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Reconstructing Tawhidic Humanism: Nurcholish Madjid and the Transformation of Intellectual Da'wah in Contemporary Islam

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Abstract

This study examines the ethical and humanistic dimensions of *tawhid* in the thought of Nurcholish Madjid and their implications for the transformation of contemporary intellectual da'wah. The study responds to the growing tendency of religious formalism, ideological polarization, and the weakening of ethical public engagement in contemporary Muslim societies. While previous scholarship has extensively explored Madjid's ideas on pluralism, secularization, democracy, and Islamic neo-modernism, limited attention has been paid to the interconnections among *tawhid*, human dignity, rationality, intellectual freedom, pluralism, and intellectual da'wah within a unified framework. Employing qualitative library research with an interpretivist orientation, this study combines intellectual-historical analysis, hermeneutic interpretation, and critical discourse analysis of Madjid's major writings and relevant scholarly works. The findings reveal three interconnected dimensions in his thought: *tawhid* as the theological basis of human freedom and dignity; rationality and intellectual freedom as foundations of critical religious consciousness; and pluralism, equality, and mutual respect as ethical principles for public life. Based on these dimensions, the study reconstructs *tawhidic humanism* as an analytical framework linking transcendence to human dignity, rationality, and plural coexistence. Within this framework, intellectual da'wah is understood as a dialogical and transformative process aimed at fostering critical religious consciousness, social responsibility, and ethical engagement in diverse societies.

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Introduction

The contemporary landscape of Islamic da'wah has undergone a significant transformation in response to globalization, digital communication, political polarization, and the expansion of rational-critical consciousness within Muslim societies. In many contemporary Muslim contexts, religious discourse increasingly operates within fragmented public spheres shaped by symbolic religiosity, ideological contestation, and identity-based mobilization. As a consequence, da'wah often shifts from an ethical-spiritual endeavor into a performative arena dominated by formalism, exclusivism, and doctrinal rigidity. In such conditions, the universal moral vision of Islam as a religion of justice, compassion, and human dignity is frequently obscured by reductionist

theological narratives and symbolic religious competition (Aripudin & Junaedi, 2024). This situation has created an urgent need to reconstruct a paradigm of da'wah that integrates transcendental faith with ethical humanism in contemporary Muslim societies.

The crisis confronting contemporary Islamic discourse is not merely theological, but also epistemological and ethical. Religious preaching frequently remains trapped within monologic and doctrinal frameworks that provide limited space for dialogue, contextual interpretation, and reflective reasoning. Consequently, da'wah often fails to adequately address contemporary social realities such as polarization, intolerance, dehumanization, and ethical fragmentation in public life (Ichwayudi et al., 2025). Several Muslim intellectuals, therefore, emphasize the necessity of reconstructing Islamic discourse beyond both secular reductionism and authoritarian religious formalism. In this context, the relationship among tawhid, ethics, rationality, and human dignity has become increasingly important in contemporary Islamic reformism.

Among Indonesian Muslim intellectuals, Nurcholish Madjid occupies a significant position in articulating the relationship between Islamic theology, rationality, and universal humanism. As a leading figure in Islamic neo-modernism in Indonesia, Nurcholish Madjid developed a substantive understanding of Islam that emphasized openness, ethical universalism, pluralism, intellectual freedom, and democratic coexistence within the framework of tawhid (Bakti, 2005). His intellectual project sought to reconcile Islamic faith with modern rationality and social inclusivity without abandoning theological authenticity. Through this approach, Islam was positioned not as an ideological instrument of domination, but as a moral force capable of nurturing justice, dialogue, and ethical civilization within plural societies.

Building upon this theological orientation, this study introduces *tawhidic humanism* as an analytical construct formulated by the authors through a synthesis of Nurcholish Madjid's writings and ideas, rather than as a technical term explicitly coined by Madjid himself. The construct refers to an ethical-theological framework in which human dignity, rational consciousness, intellectual freedom, equality, and social responsibility are grounded in transcendental monotheism. Unlike secular humanism, which frequently separates ethics from transcendence, tawhidic humanism positions human worth within humanity's existential relationship with God. Consequently, intellectual da'wah becomes an emancipatory process aimed at cultivating ethical awareness, critical reasoning, and socially responsible religiosity within contemporary Muslim society.

Recent scholarship on Nurcholish Madjid has increasingly revisited his intellectual legacy in response to contemporary challenges in Indonesian Islam. Nafis et al. (2023) examine Madjid's theology of pluralism and emphasize its relevance to religious diversity and peaceful coexistence, while Aripudin and Junaedi (2024) reconstruct his intellectual-substantive da'wah as a contextual form of religious engagement responsive to social change. Safitri et al. (2022) examine Madjid's thought on Islamic education through a hermeneutical perspective, while Siroj and Ulfah (2025) further highlight the relevance of his critical, inclusive, and transformative educational thought. Recent studies also demonstrate the continuing significance of Madjid's intellectual legacy: Ichwayudi et al. (2025) reinterpret his ideas on democracy and pluralism in relation to contemporary Indonesian society, Andoni and Yulia (2025) examine the ethical and humanistic dimensions of his inclusive interpretation of Islam and plurality, and Zaprukhhan (2025) situates Madjid's thought within the broader relationship between Islam, humanity, and Indonesian identity. Collectively, these studies demonstrate the continuing relevance of Madjid's ideas to pluralism, democracy, education, rationality, humanity, and the transformation of Indonesian Islamic thought.

Despite these important contributions, the existing literature remains largely organized around particular dimensions of Madjid's thought—such as pluralism, democracy, secularization, educational reform, or substantive da'wah—rather than examining how these dimensions are interconnected through tawhid as an ethical-theological foundation. Even studies that identify humanistic, rational, inclusive, or transformative dimensions in his thought have not sufficiently reconstructed the relationship among tawhid, human dignity, rational freedom, ethical responsibility, and intellectual da'wah within a unified conceptual framework. The present study addresses this gap by synthesizing these dispersed dimensions through the analytical construct of *tawhidic humanism* and examining how this construct provides an ethical-theological foundation for transformative intellectual da'wah in contemporary Muslim societies.

This article, therefore, seeks to reconstruct the concept of tawhidic humanism within Nurcholish Madjid's intellectual thought and examine its significance for the transformation of contemporary intellectual da'wah. Specifically, the study investigates how tawhid functions as an ethical foundation for human dignity, rational consciousness, plural coexistence, and emancipatory religious communication in modern Muslim societies. Accordingly, this study addresses the following research question: How can the relationship among tawhid, human dignity, rationality, freedom, and ethical responsibility be reconstructed through Nurcholish Madjid's intellectual thought? How does the analytical construct of *tawhidic humanism* provide an ethical-theological framework for intellectual da'wah? What are the implications of *tawhidic humanism* for the transformation of intellectual da'wah in contemporary Muslim societies? The article argues that tawhidic humanism constitutes a significant contribution to contemporary Islamic thought by offering an alternative ethical-theological paradigm that mediates between secular anthropocentrism and authoritarian religious formalism.

Method

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative, library-based research design to reconstruct the concept of tawhidic humanism from Nurcholish Madjid's intellectual thought and to examine its implications for contemporary intellectual da'wah. The study combined hermeneutic interpretation, intellectual-historical analysis, and critical discourse analysis to examine the relationship between theology, rationality, ethics, and social transformation within Madjid's intellectual discourse.

The research was grounded in an interpretivist orientation that understands religious thought as historically situated and embedded within particular intellectual and socio-religious contexts. Accordingly, Madjid's writings were approached not merely as isolated theological texts but as intellectual responses to the changing conditions of Indonesian Islam, modernity, religious pluralism, and public life. The intellectual-historical dimension was used to situate key concepts within the development of Madjid's thought and the broader context in which his ideas emerged, while hermeneutic interpretation was employed to reconstruct the conceptual relationships among tawhid, human dignity, rationality, freedom, pluralism, and ethical responsibility. Critical discourse analysis was subsequently used to examine how these concepts function within Madjid's critique of religious formalism and his articulation of a more dialogical and ethically oriented Islamic discourse.

Rather than testing causal relationships or producing statistical generalizations, the study sought to develop a systematic conceptual reconstruction based on Madjid's primary writings and their interpretation in the relevant scholarly literature. This design, therefore, enabled the study to

formulate *tawhidic humanism* as an analytical construct derived from a synthesis of Madjid's ideas and to assess its theoretical implications for transformative intellectual da'wah.

Data Sources

The primary corpus consisted of selected writings by Nurcholish Madjid that directly address the conceptual themes relevant to this study, particularly tawhid, human dignity, rationality, freedom, pluralism, democracy, secularization, religious ethics, and the relationship between Islam and modernity. The core primary texts included *Islam Doktrin dan Peradaban*, *Islam Kemodernan dan Keindonesiaan*, and *Islam Agama Kemanusiaan*. These works were selected because they contain Madjid's sustained discussions of theological monotheism, humanity, modernity, intellectual freedom, and the ethical role of religion in public life. Relevant essays, lectures, and intellectual reflections were used as supplementary primary materials when they provided clarification or contextual elaboration of concepts identified in the core texts.

Primary-source selection followed three criteria: (1) direct relevance to the study's research questions; (2) substantive discussion of one or more core analytical concepts, including tawhid, human dignity, rationality, freedom, pluralism, and ethical responsibility; and (3) contribution to understanding the development and interrelationship of these concepts within Madjid's intellectual thought. Texts that mentioned these themes only incidentally, without contributing to their conceptual interpretation, were not treated as part of the core analytical corpus.

Secondary sources consisted of peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, dissertations, and other scholarly works addressing Nurcholish Madjid, Indonesian Islamic thought, Islamic reformism, religious humanism, neo-modernism, intellectual da'wah, pluralism, and post-secular religious ethics. These sources were used primarily to contextualize Madjid's intellectual position, compare scholarly interpretations, identify areas of convergence and disagreement, and establish the research gap addressed by the present study.

Data Collection

Data were collected through systematic textual documentation and thematic extraction from the selected primary corpus. The collection procedure involved four stages. First, the core texts were identified based on their relevance to the research questions and the study's analytical focus. Second, the selected texts were read closely to identify passages addressing the principal concepts of tawhid, human dignity, rationality, freedom, pluralism, liberation, ethical universalism, public morality, and religious responsibility. Third, relevant passages were documented and grouped according to these preliminary conceptual categories. Fourth, the categories were compared across the primary texts to identify recurring patterns, conceptual relationships, differences in emphasis, and developments in Madjid's intellectual discourse.

The thematic categories were not treated as isolated keywords but as interconnected conceptual units. Particular attention was therefore given to passages in which theological claims concerning tawhid were connected with anthropological and ethical themes such as human dignity, freedom, rational responsibility, equality, and plural coexistence. Secondary literature was subsequently organized according to corresponding themes and used to contextualize, compare, and critically assess the interpretations derived from the primary corpus. This procedure provided the textual basis for reconstructing *tawhidic humanism* as an analytical construct rather than assuming it as an explicit technical term employed by Madjid himself.

Data Analysis

Data analysis proceeded through four interconnected stages: conceptual mapping, contextual-hermeneutic interpretation, critical discourse analysis, and integrative conceptual reconstruction. First, conceptual mapping was used to identify recurring themes in Madjid's writings, particularly tawhid, human dignity, rationality, freedom, equality, pluralism, ethical responsibility, and intellectual da'wah.

Second, contextual-hermeneutic interpretation was employed to examine these concepts by moving between individual passages, the broader arguments of each text, and the wider context of Madjid's thought. Third, critical discourse analysis examined how Madjid critiqued religious formalism, exclusivism, and doctrinal rigidity while articulating a more substantive, rational, and ethically oriented Islamic discourse.

Finally, the integrative conceptual reconstruction synthesized these findings to formulate *tawhidic humanism* as an analytical construct that connects tawhid with human dignity, rational freedom, pluralism, and ethical responsibility, and to examine its implications for transformative intellectual da'wah. Interpretive credibility was strengthened through source triangulation across primary texts and relevant secondary scholarship.

Findings

This section presents the principal findings from the conceptual and textual analysis of Nurcholish Madjid's thought on tawhid, humanism, and intellectual da'wah. The findings indicate that Madjid's treatment of tawhid extends beyond metaphysical affirmation to encompass ethical and civilizational implications concerning rational consciousness, human dignity, plural coexistence, and public engagement (Madjid, 1992, 1995, 2008). Unlike previous studies that have predominantly examined Madjid's thought through the frameworks of pluralism, secularization, democracy, Islamic education, or Islamic neo-modernism (Bakti, 2005; Muin, 2014; Nafis et al., 2023; Aripudin & Junaedi, 2024; Siroj & Ulfah, 2025), this study reconstructs the interconnections among these dimensions through tawhidic humanism as an integrated ethical-theological framework for contemporary intellectual da'wah.

Tawhid, Human Freedom, and Human Dignity

The textual analysis identifies a consistent relationship between tawhid, human freedom, and human dignity across Madjid's writings. Rather than treating tawhid exclusively as a metaphysical affirmation of divine unity, Madjid develops its ethical implications for the position of human beings in relation to God and to one another (Madjid, 1992, 1995). This orientation is particularly evident in *Islam Doktrin dan Peradaban*, where discussions of tawhid are explicitly connected with the liberating implications of monotheistic faith and the emancipation of human dignity (Madjid, 1992). The structure of Madjid's argument, therefore, indicates that theological commitment to the absolute unity of God has direct anthropological and social consequences.

A central pattern emerging from the texts is that recognition of God as the ultimate source of authority relativizes human claims to absolute power. Madjid emphasizes that external distinctions such as ethnicity, social status, or communal identity cannot determine a person's ultimate moral worth, since such judgment belongs to God alone (Madjid, 1992). Read within his broader discussion of tawhid and human emancipation, this position suggests that equality is not merely a social principle but a theological consequence of recognizing God as the only absolute authority.

Human equality thus emerges from the refusal to absolutize social distinctions or hierarchies among human beings.

This theological anthropology also connects the divine and human dimensions of religious life. Madjid describes the humanistic orientation (*habl-un min-a 'l-nās*) as the second dimension of Islam alongside the orientation toward God (*habl-un min-a 'l-Lāh*) (Madjid, 1992). He further argues that religious norms should not remain at the level of abstract or dogmatic formulation but should be understood in relation to their historical and social realization. In this sense, the relationship with God is translated into concrete relationships among human beings (Madjid, 1992).

These textual patterns support the interpretation that Madjid's understanding of tawhid contains an emancipatory humanistic dimension. Human dignity does not emerge from autonomous anthropocentrism but from the theological recognition that God alone is absolute. The first major finding of this study can therefore be formulated as a movement from divine unity to the relativization of human absolutism, and from that relativization to human freedom, equality, and dignity. This relationship constitutes the first analytical dimension of what this study reconstructs as tawhidic humanism.

Rationality, Intellectual Freedom, and Religious Consciousness

The second major theme identified in Madjid's writings concerns the relationship between rationality, intellectual freedom, and religious consciousness. The textual analysis indicates that rational inquiry is not opposed to faith; rather, it constitutes an important dimension of responsible religious consciousness. In his discussion of modernization, Madjid explicitly associates modernization with rationalization, understood as the transformation of irrational patterns of thought and practice into more rational ones through the use of human knowledge and intellectual capacity (Madjid, 2019, pp. 239–240).

Madjid formulates this relationship explicitly when he states that “*modernisasi ialah ... identik, atau hampir identik, dengan pengertian rasionalisasi*” [modernization is identical, or nearly identical, with rationalization] (Madjid, 2019, p. 240). He further describes rationalization as the transformation of patterns of thought and practice that are not rational into those grounded in rational inquiry and contemporary knowledge. This passage demonstrates that rationality in Madjid's thought is not merely an instrumental response to modernity but an epistemological disposition requiring Muslims to critically reconsider inherited patterns of thought.

More importantly, Madjid explicitly anchors rationalization in theological and moral consciousness: “*modernisasi ialah rasionalisasi yang ditopang oleh dimensi-dimensi moral, dengan berpijak pada prinsip iman kepada Tuhan Yang Mahaesa*” [modernization is rationalization supported by moral dimensions and grounded in faith in the One God] (Madjid, 2019, p. 258). This formulation provides particularly strong textual evidence that rationality in Madjid's thought is neither autonomous from faith nor subordinated to uncritical religious authority; rather, rational inquiry operates within a moral-transcendental horizon.

This orientation becomes more explicit when Madjid connects rationality with the human capacity to understand the order of creation. He argues that understanding the laws of nature yields knowledge, which is acquired through human reason. Rationality, therefore, is not treated as a secular alternative to religious commitment, but as part of humanity's engagement with the divine order. At the same time, Madjid distinguishes the provisional character of human knowledge from absolute truth: modernity and human understanding remain historically relative, whereas absolute truth ultimately belongs to God (Madjid, 2019).

The textual reading further reveals that this theological limitation of human claims to absolute truth provides an important basis for intellectual openness. Madjid's intellectual project consistently emphasizes intellectual freedom and the necessity of creating an intellectual climate in which different ideas can be expressed and critically examined. He states that "*di antara kebebasan perseorangan, kebebasan berpikir dan menyatakan pendapatlah yang paling berharga*" [among individual freedoms, freedom of thought and expression is the most valuable] (Madjid, 2019, p. 283). This formulation demonstrates that religious and intellectual renewal requires sustained critical engagement rather than the passive reproduction of inherited formulations.

These textual patterns suggest that rationality and intellectual freedom in Madjid's thought remain anchored in *tawhidic* consciousness rather than autonomous from it. Human reason is affirmed as a legitimate means of understanding reality, while awareness of God as the ultimate truth prevents human interpretations from becoming absolute. This relationship produces a form of religious consciousness that is simultaneously faithful, rational, critical, and open to intellectual development. Within the analytical framework of this study, this constitutes the second dimension of *tawhidic humanism* and provides an epistemological foundation for intellectual da'wah: da'wah becomes not merely the transmission of established doctrine, but a process of cultivating reflective, dialogical, and ethically responsible religious understanding.

Pluralism, Equality, and Ethical Public Islam

The third major theme identified in Madjid's writings concerns the relationship between pluralism, human equality, and the ethical orientation of Islam in public life. The textual analysis indicates that Madjid does not regard social and religious plurality merely as a condition to be tolerated, but as a social reality that should be recognized positively. Madjid argues that pluralism requires more than acknowledging the right of other groups to exist; it also entails treating them justly within relationships grounded in peace and mutual respect (Madjid, 2019). This position indicates that pluralism in Madjid's thought extends beyond passive tolerance toward an affirmative ethical engagement with difference grounded in recognition, justice, peace, and reciprocal respect. This interpretation is consistent with scholarly readings that emphasize the centrality of pluralism and inclusive coexistence within Madjid's intellectual project (Muin, 2014; Nafis et al., 2023; Andoni & Yulia, 2025).

This positive recognition of plurality is closely related to Madjid's understanding of human equality and religious freedom. His writings reject claims of inherent superiority based on descent, communal identity, or social position and emphasize that moral worth cannot ultimately be determined by such external distinctions (Madjid, 1992, 1995). Within this framework, equality provides the ethical basis for recognizing the legitimate presence of different communities, while religious freedom prevents theological commitment from being transformed into coercive social authority. Pluralism, therefore, emerges not merely as a pragmatic response to social diversity but as an ethical expression of human dignity and responsibility within a religiously diverse society (Muin, 2014; Nafis et al., 2023).

The public implications of this orientation become particularly visible in Madjid's reflections on democracy and social coexistence. His intellectual project links the recognition of diversity with an ethic of openness, equality, dialogue, and respect for others, thereby resisting the absolutization of human interpretations and political authority (Bakti, 2005; Rozak et al., 2015). From this perspective, democratic coexistence requires not the elimination of religious or ideological differences, but the development of public relationships grounded in reciprocal recognition,

peaceful engagement, and respect for the legitimate presence of others. Read contextually, this orientation demonstrates how theological humility can be translated into a public ethic in which difference is negotiated through dialogue rather than coercion.

These textual patterns suggest that pluralism in Madjid's thought is inseparable from a theological ethic of equality, humility, and responsibility toward others. *Tawhid* relativizes human claims to absolute authority; equality affirms human dignity beyond inherited identities; and pluralism translates these principles into an ethic of coexistence in the public sphere. Within the analytical framework of this study, this constitutes the third dimension of *tawhidic humanism*: an orientation in which transcendental commitment generates, rather than restricts, openness to human diversity. In relation to intellectual da'wah, these findings support its reconstruction as a mode of religious engagement characterized by dialogue, ethical persuasion, mutual respect, and constructive engagement with diversity, rather than coercion, exclusion, or identity-based domination.

From Tawhidic Humanism to Transformative Intellectual Da'wah

The preceding findings reveal three interconnected dimensions in Nurcholish Madjid's thought: (1) *tawhid* as a theological basis for human freedom and dignity; (2) rationality and intellectual freedom as foundations of critical religious consciousness; and (3) pluralism, equality, and mutual respect as ethical principles for public life. These dimensions do not appear as isolated themes. Rather, the textual analysis indicates a coherent movement from transcendental commitment to human and social responsibility. *Tawhid* relativizes human claims to absolute authority, rationality enables critical engagement with changing realities, and pluralism translates theological humility and human equality into an ethic of coexistence (Madjid, 1992, 1995, 2019).

On the basis of this convergence, this study reconstructs *tawhidic humanism* as an analytical synthesis of Madjid's theological, anthropological, epistemological, and social-ethical ideas. The term is not attributed to Madjid as an explicit technical concept; rather, it denotes the conceptual relationship he identifies across his writings among divine unity, human dignity, rational freedom, equality, pluralism, and ethical responsibility. In this reconstruction, transcendence and humanism are not oppositional: commitment to God provides the ethical basis for resisting human absolutism while simultaneously affirming human agency, dignity, and responsibility.

This synthesis also provides a conceptual foundation for reconstructing intellectual da'wah. Madjid's emphasis on rationality and intellectual freedom demonstrates that religious renewal requires sustained critical engagement rather than the passive reproduction of inherited formulations (Madjid, 2019, pp. 240, 258, 283). Read together with his affirmation of pluralism, equality, peaceful coexistence, and respect for others, these ideas provide conceptual resources for understanding intellectual da'wah as a dialogical and ethically oriented process through which religious commitment engages critically with contemporary social realities (Madjid, 2019; Bakti, 2005; Aripudin & Junaedi, 2024). Scholarship on Madjid's intellectual-substantive da'wah similarly emphasizes the contextual and transformative orientation of his religious thought (Aripudin & Junaedi, 2024). Within the analytical reconstruction developed in this study, intellectual da'wah therefore emerges not as a concept explicitly systematized by Madjid in these terms, but as an interpretive extension of the ethical, rational, and pluralistic orientations identified across his writings.

Accordingly, the transformative dimension of intellectual da'wah lies not merely in the transmission of religious knowledge but in the cultivation of critical religious consciousness, ethical

agency, dialogical openness, and social responsibility. The analytical trajectory emerging from the textual findings can therefore be summarized as follows: *tawhid* → human dignity and rational freedom → pluralistic ethical consciousness → *tawhidic humanism* → transformative intellectual da'wah. This trajectory constitutes the principal integrative finding of the study and provides the conceptual basis for the analytical comparison presented in Table 1.

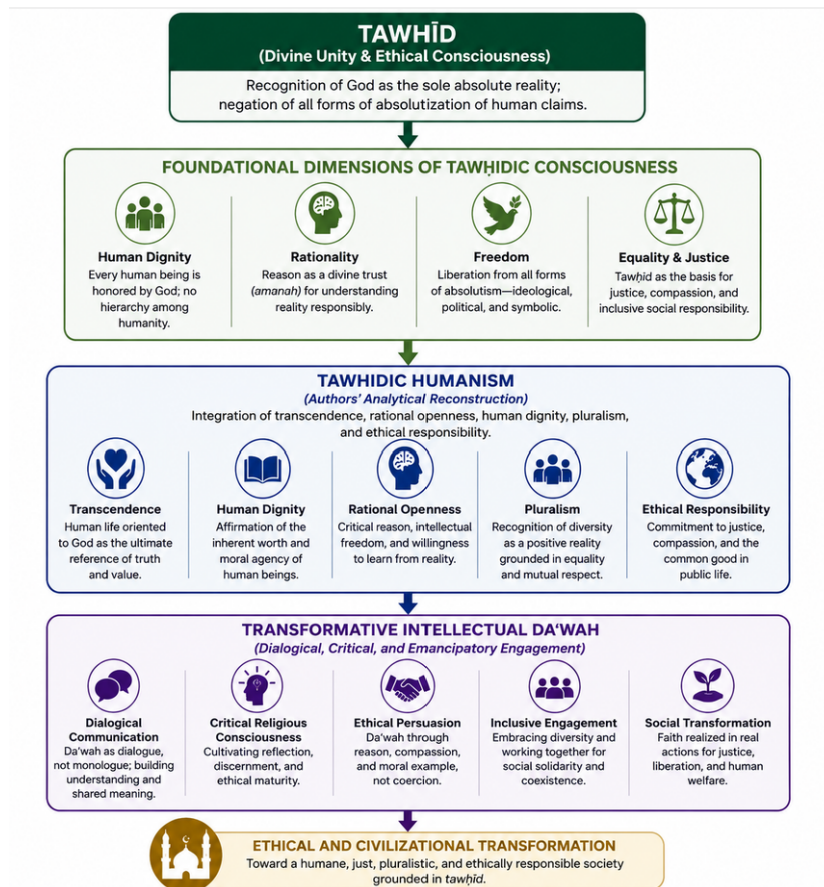
Table 1. Analytical Distinctions among Secular Humanism, Religious Formalism, and Tawhidic Humanism

Analytical Dimension	Secular Humanism	Religious Formalism	Tawhidic Humanism
Primary ethical reference	Human reason and experience	Normative and institutional religious authority	Tawhid as transcendental-ethical orientation
Understanding of human agency	Human autonomy	Normatively regulated religious subject	Morally responsible human agency before God
Role of rationality	Independent critical inquiry	Reason interpreted within established religious norms	Rational inquiry integrated with theological consciousness
Relation between transcendence and humanity	Ethics may be articulated independently of transcendence	Transcendence emphasized through normative conformity	Transcendence grounds human dignity and ethical responsibility
Approach to plurality	Recognition grounded primarily in human equality and rights	Varies according to normative interpretation	Plurality approached through equality, humility, and ethical responsibility
Religious/public orientation	Human-centered public ethics	Normative preservation of religious identity and practice	Dialogical, inclusive, and ethically engaged public religiosity
Implication for da'wah	Not inherently a religious category	Primarily transmission and preservation of religious norms	Dialogical intellectual engagement and ethical transformation

Source: Authors' analytical reconstruction based on the textual analysis of Nurcholish Madjid's selected works and relevant scholarly literature.

Building on this analytical comparison, Figure 1 integrates the principal textual findings into a reconstructed model of tawhidic humanism and transformative intellectual da'wah.

Figure 1. Reconstructed Model of Tawhidic Humanism and Transformative Intellectual Da'wah in Nurcholish Madjid's Thought



Source: Authors' analytical reconstruction based on the textual findings of the study.

Figure 1 synthesizes the principal textual findings by illustrating the analytical progression from *tawhid* to transformative intellectual da'wah. Tawhid functions as the transcendental-ethical foundation from which human dignity, rationality, freedom, and equality acquire their normative orientation. These dimensions converge in what this study reconstructs as *tawhidic humanism*, an analytical construct integrating transcendence with rational openness, pluralism, and ethical responsibility. Within this framework, transformative intellectual da'wah represents the communicative and social articulation of tawhidic humanism through dialogical communication, critical religious consciousness, ethical persuasion, inclusive engagement, and socially transformative action. The model should therefore be understood as an integrative reconstruction derived from the textual analysis of Madjid's thought rather than as a conceptual framework explicitly formulated by Madjid himself.

Discussion

This study demonstrates that Madjid's treatment of *tawhid* extends beyond conventional theological interpretation into an ethical and civilizational framework capable of addressing contemporary challenges in Islamic discourse. The findings indicate that the reconstructed framework of *tawhidic humanism* serves as an ethical-theological paradigm that integrates transcendence, rationality, human dignity, and transformative public engagement.

The findings are consistent with several previous studies that emphasize Nurcholish Madjid's contributions to Islamic reformism, pluralism, and democratic coexistence in Indonesia (Muin, 2014; Rozak et al., 2015). However, unlike earlier studies that primarily focused on socio-political interpretations of his thought, this study demonstrates that tawhid functions as an integrated ethical-theological foundation for reconstructing intellectual da'wah and ethical public Islam. The present study, therefore, expands previous scholarship by positioning tawhidic humanism not merely as a theological interpretation but as a transformative paradigm of religious communication and ethical social engagement within contemporary Muslim societies.

Tawhidic Humanism and Post-Secular Ethics

The findings further indicate that tawhidic humanism resonates strongly with broader discussions concerning post-secular ethics and religion in the public sphere. Contemporary post-secular theorists argue that religious traditions continue to provide important ethical resources within modern democratic societies despite the expansion of secular rationality (Habermas, 2006; Casanova, 1994). In this context, Madjid's treatment of *tawhid*, as reconstructed in the present study, demonstrates how Islamic theology may provide internal ethical resources for plural coexistence, democratic participation, and public morality without abandoning transcendental foundations.

Analytically, the reconstructed framework of *tawhidic humanism* can be distinguished from forms of secular humanism that ground ethical authority independently of transcendental commitments. In contrast, *tawhidic humanism* locates human dignity and ethical responsibility within humanity's relationship with God. Nevertheless, the findings demonstrate that *tawhidic humanism* differs from authoritarian religious formalism, which prioritizes rigid legal-symbolic conformity over ethical consciousness and intellectual openness.

Rather than functioning simply as a midpoint between secular and religious paradigms, *tawhidic humanism* may be understood as an analytical framework that integrates transcendental commitment, human dignity, rational inquiry, and pluralistic ethics within a unified normative orientation. The framework integrates transcendence and humanity, spirituality and rationality, and faith and democratic coexistence within contemporary Islamic discourse. This interpretation supports broader contemporary discussions that emphasize the importance of ethical religion in plural societies while demonstrating the relevance of Islamic theology to post-secular public life.

Intellectual Da'wah and the Transformation of Religious Communication

The findings of this study also demonstrate that intellectual da'wah in Nurcholish Madjid's thought significantly transforms the conventional structure of religious communication. Previous studies concerning Islamic preaching frequently describe da'wah as a process centered on doctrinal transmission, moral instruction, and religious authority (Bakti, 2005; Aripudin & Junaedi, 2024). However, the present study reveals that intellectual da'wah operates as a dialogical and emancipatory process aimed at cultivating critical religious consciousness, ethical maturity, and rational engagement.

This finding is particularly relevant within contemporary digitally mediated religious environments characterized by symbolic polarization, emotional populism, and identity-based religious mobilization. In many contemporary contexts, religious discourse increasingly operates through algorithmic visibility and symbolic performance rather than intellectual depth and ethical reflection. Consequently, religious communication often becomes fragmented into binary

oppositions that weaken ethical dialogue and public rationality (Campbell, 2021; Khairiyah et al., 2025).

Against this backdrop, tawhidic humanism offers an alternative framework for an ethically grounded public Islam, grounded in dialogical engagement, rational communication, and social responsibility. Read through the analytical framework developed in this study, Madjid's emphasis on rationality, dialogue, and intellectual freedom enables the role of the preacher to be reconstructed not as an unquestionable authority, but as a facilitator of ethical reflection and critical religious consciousness. This transformation shifts da'wah from monologic preaching to participatory intellectual engagement that can address contemporary social realities more substantively.

The findings also support broader discussions concerning the necessity of reconstructing Islamic education and public discourse within modern Muslim societies. Intellectual da'wah requires educational and communicative models that nurture critical reasoning, ethical reflexivity, and plural coexistence rather than passive doctrinal conformity. Consequently, the reconstruction developed in this study demonstrates the continuing relevance of Madjid's ethical and rational Islamic discourse for responding to contemporary socio-religious challenges.

Critical Tensions and Contestations in Madjid's Intellectual Project

Despite the analytical potential identified in the preceding findings, Madjid's intellectual project should not be treated as internally uncontested or normatively unproblematic. His reformist thought has generated significant debate within Indonesian Islamic scholarship, particularly concerning secularization, pluralism, democracy, and the relationship between Islam and modernity. These debates are important because they reveal a persistent tension within Madjid's project: his attempt to preserve theological commitment while simultaneously opening Islamic thought to rational criticism, social plurality, and modern democratic institutions. *Tawhidic humanism* should therefore be understood not as a resolution of all these tensions, but as an analytical reconstruction emerging from within them.

One of the most contested dimensions of Madjid's intellectual legacy concerns his formulation of secularization. Madjid distinguished secularization from secularism and employed the former primarily to refer to the process of desacralizing worldly institutions, political arrangements, and historically contingent interpretations that had acquired an unwarranted sacred status (Madjid, 2008; Bakti, 2005). Yet this distinction has remained controversial within interpretations of his Islamic reformist thought (Barton, 1997; Bakti, 2005). Critics have questioned whether secularization can be conceptually separated from the broader secularist trajectory historically associated with the term, while more sympathetic interpretations understand Madjid's formulation as a theological critique of the absolutization of non-divine realities (Barton, 1997; Bakti, 2005). This debate exposes a productive tension within his thought: the same *tawhidic* principle that affirms the absoluteness of God also requires the relativization of human institutions and interpretations. The emancipatory potential identified in the present study, therefore, depends upon maintaining this distinction without reducing religious normativity to historical contingency.

A comparable tension appears in Madjid's treatment of religious pluralism. His affirmation of openness, equality, and positive recognition of diversity has been interpreted as an important contribution to interreligious coexistence in Indonesia (Muin, 2014; Nafis et al., 2023; Andoni & Yulia, 2025). At the same time, it has generated debate concerning the boundary between the sociological recognition of religious plurality and theological claims about religious truth (Muin,

2014; Nafis et al., 2023). Critical readings question whether an affirmative conception of pluralism risks relativizing distinctive theological commitments, whereas other interpretations understand Madjid as defending religious freedom and ethical coexistence without necessarily erasing doctrinal differences. The findings of this study are closer to the latter interpretation, since Madjid's openness to plurality remains embedded within a transcendental framework. Nevertheless, this tension cautions against interpreting *tawhidic humanism* as eliminating substantive theological disagreement; its contribution lies instead in providing an ethical basis for engaging such disagreement without coercion or exclusion.

A further conceptual tension concerns Madjid's engagement with democracy and modernity. His affirmation of rationality, intellectual freedom, equality, and democratic coexistence created an intellectual space in which Islamic thought could engage constructively with modern political values (Bakti, 2005; Barton, 1997; Rozak et al., 2015). However, this raises an important interpretive question: to what extent are democracy, pluralism, and individual freedom derived from the internal ethical resources of Islamic theology, and to what extent are modern political categories retrospectively harmonized with Islamic concepts? Rather than assuming an uncomplicated compatibility between Islam and modernity, Madjid's project may therefore be understood as an ongoing intellectual negotiation between Islamic normativity and historically evolving forms of modern public life. This unresolved negotiation represents both a productive feature and a conceptual limitation of his reformist project.

The contemporary applicability of Madjid's framework also requires qualification. His major intellectual interventions emerged primarily within the socio-political context of late-twentieth-century Indonesia, particularly in debates over modernization, political Islam, democratization, religious authority, and national identity. Contemporary religious communication, by contrast, increasingly operates within digital environments shaped by algorithmic amplification, fragmented authority, affective polarization, influencer culture, and rapidly circulating identity narratives (Campbell, 2021; Khairiyah et al., 2025). Madjid's emphasis on rationality, dialogue, intellectual freedom, and ethical responsibility remains normatively relevant to these conditions, but his framework does not itself provide an account of the technological infrastructures and affective dynamics through which contemporary religious authority is produced. Applying *tawhidic humanism* to digital da'wah, therefore, requires its integration with contemporary scholarship on digital religion, media theory, and changing structures of religious authority.

Taken together, these contestations demonstrate that Madjid's intellectual legacy is better understood as an open and contested field of interpretation than as a closed theoretical system. Secularization may be read either as a problematic accommodation to modernity or as a tawhidic desacralization of worldly authority; pluralism may be interpreted either as a challenge to theological particularity or as an ethic of coexistence grounded in religious humility; and democracy may be viewed either as an imported modern category or as a political expression compatible with Islamic principles of equality, consultation, and human dignity. The concept of *tawhidic humanism* proposed in this study does not claim to resolve these debates definitively. Its theoretical value lies instead in identifying and reconstructing a recurring ethical trajectory across Madjid's writings while remaining attentive to the historical conditions, conceptual tensions, and competing interpretations that constitute his intellectual legacy.

Theoretical Contribution of Tawhidic Humanism

One of the most significant contributions of this study lies in its reconstruction of tawhidic humanism as an ethical-theological framework for transformative intellectual da'wah. Unlike previous scholarship that often discusses tawhid, pluralism, rationality, and Islamic reformism separately, this study integrates these dimensions into a unified conceptual framework connecting transcendence, ethics, rational consciousness, and social transformation.

The findings, therefore, contribute to contemporary Islamic studies by demonstrating that tawhid can function not only as a theological doctrine but also as an ethical paradigm shaping public morality, intellectual freedom, and inclusive social engagement. In this regard, tawhidic humanism provides a conceptual alternative to both secular reductionism and authoritarian religious formalism.

Furthermore, this study contributes to broader discussions concerning religion, ethics, and human dignity in contemporary plural societies. The findings indicate that Islamic theology possesses internal intellectual resources capable of supporting democratic coexistence, ethical pluralism, and transformative public engagement while maintaining theological authenticity. Consequently, Madjid's intellectual project may offer conceptual resources for broader comparative debates concerning religion, human dignity, pluralism, and ethical transformation beyond the Indonesian context.

Nevertheless, this study remains primarily limited to conceptual and textual reconstruction rather than to empirical investigation of contemporary da'wah movements influenced by Nurcholish Madjid's thought. Future research may therefore examine the practical implications of tawhidic humanism in digital religious communication, Islamic education, Muslim civil society, and contemporary public ethics across diverse sociocultural contexts.

Conclusion

This study concludes that Nurcholish Madjid's treatment of *tawhid* extends beyond doctrinal affirmation to encompass significant ethical, anthropological, and social implications concerning human dignity, rationality, freedom, equality, pluralism, and social responsibility. Through a systematic textual reconstruction of these interconnected dimensions, this study develops *tawhidic humanism* as an analytical construct that integrates transcendental commitment with human dignity, rational openness, plural coexistence, and ethical responsibility. Within this framework, intellectual da'wah can be reconstructed as a dialogical, ethically grounded, and socially transformative process oriented toward cultivating critical religious consciousness rather than merely transmitting doctrine or reproducing symbolic religious formalism.

The principal theoretical contribution of this study, therefore, lies not in attributing *tawhidic humanism* to Madjid as an explicit technical concept but in demonstrating how recurring relationships among *tawhid*, human dignity, rationality, intellectual freedom, pluralism, and ethical responsibility across his writings can be integrated into a coherent analytical framework for transformative intellectual da'wah. In this sense, the study contributes to contemporary Islamic thought by connecting theology, ethics, religious communication, and public engagement within a unified conceptual reconstruction.

At the same time, the analytical potential of *tawhidic humanism* should not obscure the tensions and contestations within Madjid's intellectual legacy, particularly concerning secularization, religious pluralism, democracy, and the relationship between Islam and modernity. The framework proposed in this study should therefore be understood as a critical and interpretive reconstruction

rather than as a definitive resolution of these debates. Its contemporary application also requires attention to social and technological conditions that were not central to the historical context in which Madjid developed his major intellectual interventions.

In practical terms, the findings suggest that the reconstructed framework may provide conceptual resources for developing more dialogical, inclusive, critically reflective, and ethically responsible approaches to Islamic education, religious communication, and public discourse. Nevertheless, this study is limited to conceptual and textual analysis and does not empirically examine the implementation or reception of *tawhidic humanism* in contemporary Muslim communities. Future research should therefore investigate its analytical and practical relevance within digital religious communication, Islamic educational institutions, Muslim civil society, and other socio-cultural contexts through empirical and comparative research.

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