowerment	Rahma's ideas remain relevant through strengthening faith, morality, educational access, and women's leadership development.	Alignment of Rahma's educational values with national education goals and contemporary Islamic education development.	Directorate General of Islamic Education, Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia (2006)

Source: Authors' analysis (2023).

The first theme, equal access to education as the foundation of women's empowerment, was constructed from codes relating to educational opportunities, women's limited access to education, criticism of an educational system that had not adequately accommodated women's needs, and the establishment of women-only schools. Rahma regarded limited access to religious education as a fundamental cause of inequality in women's social roles. Her educational experience at Diniyah School inspired the establishment of Diniyah Puteri as an institution providing comprehensive Islamic education for women. These findings affirm that equitable access to education constituted a central foundation of women's empowerment in Rahma El Yunusiah's educational thought (Subadio, 1994; Sukri et al., 2009).

The second theme, education in Islamic creed as the foundation of Muslim women's development, was derived from codes concerning faith, worship, devotion to Allah, and the Qur'an and Hadith as the foundations of education. Women's education was directed not only towards the acquisition of knowledge but also towards the formation of individuals who possessed faith and piety and regarded all aspects of life as acts of worship. The educational vision of Diniyah Puteri positioned Islamic creed as the foundation for developing Muslim women who were personally responsible and capable of contributing meaningfully to both family and society (Burhanuddin, 2002).

The third theme, moral education as a means of developing women's character and leadership, was constructed from codes relating to morality, exemplary conduct, resilience, social responsibility, and women's leadership. Rahma viewed women's education as extending beyond the acquisition of religious knowledge to include the development of integrity, independence, and resilience. Her exemplary leadership in establishing and developing Diniyah Puteri embodied the moral values that she sought to promote through education (Burhanuddin, 2002).

The fourth theme, women as family educators and agents of social transformation, was derived from codes concerning maternal roles, family education, the preparation of female teachers, and social leadership. Rahma positioned women as both the primary educators within the family and agents of social change through Islamic education. The establishment of *Kulliyatul Mu'allimat Islamiyah* (KMI) as a residential educational institution reflected her efforts to prepare women to become teachers, leaders, and drivers of social transformation. Women's education, therefore, assumed a strategic role in the development of families, communities, and the nation (Sukri et al., 2009; Burhanuddin, 2002).

The fifth theme, the relevance of Rahma El Yunusiah's thought to contemporary Islamic education, was constructed from codes relating to inclusive education, gender equality, Islamic education, and women's empowerment. Her educational thought remains relevant through its emphasis on strengthening Islamic creed and morality, expanding women's access to education, and developing women's leadership. Her educational model integrates spiritual, moral, intellectual, and social dimensions in ways consistent with the development of character education and the improvement of human resource quality within Islamic education in Indonesia (Directorate General of Islamic Education, Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2006).

Comparative perspectives on women's education: Kartini and Rahma El Yunusiah

The configuration-based comparative analysis shows that both Kartini and Rahma El Yunusiah viewed education as a means of women's empowerment. However, their different social, cultural, and religious contexts shaped distinct strategies. Kartini advocated educational access and gender equality through critiques of feudal culture, while Rahma El Yunusiah realized these ideals by establishing Islamic educational institutions for women. Despite these differences, both shared the common goal of advancing women's capacities and social status through education.

Table 3

A Comparison of Kartini's and Rahma El Yunusiah's Perspectives on Women's Education

Comparative Theme	Formative Conditions	Educational Strategies	Key Outcomes/Findings	Supporting Evidence
Theme 1. Shared Vision of Education as	Unequal educational access, the need to enhance	Kartini advocated women's educational rights through social	Both viewed education as a means to improve women's quality of life, dignity, and social roles	Kartini promoted women's education through writings; Rahma

Women's Empowerment	women's dignity, and awareness of education's importance	critique, while Rahma established Diniyah Putri as a women's educational institution		institutionalised women's education through Diniyah Putri
Theme 2. Different Backgrounds and Foundations of Educational Thought	Kartini's Javanese feudal aristocratic context versus Rahma's Minangkabau Islamic scholarly tradition	Kartini challenged social and cultural barriers, while Rahma developed Islamic-based educational ideas	Different socio-cultural contexts shaped distinct educational orientations	Kartini was the daughter of Jepara's regent, whereas Rahma was the daughter of a Minangkabau ulama; Islamic education in Minangkabau was more developed than in Java at that time
Theme 3. Different Orientations and Models of Women's Education	Diverse social needs and educational contexts of women	Kartini emphasised character, nationalism, and gender equality through writings, while Rahma developed Islamic education based on faith, morality, and women's leadership training through Diniyah Putri	Kartini represented a conceptual transformation approach, whereas Rahma demonstrated an institutional empowerment approach	Kartini articulated ideas through letters; Rahma implemented ideas through the establishment and development of Diniyah Putri
Theme 4. Relevance to Islamic Education in Indonesia	The need for character-based, spiritual, gender-equitable, and empowering education	Both positioned women as educational subjects and agents of social change	Their ideas remain relevant for developing inclusive, gender-equitable, and character-oriented Islamic education	Their educational values align with national and Islamic education principles that promote equal learning opportunities without gender discrimination

Source: Authors' analysis (2023).

The first theme indicates that the principal configuration linking Kartini's and Rahma El Yunusiah's educational thought lies in their shared view of education as the foundation of women's empowerment. Both figures regarded limited access to education as a major constraint on women's development. However, they adopted different strategies. Kartini focused on transforming social consciousness by criticizing cultural practices that restricted women, whereas Rahma developed an institutional solution by establishing Diniyah Puteri. This finding demonstrates that education is a fundamental condition that enables women to enhance their intellectual, moral, and social capacities.

The second theme demonstrates that differences in historical circumstances shaped the educational orientations of the two figures. Kartini grew up in the Javanese aristocratic milieu, strongly influenced by feudal culture; consequently, her thought focused on challenging educational discrimination and advocating for women's equality. By contrast, Rahma was raised in a Minangkabau family of Islamic scholars with a strong tradition of Islamic education,

and her educational thought was therefore grounded in the Qur'an and Hadith. This configuration of conditions indicates that social and cultural contexts played a significant role in shaping each figure's educational orientation.

The third theme reveals differences in their strategies for implementing women's education. Kartini developed a conceptual approach through her ideas concerning character education, nationalism, and women's equality, as articulated in her letters. Rahma, meanwhile, adopted an institutional approach through the Islamic educational system of *Diniyah Puteri*, which integrated education in Islamic creed, moral formation, and the development of women's leadership. This difference demonstrates that women's empowerment may be pursued through both intellectual transformation and the establishment of educational institutions.

The fourth theme indicates that Kartini's and Rahma's educational thought produced convergent outcomes within the Indonesian educational context, particularly in strengthening character, spirituality, equal access to education, and women's empowerment. Although their ideas emerged from different configurations of conditions and strategies, both figures made significant conceptual contributions to the development of inclusive and gender-equitable Islamic education. Their perspectives are therefore complementary foundations for constructing a model of women's education oriented not only towards knowledge acquisition but also towards character formation and the strengthening of women's social roles.

Discussion

The findings demonstrate that Kartini and Rahma El Yunusiah shared the view that education constitutes a principal instrument of women's empowerment, although they pursued this objective through different strategies. Kartini criticized the Javanese feudal system for restricting women's access to education and emphasized moral education, spirituality, and women's roles as primary educators within the family. By contrast, Rahma translated her educational vision into institutional practice through the establishment of *Diniyah Puteri* and *Kulliyatul Mu'allimat Islamiyah* (KMI), which focused on strengthening Islamic faith, cultivating moral character, developing leadership, and preparing women to become educators. The principal difference between the two figures lies in their implementation strategies. Kartini adopted a conceptual approach based on social criticism and the transformation of public consciousness, whereas Rahma employed an institutional approach through the development of Islamic educational institutions specifically designed for women. Their distinct sociocultural backgrounds shaped different educational orientations but ultimately led to the same objective: enhancing women's dignity, capacities, and social roles. Accordingly, their educational thought remains relevant as a foundation for developing an inclusive, gender-equitable Islamic education oriented towards women's character formation.

The findings of this study are closely related to contemporary social realities, particularly as Indonesia confronts multidimensional challenges, including the prevalence of sexual violence, bullying, and moral decline among younger generations, which are frequently associated with weakened spiritual and character-based safeguards (Salakory, 2021). Kartini had already cautioned that civilization and intellectual advancement do not necessarily ensure civility when moral education is neglected (Ima et al., 2020; Muthoifin et al., 2017). At the same time, persistent social prejudices that restrict women's participation in the public sphere, as identified by Gurieva et al. (2022), render Rahma's emphasis on equal educational access and the systematic development of women's leadership particularly relevant to addressing structural discrimination. Furthermore, the threats posed by radicalism and

intolerant ideologies necessitate the comprehensive strengthening of Islamic faith, as practiced at Diniyah Puteri (Burhanuddin, 2002). Their shared commitment to equal educational rights without discrimination is also consistent with the mandate of Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System, thereby providing a moral foundation for inclusive educational policies in the era of digital disruption.

Theoretically, the findings reinforce the intellectual framework of Islamic feminism, which promotes social transformation towards gender justice grounded in Islamic teachings (Mulia, 2022). The findings indicate that Kartini's thought may be interpreted as a critique of feudal structures that restricted women's access to education, while simultaneously positioning education as a means of cultivating moral character, strengthening faith, and empowering women (Purwaningsih et al., 2018). Rahma El Yunusiah, meanwhile, demonstrated that women's empowerment could be realized through the establishment of Islamic educational institutions grounded in the Qur'an and Hadith, with the aim of developing women who possessed strong faith and character and were capable of serving as educators within both the family and society (Adib, 2022; Isnaini, 2016). Thus, the two figures converge in their conviction that education should not be oriented solely to the acquisition of knowledge but should also integrate intellectual, spiritual, and moral dimensions as the foundation for the development of empowered women.

A fundamental insight derived from this study is that genuine social transformation does not necessarily begin with large-scale movements; rather, it may emerge from individual critical consciousness and sustained commitment in confronting adversity. Kartini demonstrated that the physical restrictions imposed by seclusion did not prevent her ideas from circulating widely through writing. Her experience also illustrates that engagement with foreign cultures does not necessarily result in the erosion of Islamic identity (Hartutik, 2018; Putri & Nurhajati, 2020). Rahma, meanwhile, exemplified perseverance: opposition from customary leaders and even from other women did not deter her from establishing a school, as she consistently placed her trust in Allah (Sukri et al., 2009). This study further highlights the importance of understanding sociohistorical contexts when formulating educational theories and recognizing that the struggle for women's emancipation in Indonesia has never followed a single trajectory but has instead taken multiple forms. From a scholarly perspective, the study demonstrates that a biographical approach can reveal the authentic foundations of educational thought, as emphasized by Setiawati and Lessy (2022), which can subsequently serve as a basis for addressing contemporary educational challenges.

This study offers a novel contribution to previous scholarship. Studies conducted by Abdullah (2017) and Fatmawati (2020) predominantly focused on Rahma's biography and personal struggles without undertaking a thematic comparison with a Javanese female figure. Ulum's (2015) study, meanwhile, concentrated primarily on Kartini's critique of feudalism but paid insufficient attention to the institutional dimensions of educational implementation. The present study addresses this academic gap by systematically comparing two figures from distinct cultural contexts Javanese and Minangkabau through content analysis. The findings also extend previous conclusions by demonstrating that both Kartini and Rahma possessed a strong national consciousness, particularly through their efforts to prepare educated women to contribute to the nation (Adib, 2022). Accordingly, this study argues that Kartini's conceptual orientation and Rahma's institutional orientation should not be understood as a binary opposition but as complementary dimensions of the same struggle to advance a humanistic and gender-equitable model of Islamic education. This interpretation is consistent with Mustofa et al. (2021), who emphasize the importance of educational practices that are responsive to gender perceptions.

Based on the findings, several recommendations are proposed. First, the government should more explicitly integrate the educational thought of Kartini and Rahma El Yunusiah into the curricula for Islamic Religious Education and History to foster awareness of gender equality from an early age. Second, pesantren and madrasah administrators are encouraged to adopt a *Kulliyatul Mu'allimat Islamiyah* (KMI)-inspired residential education model that integrates strengthening Islamic faith, pedagogical training, and life-skills development to prepare professional, morally grounded female educators. Third, local governments, in collaboration with Regional Houses of Representatives, should allocate scholarship funding for women pursuing higher education in underdeveloped, frontier, and outermost regions. Fourth, civil-society organizations may establish community-based learning centers that combine vocational training with moral development, following Rahma's model at the Amai Setia Handicraft School. Implementing these recommendations is expected to make the intellectual legacies of both figures more applicable to advancing Islamic education and women's empowerment in Indonesia.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that Raden Ajeng Kartini and Rahma El Yunusiah shared a common vision of education as a principal instrument of women's empowerment, although they developed different strategies shaped by their respective sociocultural backgrounds. Kartini promoted conceptual transformation through her critique of the feudal system and her emphasis on moral education, spirituality, character formation, and women's roles as primary educators within the family. By contrast, Rahma El Yunusiah pursued institutional transformation through the establishment of Diniyah Puteri and Kulliyat al-Mu'allimat al-Islamiyah (KMI), which focused on strengthening Islamic faith, cultivating character, developing leadership, and preparing women to become educators. The educational thought of the two figures is therefore complementary and provides a foundation for developing Islamic education in Indonesia that is gender-equitable, character-oriented, spiritually grounded, and committed to women's empowerment.

Theoretically, this study enriches scholarship on Islamic education and Islamic feminism by demonstrating that women's empowerment can be advanced through two complementary strategies: conceptual transformation through the critique of educational injustice and institutional transformation through the establishment of Islamic educational institutions. Practically, the findings provide a basis for developing Islamic educational policies and practices that integrate equitable access to education, the strengthening of moral character and Islamic faith, and the advancement of women's leadership. The findings may also serve as a reference for madrasas, pesantren, and other Islamic educational institutions in designing educational models that balance knowledge acquisition, character formation, spiritual development, and the empowerment of women as agents of change within both families and wider society.

This study is limited by its reliance on content analysis of primary and secondary documents concerning the educational thought of Raden Ajeng Kartini and Rahma El Yunusiah. It therefore does not evaluate how their ideas have been implemented in contemporary Islamic educational practice. Furthermore, the study's focus on only two figures does not fully capture the broader diversity of women's educational thought in Indonesia. Future research should consequently undertake empirical studies across different Islamic educational institutions to examine the implementation of the values promoted by Kartini and Rahma, expand the comparative analysis to include other Muslim women intellectuals, and

explore the relevance of their educational thought to contemporary challenges relating to education, character formation, and women's empowerment in the digital era.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

Nurul Hidayatillah: Conceptualization; Data Curation; Formal Analysis; Methodology; Writing Original Draft; Validation; Visualization; Writing Original Draft; Writing Review & Editing. **Lukman Hakim:** Conceptualization; Data Curation; Formal Analysis; Validation; Visualization; Writing Original Draft.

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