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MENTAL ILLNESS AND SPIRITUAL WELL-BEING IN HAMKA'S MODERN SUFISM: A CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis konstruksi pemikiran Hamka mengenai jiwa, penyakit hati, dan kebahagiaan dalam Tasawuf Modern, serta menjelaskan landasan filosofis dan relevansinya terhadap kesehatan mental kontemporer. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif melalui studi kepustakaan dengan analisis filosofis-interpretatif. Sumber primer penelitian adalah Tasawuf Modern, sedangkan karya Hamka lainnya dan literatur ilmiah terkait digunakan sebagai sumber pendukung. Data dianalisis melalui pembacaan mendalam, kategorisasi tematik, dan interpretasi kritis berdasarkan dimensi ontologis, epistemologis, dan etis. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penyakit hati menurut Hamka merupakan ketidakseimbangan moral-spiritual yang berkaitan dengan kemarahan, kebencian, dan kedengkian, sehingga tidak dapat disamakan dengan gangguan mental klinis. Pembinaan jiwa dilakukan melalui pergaulan yang baik, pembiasaan berpikir, pengendalian nafsu dan amarah, keteraturan aktivitas, serta evaluasi diri. Secara filosofis, prinsip-prinsip tersebut membentuk kerangka etika-spiritual yang mengintegrasikan hakikat manusia, sumber pengetahuan moral, dan pembentukan kebajikan. Penelitian menyimpulkan bahwa pemikiran Hamka memberikan kontribusi terhadap penguatan karakter, kebermaknaan hidup, dan kesejahteraan spiritual, sekaligus menegaskan bahwa pembinaan tasawuf tidak menggantikan penanganan kesehatan mental secara profesional.

Kata Kunci: *Hamka; Tasawuf Modern; Penyakit Hati; Etika Spiritual; Kesehatan Mental.*

Abstract

This study examines Hamka's conceptualization of the soul, spiritual illness, and happiness in Tasawuf Modern, focusing on its philosophical foundations and relevance to contemporary mental health. Employing a qualitative library research approach, the study applies philosophical and interpretative analysis to Hamka's primary work, supported by his other writings and relevant scholarly literature. Data were analyzed through close reading, thematic categorization, and critical interpretation within ontological, epistemological, and ethical dimensions. The findings indicate that spiritual illness in Hamka's thought refers to moral and spiritual imbalances, particularly uncontrolled anger, hatred, and envy, rather than clinically diagnosed mental disorders. Hamka proposes cultivating the soul through positive social relationships, intellectual reflection, emotional self-regulation, disciplined activities, and self-evaluation. Philosophically, these principles constitute an ethical-spiritual framework integrating human nature, sources of moral knowledge, and virtue formation. The study concludes that Hamka's Sufism contributes to character development, meaningful living, and spiritual well-being while maintaining a clear distinction between moral-spiritual cultivation and clinical mental health treatment. This framework offers a critical perspective for interdisciplinary dialogue between Islamic philosophy and contemporary mental health studies.

Keywords: Hamka; Modern Sufism; Spiritual Illness; Spiritual Ethics; Mental Health.

INTRODUCTION

Mental health is a fundamental concern in contemporary society, encompassing not only individuals' psychological conditions but also social and cultural dimensions and the experience of meaning in life. Technological advances, economic changes, and transformations in social relationships present various challenges to human psychological well-being. Mental health problems, however, cannot be explained solely as consequences of modernization or a decline in spiritual values, because mental disorders arise through complex interactions among biological, psychological, and social factors. The World Health Organization (WHO), in its 2025 report *World Mental Health Today: Latest Data*, reported that more than one billion people worldwide were

living with mental disorders, while most had yet to receive adequate health support. This situation demonstrates that mental health is a global concern requiring multidimensional approaches, including professional healthcare services as well as stronger social environments and individual psychological resources.[1]

Similar concerns arise in Indonesia. The 2023 Indonesian Health Survey (Survei Kesehatan Indonesia, SKI), as reiterated by the Ministry of Health on October 9, 2026, indicated a depression prevalence of 1.4% among people over the age of 15, representing an estimated 2.5 to 3 million individuals. Of these, only approximately 12.7% had received treatment. The Ministry of Health also emphasized that social stigma and limited access to services remain challenges in mental healthcare. These facts indicate that mental health concerns extend beyond the presence of psychological disorders to include social acceptance, access to assistance, and society's understanding of human suffering.[2] Accordingly, mental health scholarship should foster dialogue between clinical approaches and broader humanistic perspectives, including ethical and spiritual traditions, without overlooking the disciplinary boundaries of each.

As scholarship in psychology and mental health has developed, spirituality has attracted attention as a dimension associated with meaning in life, value orientations, and individuals' strategies for coping with adversity. Spiritual experiences and mental disorders, however, belong to distinct conceptual domains that must be critically differentiated. In *Clinical Descriptions and Diagnostic Requirements for ICD-11 Mental, Behavioural and Neurodevelopmental Disorders*, the WHO stresses the importance of clinical criteria in identifying mental

[1] World Health Organization, *World Mental Health Today: Latest Data* (Geneva: World Health Organization, 2025), https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240113817.

[2] Kementerian Kesehatan Republik Indonesia, "Kemenkes: 9 dari 10 Orang dengan Depresi Belum Terjangkau Layanan Kesehatan," 9 Oktober 2026, https://www.kemkes.go.id/id/kemenkes-9-dari-10-orang-dengan-depresi-belum-terjangkau-layanan-kesehatan-.

disorders. Religious and spiritual traditions, meanwhile, employ their own frameworks for understanding the quality of the soul, character formation, and the orientation of human life.[3] This distinction matters because the expression 'illness of the soul' in moral and religious traditions does not necessarily have the same meaning as 'mental illness' in modern health sciences. Bringing psychology and spirituality into dialogue therefore requires an account of their conceptual foundations, scope, and relational boundaries so that their concepts are not simplistically equated.

Within Indonesian Islamic thought, Haji Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah, commonly known as Hamka, is a thinker who devoted attention to happiness, cultivation of the soul, moral character, and the human relationship with God. In *Tasawuf Modern*, Hamka develops an understanding of Sufism in which purification of the soul contributes to the formation of a rational, virtuous, and socially responsible personality. For Hamka, Sufism is not directed solely toward individual spiritual experience; it also concerns the human capacity to regulate desires, cultivate wisdom, manage social relationships, and discover an orientation toward happiness. In this context, the well-being of the soul can be interpreted through ethical-spiritual categories that emphasize the relationship among inner character, moral action, and a meaningful life. Rahim and Bachtiar explain that Hamka's neo-Sufism offers an orientation toward happiness and transcendental awareness in response to materialism and hedonism in modern society.[4]

Hamka's conception of the soul merits examination because it extends beyond emotional tranquility to the cultivation of human moral qualities. Within this framework, traits such as ghadab (uncontrolled

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[3] World Health Organization, *Clinical Descriptions and Diagnostic Requirements for ICD-11 Mental, Behavioural and Neurodevelopmental Disorders* (Geneva: World Health Organization, 2024), https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240077263.

[4] Fathor Rahim and Hasnan Bachtiar, "Hamka's Neo-Sufism in the Context Modern Society," *Journal of Social Studies* 19, no. 1 (2023): 1–14, https://doi.org/10.21831/jss.v19i1.57513.

anger), haqad (persistent resentment or hatred), and hasad (envy) may be understood as problems of inner ethics that disrupt behavioral balance and interpersonal relationships. Conversely, self-control, patience, sincerity, and the capacity for self-evaluation underscore the importance of cultivating the soul. Nevertheless, the Sufi category of 'diseases of the heart' cannot be directly equated with mental disorders defined by clinical classifications. The central analytical question is not whether all mental disorders are caused by spiritual weakness, but how Hamka constructs the relationships among the soul, reason, desire, moral character, and happiness within a philosophical understanding of humanity.[5]

Several previous studies have examined the relationship between Hamka's thought, mental health, and modern life. In Mental Diseases According to Hamka and the Methods of Treatment, Istiqomah, Rukmana, and Mujtaba identify the characteristics of a healthy soul, forms of spiritual illness from Hamka's perspective, and methods of cultivating the soul through tazkiyat al-nafs. Their study emphasizes external forms of cultivation, including good company, habits of reflection, regulation of desire, orderly activity, and introspection, alongside internal cultivation through spiritual values.[6] Although it systematically maps Hamka's ideas, the discussion focuses more on identifying types of illness and approaches to their treatment as presented in the text than on philosophically examining the distinction between diseases of the heart as moral-spiritual categories and mental disorders as clinical categories. There is therefore scope for deeper analysis of the ontological and epistemological foundations underlying these two concepts.

Another study, by Aswar and colleagues, examines existential anxiety and spiritual coping mechanisms in digital society through the

[5] Hamka, *Tasawuf Modern* (Jakarta: Republika Penerbit, 2018).

[6] Imroatul Istiqomah, Fikri Hidayatul Rukmana, and Muhammad Shohibul Mujtaba, "Mental Diseases According to Hamka and the Methods of Treatment (A Review of Hamka's Tasawuf Modern Book)," *NUKHBATUL 'ULUM: Jurnal Bidang Kajian Islam* 10, no. 2 (2024): 170–186, https://doi.org/10.36701/nukhbah.v10i2.1708.

perspective of Hamka's *Tasawuf Modern*. It identifies loss of meaning in life, digital isolation, and uncertainty about the future, while also highlighting gratitude, qana'ah (contentment), tawakal (trust in God), and dhikr (remembrance of God) as resources for spiritual meaning-making. Its principal contribution lies in bringing the experiences of digital society into dialogue with Hamka's Sufi philosophy. Its primary focus, however, is existential anxiety and spiritual meaning-making strategies rather than a foundational analysis of the conceptual status of diseases of the heart and the limits of their application to discussions of mental disorders.[7] Hisyam, meanwhile, relates Hamka's Sufi thought to Carol D. Ryff's six dimensions of psychological well-being: self-acceptance, positive relationships, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth. That study demonstrates conceptual correspondences between Hamka's spiritual values and psychological well-being theory but does not specifically place the distinction between moral-spiritual health and psychopathological disorders at the center of its critical analysis.[8]

More broadly, Cetinkaya and Billings systematically reviewed 49 studies on the relationship between Islamic-Sufi spirituality and practices and mental well-being. Their review found indications of positive associations between Sufi spiritual practices and several psychological outcomes, including anxiety and depression. However, they emphasized the methodological limitations of much of the evidence reviewed, making it impossible to draw definitive conclusions about the effectiveness of Sufi practices for mental health conditions. These findings underscore the need for caution when translating spiritual

[7] Aswar Aswar et al., "Existential Anxiety and Spiritual Coping in the Contemporary Digital Landscape: A Dialogue with Buya Hamka's Sufism," *Teosofia: Indonesian Journal of Islamic Mysticism* 14, no. 2 (2025): 241–272, https://doi.org/10.21580/tos.v14i2.27603.

[8] Muhammad Hisyam, "Psychological Well-Being dalam Tasawuf: Studi Pemikiran Haji Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah (HAMKA)," *Indonesian Journal of Islamic Theology and Philosophy* 8, no. 1 (2026): 1–20, https://doi.org/10.24042/ijitp.v8i1.27663.

teachings into therapeutic claims.[9] Similarly, in a systematic review of spirituality, religiosity, and recovery from psychosis, Westhead and Georgiades found that different forms of religious coping may be associated with different outcomes. Positive religious coping was associated with some more favorable recovery indicators, whereas negative religious coping was linked to poorer outcomes. These findings show that the relationship between spirituality and mental health is complex and context-dependent and cannot be generalized as an invariably positive causal relationship.[10]

Taken together, these studies show several trends in scholarship on Hamka's Sufism and mental health: identifying spiritual illnesses and methods of cultivating the soul; interpreting spirituality as a strategy for coping with life's pressures; and exploring correspondences between Sufi values and psychological well-being theories. Despite their significant contributions, these approaches have not fully resolved the conceptual problems that arise when the Sufi notion of diseases of the heart is used to explain contemporary mental disorders. The distinctive contribution of the present study is to shift the focus from identifying teachings and spiritual benefits toward a critical analysis of the ontological, epistemological, and ethical foundations of soul cultivation in Hamka's thought. Rather than assuming that Sufism constitutes a form of clinical treatment, this study approaches it as a tradition of moral and spiritual philosophy with its own understanding of human beings, happiness, and the good life.

Accordingly, the research gap lies in the insufficient systematic explanation, particularly within the studies reviewed, of both the

[9] Merve Cetinkaya and Jo Billings, "Systematic Review of the Relationship between Islamic-Sufi Spirituality and Practice and Mental Well-Being," *Mental Health, Religion & Culture* 26, no. 10 (2023): 1065–1080, https://doi.org/10.1080/13674676.2023.2256265.

[10] Megan Westhead and Anna Georgiades, "The Role of Spirituality and Religiosity in the Maintenance and Recovery of Psychosis: A Systematic Review," *Early Intervention in Psychiatry* 19, no. 7 (2025): e70061, https://doi.org/10.1111/eip.70061.

relationship and the conceptual boundaries between diseases of the heart in *Tasawuf Modern* and mental disorders in contemporary health sciences. Unclear conceptual boundaries can give rise to epistemological problems when moral categories are invoked to explain the causes of clinical illness or when spiritual cultivation is presented as a substitute for professional care. Further analysis is also needed to show how reason, nafs, qalb, moral character, and happiness are interconnected in forming the distinctive ethical framework of soul cultivation found in Hamka's thought. Thus, the inquiry goes beyond identifying Sufi values to reconstruct Hamka's intellectual framework and determine its relevance and limitations for understanding mental health in contemporary society.

The novelty of this study lies in its reconstruction of Hamka's ethical-spiritual framework for cultivating the soul through three philosophical dimensions. First, the ontological dimension investigates Hamka's understanding of human nature and the relationship between reason, nafs, qalb, and moral action. Second, the epistemological dimension examines the bases of knowledge and reasoning used to distinguish moral-spiritual assessments of the soul from clinical knowledge of mental disorders. Third, the ethical dimension analyzes how self-control, moral cultivation, and an orientation toward happiness can serve as sources of value for spiritual well-being without becoming grounds for blaming individuals who experience mental disorders. Through these three dimensions, the study seeks to establish Hamka's Sufism as a source of ethical reflection and meaning-making that can engage with modern mental health approaches without replacing clinical diagnosis or treatment.

On this basis, the study aims to analyze Hamka's conceptualization of the soul, diseases of the heart, and happiness in *Tasawuf Modern*; identify the ontological, epistemological, and ethical foundations of his approach to cultivating the soul; and explain the relevance and limits of his ethical-spiritual approach within contemporary mental health discourse. Through library research and philosophical-interpretative analysis of Hamka's primary writings, supported by relevant secondary literature, the study seeks to contribute

to contemporary Islamic philosophy by clarifying the relationship among Sufism, the ethics of self-cultivation, and mental health in a critical, proportionate, and responsible manner.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study adopts a qualitative library research approach employing philosophical-interpretative analysis. Its material object is Hamka's thought concerning the soul, diseases of the heart, moral cultivation, and happiness in *Tasawuf Modern*; its formal object is the ontological, epistemological, and ethical structure of that thought and the boundaries of its relevance to contemporary mental health. This approach was selected because the study examines meanings, conceptual relationships, and arguments within texts rather than testing the clinical effectiveness of Sufi practices. In qualitative document analysis, sources are identified, content organized, and categories developed systematically, as described by Ji.[11] Conceptual synthesis is then developed through repeated, reflective interpretative reading, in line with Goñi's account.[12] The use of documents as data sources also takes into consideration their strengths and limitations and the need for cross-checking, as discussed by Bowen.[13]

The principal primary source is Hamka's *Tasawuf Modern*, with the 2018 Jakarta edition published by Republika Penerbit used as the bibliographic reference listed in the manuscript. The selected passages address happiness and the well-being of the soul, association with virtuous people, habits of thinking, regulation of desire and anger, orderly activity, and the examination of personal aspirations or self-

[11] Yeonjung Ji, "A Methodological Exploration of Document Analysis as a Qualitative Research Method," Journal of Qualitative Inquiry 10, no. 3 (2024): 25–56, https://doi.org/10.30940/JQI.2024.10.3.25

[12] Julian "Iñaki" Goñi, "Can Literature Reviews Be Both Interpretive and Systematic? Revisiting Critical Interpretive Reviews," International Journal of Social Research Methodology 29, no. 3 (2026): 399–419, https://doi.org/10.1080/13645579.2025.2552752

[13] Glenn A. Bowen, "Document Analysis as a Qualitative Research Method," Qualitative Research Journal 9, no. 2 (2009): 27–40, https://doi.org/10.3316/QRJ0902027.

evaluation. *Akhlaqul Karimah* (Gema Insani, 2017) serves as a supporting primary source for examining ghadab, haqad, and hasad, while *Tafsir Al-Azhar* is used as a limited comparative text when interpreting the terms nafs and qalb. Secondary sources comprise scholarship on Hamka, Islamic ethics and philosophy, spirituality, and mental health, prioritizing publications from 2020 to 2026 without excluding relevant classics. Sources were selected purposively on the basis of thematic relevance, the authority of their authors or publishers, bibliographic clarity, and the traceability of their arguments. The organization of materials and categories follows Kuckartz and Rädiker's principles of qualitative content analysis.[14] The selection of sources and methods is also aligned with the research questions and philosophical assumptions of qualitative inquiry as explained by Creswell and Poth.[15]

The units of analysis are textual excerpts sentences, paragraphs, or extended passages containing Hamka's propositions concerning reason, nafs, qalb, diseases of the heart, self-control, moral character, and happiness. A text was included in the analytical corpus if it (1) directly addressed at least one of these concepts, (2) had an identifiable argumentative context that could be examined, and (3) related to the research questions. Interpretations by secondary authors were not treated as direct statements by Hamka without verification against primary writings. Data collection involved cataloguing works and editions, reading relevant sections in full, distinguishing direct quotations from the researcher's paraphrases, and recording information in an extraction sheet that included the book's identity, section or theme, page number, context of the statement, key concepts, and preliminary interpretative notes. Initial codes were explicitly defined and could be revised during

[14] Udo Kuckartz and Stefan Rädiker, Qualitative Content Analysis: Methods, Practice and Software, 2nd ed. (London: SAGE Publications, 2023).

[15]John W. Creswell and Cheryl N. Poth, Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches, 5th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2024).

analysis, in accordance with the principles of qualitative coding set out by Saldaña.[16]

Data analysis proceeded in five stages. First, close reading was undertaken to interpret statements within the context of Hamka's arguments. Second, conceptual coding was applied to textual units concerning such categories as the soul (its nature), alamul qolb (diseases of the heart), cultivation of the soul, happiness, and the distinction from clinical categories. Third, codes were grouped into themes, which could be revised as new conceptual relationships emerged from the text. Fourth, the themes were interpreted philosophically across ontological (human nature, reason, nafs, and qalb), epistemological (revelation, reason, experience, and the basis of evaluation), and ethical (self-control, virtue, and responsibility) dimensions. Fifth, a critical synthesis with psychological literature and mental health guidelines identified points of convergence while setting limits on any equation of diseases of the heart with clinical mental disorders. Theme development and review followed Braun and Clarke's principles of reflexive thematic analysis.[17] Coding results and interconceptual relationships were presented in matrices to make the inferential process traceable, as recommended by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña.[18]

To demonstrate the relationship among primary materials, coding, and philosophical inference, this study uses a textual analysis matrix. Table 1 presents an illustrative format based on themes discussed in the manuscript. The summaries of textual units in the table are working paraphrases rather than direct quotations; page references must be

[16]Johnny Saldaña, The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers, 4th ed. (London: SAGE Publications, 2021).

[17] Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, "Thematic Analysis," in The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research, 6th ed., ed. Norman K. Denzin, Yvonna S. Lincoln, Michael D. Giardina, and Gaile S. Cannella (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2023), 385–402.

[18]Matthew B. Miles, A. Michael Huberman, and Johnny Saldaña, Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook, 4th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2019).

completed by checking the actual copies of the source editions used before the manuscript is resubmitted.

The validity of interpretation was maintained through three forms of checking. First, every claim attributed to Hamka was traced to a quotation and its page context in the primary work, distinguishing the researcher's paraphrases from the author's own statements. Second, the main findings were compared with *Akhlaqul Karimah*, *Tafsir Al-Azhar* (where textual references were available), and previous scholarship to examine consistency and possible differences in meaning. Third, coding decisions, changes in categories, and the rationale for conclusions were documented as an audit trail. These checks sought to establish credibility, dependability, and confirmability, as described by Ahmed.[19] Epistemologically, the study distinguishes normative-spiritual claims, the author's philosophical inferences, and empirical clinical evidence; its findings are therefore not used to assert that Hamka's approach to cultivating the soul can replace professional diagnosis or therapy. Documentation of thematic changes and interpretative decisions also supports the trustworthiness of thematic analysis, as discussed by Nowell and colleagues.20

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Concept of the Soul and Diseases of the Heart in Hamka's Thought

Hamka's understanding of the human soul is grounded in the view that human life cannot be comprehended solely through its physical dimensions; it must also be understood through the relationship among reason, the impulses of desire, moral character, and spiritual orientation. In *Tasawuf Modern*, Hamka places happiness among the central concerns of human life. Happiness is not measured simply by material

[19] Sirwan Khalid Ahmed, "The Pillars of Trustworthiness in Qualitative Research," Journal of Medicine, Surgery, and Public Health 2 (2024): 100051, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.glmedi.2024.100051

[20]Lorelli S. Nowell et al., "Thematic Analysis: Striving to Meet the Trustworthiness Criteria," International Journal of Qualitative Methods 16, no. 1 (2017), https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406917733847.

possessions, social position, or the satisfaction of desires, but is related to the human capacity to balance physical needs with inner qualities. Within this framework, a spiritually healthy soul may be understood as one capable of controlling destructive impulses, employing reason wisely, and directing life toward virtue.[21]

This perspective suggests that the concept of the soul in Hamka's thought has both normative and philosophical characteristics. The soul is viewed not merely as the locus of emotional experience but also as a center of moral decision-making. Reason serves to evaluate actions, while desire represents a dimension of human impulses that requires regulation to prevent conduct harmful to oneself or others. Accordingly, the well-being of the soul in Hamka's perspective is inseparable from character formation and awareness of life's purpose. This relationship situates happiness not simply as a pleasurable emotional state, but as a quality of life achieved through inner order and moral action.

In *Akhlaqul Karimah*, Hamka considers traits that can damage a person's inner life, particularly ghadab (anger), haqad (hatred or resentment), and hasad (envy or jealousy). These three dispositions are understood as moral concerns that can affect a person's relationship with the self, society, and God. Uncontrolled anger may engender hostility; sustained hatred may undermine social relationships; and envy may lead a person to perceive others' success as a personal threat.[22] These conditions illustrate that diseases of the heart in Hamka's thought have both individual and social consequences.

Philosophically, this understanding of diseases of the heart presupposes that human beings can improve their moral dispositions through education and habituation. Such diseases are not treated as biological conditions that invariably lie beyond human control, but as disturbances in moral orientation and action that call for cultivation. This

[21] Hamka, *Tasawuf Modern* (Jakarta: Republika Penerbit, 2015), https://perpustakaan.jakarta.go.id/book/detail?cn=INLIS000000000779617.

[22] Hamka, *Akhlaqul Karimah* (Depok: Gema Insani, 2017), https://info.gemainsani.co.id/katalog.

interpretation, however, must remain within the domain of spiritual ethics. Anger, hatred, and envy do not amount to diagnoses of mental disorders merely because they are considered undesirable traits within the Sufi tradition. Conversely, a person experiencing depression, an anxiety disorder, or a psychotic disorder cannot be judged to have poor moral character simply on the basis of a health condition.

Istiqomah, Rukmana, and Mujtaba show that Hamka's approach to cultivating the soul encompasses emotional regulation, habit formation, and the development of spiritual values. Their study identifies internal conditions such as ghadab, takabbur, khauf, and huzn within discussions of spiritual illnesses from Hamka's perspective and explains the importance of tazkiyat al-nafs through internal and external cultivation.[23] These findings illustrate the breadth of Hamka's conception of spiritual cultivation. Nevertheless, the use of the expression 'mental illness' in such interpretations still requires conceptual differentiation, because experiences of fear, sadness, or anger do not in themselves constitute psychological disorders requiring clinical diagnosis.

This distinction can be clarified through a semantic approach to Qur'anic terms concerning the inner life. Toshihiko Izutsu argues that major Qur'anic concepts should be understood through their semantic relationships within the Qur'an's overall worldview, rather than through isolated lexical definitions.[24] This principle is relevant to the terms qalb and nafs in Hamka's thought. Qalb cannot simply be equated with the anatomical heart or treated as another name for the nervous system, because its use in Qur'anic discourse encompasses consciousness, judgment, and moral responsibility. Likewise, nafs is not necessarily

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[23] Imroatul Istiqomah, Fikri Hidayatul Rukmana, and Muhammad Shohibul Mujtaba, "Mental Diseases According to Hamka and the Methods of Treatment (A Review of Hamka's Tasawuf Modern Book)," *NUKHBATUL 'ULUM: Jurnal Bidang Kajian Islam* 10, no. 2 (2024): 170–186, https://doi.org/10.36701/nukhbah.v10i2.1708.

[24] Toshihiko Izutsu, *God and Man in the Qur'an: Semantics of the Qur'anic Weltanschauung*, 2nd ed. (Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust, 2002), https://books.google.com/books?id=ZwcjAAAACAAJ.

synonymous with psychological disturbance; depending on its context, it may refer to the self, human impulses, or qualities of personality.

From this perspective, Qur'anic expressions concerning diseases of the heart can be understood as moral and spiritual language that evaluates and guides human life orientations. When Hamka explains the relationship between corruption of the heart and wrongful action, he is addressing how human beings ought to exercise their freedom and moral capacities. This differs from clinical questions concerning the symptoms, diagnosis, and biological mechanisms of mental disorders. The WHO's ICD-11 guidance reinforces this distinction by placing the identification of mental disorders within a framework of clinical descriptions and diagnostic requirements.[25]

The analysis indicates that Hamka's concept of diseases of the heart is better located within a framework of moral-spiritual anthropology: a view of human beings as agents with the capacity to shape and improve their inner qualities. In this context, spiritual well-being in Sufism does not imply freedom from every form of psychological suffering, but rather the ability to cultivate a sound moral orientation amid diverse experiences of life.

Thus, the philosophical contribution of Hamka's thought lies not in providing a classification of mental disorders, but in explaining the relationship among inner qualities, self-control, and the good life. This finding also establishes an important boundary: ethical-spiritual categories can support moral reflection, but they cannot replace clinical knowledge concerning mental health conditions.

[25] World Health Organization, *Clinical Descriptions and Diagnostic Requirements for ICD-11 Mental, Behavioural and Neurodevelopmental Disorders* (Geneva: World Health Organization, 2024), https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240077263.

Cultivating the Soul in Hamka's Modern Sufism

Cultivation of the soul is a central aspect of Hamka's Sufi thought because human beings are considered capable of developing habits that improve their quality of life. Within this framework, Sufism is understood not simply as mystical experience or withdrawal from worldly existence, but as an effort to form individuals capable of living balanced lives. Rahim and Bachtiar show that Hamka's neo-Sufism is oriented toward happiness and closeness to God in response to materialism and the hedonistic culture of modern society.[26] This perspective reveals the practical and social dimensions of Hamka's Sufism, which emphasize character formation in everyday life.

One important idea in *Tasawuf Modern* is that the well-being of the soul should be maintained through five habitual practices: associating with virtuous people, developing habits of thought, regulating desire and anger, working in an orderly manner, and examining one's aspirations or personal orientation. These five principles show that cultivating the soul does not occur through spiritual acts detached from life, but through everyday practices involving social relationships, the exercise of reason, emotional regulation, discipline, and self-evaluation.

The first principle, associating with virtuous people, positions social relationships as a context for personality development. Human values and habits are formed not only through individual awareness but also through interaction with others. Positive social relationships enable individuals to observe exemplary conduct, receive advice, and cultivate moral sensitivity. Philosophically, this principle reveals a relational dimension in Hamka's cultivation of the soul: a person's moral quality depends not only on a personal relationship with God but also on the capacity to form responsible relationships with others.

[26] Fathor Rahim and Hasnan Bachtiar, "Hamka's Neo-Sufism in the Context Modern Society," *Journal of Social Studies* 19, no. 1 (2023): 1–14, https://doi.org/10.21831/jss.v19i1.57513.

This view can be brought into dialogue with Melani's discussion of Ibn Miskawayh's concept of akhlaq. Melani explains that moral character concerns a state of the soul that prompts action with relative spontaneity, and its formation therefore requires education and habituation.[27] This perspective provides a philosophical basis for recognizing that moral cultivation cannot be accomplished merely by transmitting knowledge of right and wrong. Knowledge must develop into stable habits and dispositions to act. The common ground between Hamka's thought and Ibn Miskawayh's ethical tradition lies in the importance of character formation, while Hamka's distinctive emphasis should be explored through the relationship among reason, religious values, lived experience, and social responsibility in modern society.

The second principle, developing habits of thought, highlights the role of reason as an instrument for cultivating the soul. Thinking in this context can be understood as exercising rational judgment before making decisions, considering the consequences of actions, and reflecting on experience. Reason is not merely a means of acquiring knowledge; it also helps people restrain immediate impulses that could lead to harmful conduct. Thus, habitual reflection provides a foundation for conscious self-control rather than mere compliance with prohibitions.

The third principle, regulating desire and anger, indicates that balance of the soul is not achieved by eliminating every emotional impulse. Human beings continue to have needs, desires, and the capacity to experience anger. Problems arise when these impulses are no longer governed by moral and rational judgment. In Hamka's thought, self-regulation may be interpreted as an effort to keep emotions within proportionate bounds so that they do not dominate human decision-making. This perspective opens possibilities for dialogue with contemporary scholarship on self-regulation, but does not justify directly equating moral exercises with particular psychotherapeutic techniques.

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[27] Melani, "Konsep Akhlak dan Penerapannya Menurut Ibnu Miskawaih," *Mahiyah: Journal of Islamic Thought and Philosophy* 1, no. 2 (2024), https://doi.org/10.24239/h8s0p458.

The relationship between Hamka's cultivation of the soul and the experiences of modern society is explored by Aswar and colleagues in their study of existential anxiety in digital society. They identified three principal themes in digital narratives: loss of meaning in life, digital isolation, and uncertainty about the future. Through their reading of *Tasawuf Modern*, they identified gratitude, qana'ah, tawakal, and dhikr as forms of spiritual meaning-making in response to existential concerns.[28] These findings reinforce the relevance of interpreting Hamka's Sufism in terms of how human beings ascribe meaning to their experiences. However, the study does not establish that these practices are effective treatments for all anxiety disorders.

The fourth principle, working in an orderly manner, demonstrates the importance of discipline as a form of self-management. Regularity helps individuals build habits and take responsibility for their activities. In moral cultivation, order is concerned not only with productivity but also with the capacity to maintain a commitment to what one considers good. The fifth principle, examining one's aspirations or personal orientation, strengthens this idea through self-evaluation. Individuals need to reassess whether their life goals and actions remain consistent with the values they uphold.

The five principles can be understood as an interconnected process of cultivation. The social environment provides examples to follow; reflective activity enables rational judgment; regulation of desire restrains harmful conduct; discipline sustains habits; and self-evaluation makes change possible when deviations occur. Hamka's approach to cultivating the soul can therefore be reconstructed as a continuous process connecting moral awareness with the practices of everyday life.

[28] Aswar et al., "Existential Anxiety and Spiritual Coping in the Contemporary Digital Landscape: A Dialogue with Buya Hamka's Sufism," *Teosofia: Indonesian Journal of Islamic Mysticism* 14, no. 2 (2025): 241–272, https://doi.org/10.21580/tos.v14i2.27603.

In his study of psychological well-being from Hamka's perspective, Hisyam identifies conceptual relevance between Sufi thought and the dimensions of self-acceptance, positive relationships, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth.[29] These connections can broaden the dialogue between Hamka's cultivation of the soul and theories of psychological well-being. Conceptual resemblance, however, cannot itself be taken as evidence that both frameworks share the same ontological foundations or empirical measures.

In her seminal work, Carol D. Ryff developed an understanding of psychological well-being that extends beyond happiness as a pleasant feeling to encompass human functioning across those six dimensions.[30] Similarities with Hamka's thought are particularly evident in the emphasis on purpose in life, personal growth, and social relationships. The difference lies in their normative orientations. Hamka regards moral character and the relationship with God as integral to the good life, whereas Ryff's theory was formulated as a framework of psychological well-being open to empirical investigation.

The analysis in this section indicates that cultivation of the soul in *Tasawuf Modern* is a process of moral education carried out through social relationships, rational reflection, self-control, discipline, and contemplation. Hamka's five principles do not stand as disconnected pieces of advice; rather, they form a conceptual relationship that enables individuals to cultivate character continuously.

These findings also demonstrate that a principal strength of Hamka's thought is its integration of spiritual orientation and practical

[29] Muhammad Hisyam, "Psychological Well-Being dalam Tasawuf: Studi Pemikiran Haji Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah (HAMKA)," *Indonesian Journal of Islamic Theology and Philosophy* 8, no. 1 (2026), https://doi.org/10.24042/ijitp.v8i1.27663.

[30] Carol D. Ryff, "Happiness Is Everything, or Is It? Explorations on the Meaning of Psychological Well-Being," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 57, no. 6 (1989): 1069–1081, https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.57.6.1069

responsibility. Sufism is presented not as a means of escaping life's challenges, but as a path for developing the ability to live meaningfully and responsibly amid those challenges.

Philosophical Foundations of Hamka's Cultivation of the Soul

Hamka's thought on cultivating the soul can be examined more closely through three philosophical dimensions: the ontological, epistemological, and ethical. These dimensions are necessary to explain not only what constitutes a good soul, but also how human beings acquire knowledge of goodness and why cultivating the soul forms an essential part of life's purpose. Such an approach makes it possible to understand Hamka's ideas as a framework of moral philosophy rather than a mere collection of spiritual recommendations.

Ontologically, Hamka's thought presents human beings as an integrated unity of bodily and inner life, endowed with the capacities to reason, exercise will, and take responsibility. Human beings are not entirely determined by their desires, because they can use reason and moral awareness to regulate their actions. At the same time, they are not conceived as purely rational beings detached from emotional and spiritual needs. The balance of the soul therefore requires a proportionate relationship among these different dimensions.

This view has historical connections with the tradition of Islamic moral philosophy, particularly al-Ghazali's account of balance among human faculties. Frank Griffel explains that al-Ghazali's ethics brings together the cultivation of virtue, reasoning, and religious orientation in the pursuit of the good life. Within this tradition, virtue is determined not only by intellectual knowledge but also by character formation and actions consistent with human moral purposes.[31] This connection helps illuminate the intellectual context of Hamka's thought. Similarities with

[31] Frank Griffel, "Al-Ghazali," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, substantive revision January 15, 2026, https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2026/entries/al-ghazali/.

al-Ghazali, however, do not imply that Hamka's entire ethical framework should be reduced to a restatement of the earlier thinker's ideas.

Analytically, a distinctive emphasis in Hamka's thought is the direct connection between moral cultivation and the problems of social life. Happiness is not merely an object of metaphysical speculation, but is related to how human beings work, interact, face adversity, and make decisions. Hamka's thought thus links the concept of virtue in Islamic moral philosophy to the practical concerns of modern human life. This ontological understanding positions human beings as agents capable of growth through cultivation without assuming that every experience of suffering can be resolved through moral improvement alone.

In the epistemological dimension, the central issues concern the sources and limits of knowledge about the soul. Hamka's thought highlights the roles of revelation, reason, experience, and self-reflection in shaping human understanding of the good life. Revelation provides normative guidance concerning goodness and responsibility, whereas reason is employed to evaluate actions in concrete situations. Experience and self-evaluation offer means of recognizing weaknesses, understanding the consequences of actions, and making changes in life.

In her study of al-Ghazali's ethics, Sophia Vasalou demonstrates that the analogy between moral cultivation and the treatment of the soul has a long history in Islamic philosophy. This analogy concerns education in virtue, practical reasoning, and the human capacity to evaluate one's own moral condition.[32] The analysis is important when interpreting expressions such as 'healing the soul' in the Sufi tradition. Such expressions may function as philosophical analogies for improving character without necessarily constituting claims about clinical treatment. Thus, addressing diseases of the heart follows a particular

[32] Sophia Vasalou, "Ethics as Medicine: Moral Therapy, Expertise, and Practical Reasoning in al-Ghazālī's Ethics," *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 104, no. 3 (2022): 468–508, https://doi.org/10.1515/agph-2020-5006.

moral logic, whereas the diagnosis of mental disorders requires a different basis of clinical knowledge.

Such epistemological caution is consistent with principles of knowledge verification in contemporary Islamic philosophy. Firmansyah emphasizes the need to restore verification, the ethics of knowledge, and intellectual accountability in response to changing forms of epistemic authority in the digital era.[33] Although that study examines a different subject from Hamka's thought, its epistemological principles are relevant in affirming that claims must be situated within their sources, methods, and disciplinary limits. In the present study, spiritual interpretations of diseases of the heart cannot be treated as scientific evidence of the causes of mental disorders without research employing appropriate clinical and empirical methods.

The epistemological foundations of Hamka's cultivation of the soul can therefore be reconstructed as a relationship between normative knowledge and rational deliberation in life. Normative knowledge establishes the values and ends to be pursued, while reason and experience help individuals identify appropriate actions for achieving them. When the discussion enters the field of contemporary mental health, however, it is essential to distinguish normative statements, conceptual conclusions, and empirical findings. This differentiation is a prerequisite for meaningful dialogue between Sufi thought and modern scientific knowledge.

Ethically, Hamka's cultivation of the soul is oriented toward character formation through virtue, self-control, simplicity, and responsibility. A person committed to the good life is not necessarily someone who never experiences anxiety, but someone who strives to bring actions into alignment with moral values. This perspective has

[33] Mursyidul Haq Firmansyah, "Algorithmic Authority and the Deconstruction of Knowledge in the Digital Age: An Islamic Philosophical Perspective," *Mahiyah: Journal of Islamic Thought and Philosophy* 3, no. 1 (2026): 23–42, https://doi.org/10.24239/332m9x5

important implications for modern life, in which happiness is often associated with material possessions and the attainment of social status.

Verrial and colleagues' discussion of Seyyed Hossein Nasr's thought shows that modern hedonism and consumerism may be examined as moral-spiritual problems associated with the dominance of materialistic orientations. Their study emphasizes simplicity, qana'ah, self-control, and spiritual awareness.[34] This perspective intersects with Hamka's criticism of views that treat wealth and pleasure as the primary measures of happiness. Such a convergence is comparative, however; the differences between Nasr's metaphysical thought and Hamka's orientation toward moral cultivation must be maintained so that the analysis does not erase either thinker's distinctive character.

Hamka's ethical orientation can also be understood through the relationship between accepting life's circumstances and assuming responsibility for change. Qana'ah need not be understood as passive resignation that eliminates effort, just as tawakal does not necessarily entail refraining from action. From a perspective of moral cultivation, these values help people manage the relationship among hope, effort, and awareness of their limitations. Nevertheless, spiritual values may be practiced differently by different individuals and do not invariably produce the same psychological experiences.

In his study of the relationship among religious coping, meaning in life, and hopelessness, Marcin Wnuk shows that the association between religious strategies and psychological conditions involves processes of meaning-making and affective experience.[35] This finding suggests that spiritual support may influence how individuals interpret

[34] Verrial, Nugrawati, and Vebrianto, "Hedonisme dan Gaya Hidup Konsumtif dalam Masyarakat Modern: Analisis Pemikiran Seyyed Hossein Nasr," *Mahiyah: Journal of Islamic Thought and Philosophy* 1, no. 2 (2024), https://doi.org/10.24239/wzqyhz88.

[35] Marcin Wnuk, "The Mechanisms Underlying Religious Coping and Hopelessness: Role of Meaning in Life and Affectivity," *Pastoral Psychology* (2024), https://doi.org/10.1007/s11089-024-01181-4.

life's pressures rather than automatically eliminating clinical conditions. In the context of Hamka's thought, this relationship can be understood as a possible role for life orientation and spiritual reflection in shaping human responses to adversity.

Drawing on these three dimensions, this study formulates an ethical-spiritual framework for cultivating the soul in Hamka's thought. This framework is the researcher's interpretative synthesis of the ideas discussed, rather than a model explicitly named or formulated by Hamka himself.

Ontologically, the framework begins from an understanding of human beings as possessing physical, rational, moral, and spiritual dimensions. Epistemologically, cultivation of the soul proceeds through the interaction of values derived from revelation, reasoning, experience, and self-evaluation. Ethically, cultivation aims at character formation, balanced conduct, responsible social relationships, and an orientation toward happiness that is not exclusively material.

This synthesis demonstrates how Hamka's cultivation of the soul interconnects an understanding of human nature, ways of knowing what is good, and actions undertaken to realize goodness. Together, these components support the argument that moral transformation cannot be achieved through knowledge alone, but requires continuous habituation and reflection. This is the conceptual contribution that can be developed from a philosophical reading of *Tasawuf Modern*.

The Relevance of Hamka’s Thought to Contemporary Mental Health

The relevance of Hamka's thought to contemporary mental health must be situated within a critical relationship between spiritual ethics and psychological knowledge. Hamka offers perspectives on character formation, self-control, meaning in life, and moral responsibility that may serve as resources for reflection when individuals face life's difficulties. Such contributions, however, do not mean that Sufism can be regarded as an effective treatment for every mental disorder. Spiritual

ethics and clinical mental health represent domains of knowledge whose aims, methods, and measures of success are not entirely identical.

In their systematic review of Sufi spirituality and mental well-being, Cetinkaya and Billings found indications that several spiritual practices within the Islamic tradition were associated with positive psychological outcomes. However, they also emphasized methodological limitations in some of the studies reviewed, requiring cautious conclusions about the effectiveness of Sufi practices for mental health conditions.[36] These findings suggest that Hamka's Sufism is more appropriately discussed as a potential source of values, orientation, and spiritual support than as a clinical treatment whose efficacy has been established through direct research on Hamka's methods.

Conceptually, several elements of Hamka's cultivation of the soul can be brought into dialogue with psychological well-being discourse, including self-control, the development of positive social relationships, the establishment of life goals, and the capacity for reflection. Self-control is related to the ability to restrain impulsive actions; the cultivation of social relationships highlights the importance of supportive environments; and Hamka's conception of happiness raises questions about meaning and purpose in life. These similarities suggest possibilities for dialogue between the frameworks but do not yet demonstrate an empirical causal relationship.

Zwingmann's research on the relationship among religiosity, spirituality, and mental health reinforces the need for such caution. A meta-analysis of 39 studies from German-speaking regions found a relatively small positive correlation between religiosity/spirituality and mental health, with a weighted mean coefficient of 0.083.[37] This finding

[36] Merve Cetinkaya and Jo Billings, "Systematic Review of the Relationship between Islamic-Sufi Spirituality and Practice and Mental Well-Being," *Mental Health, Religion & Culture* 26, no. 10 (2023): 1065–1080, https://doi.org/10.1080/13674676.2023.2256265.

[37] Christian Zwingmann, "Religiosity, Spirituality and Mental Health: Meta-analysis of Studies from the German-Speaking Area," *Journal of Religion and Health*

indicates that the association between spirituality and mental health is neither invariably strong nor uniform. Variation may arise from the forms of spirituality measured, social environments, individual characteristics, and the mental health measures employed. The claim that more religious individuals are necessarily less likely to experience mental disorders is therefore an unsustainable oversimplification.

Another consideration is that some religious experiences may themselves be associated with psychological distress. Individuals may experience spiritual conflict, excessive guilt, or religious interpretations that generate fear. In their systematic review of religiosity and recovery from psychosis, Westhead and Georgiades demonstrate that positive religious coping and negative religious coping can be associated with different psychological outcomes.[38] These findings confirm that spirituality does not affect every individual in the same way and cannot be evaluated solely by the intensity of religious participation.

For the interpretation of Hamka's thought, the implication is that teachings on cultivating the soul must be read contextually without blaming individuals who experience mental disorders. The concept of diseases of the heart associated with anger or envy cannot be used to infer that depression or psychosis results from weak faith. Likewise, recommendations to increase spiritual reflection cannot be treated as substitutes for mental health assessment and care. This distinction is ethically important because misuse of spiritual concepts can reinforce stigma and prevent people from seeking the help they need.

At the same time, spiritual approaches offered appropriately and in accordance with individual needs may have a place within holistic, person-centered care. In a meta-analysis of randomized trials, Bouwhuis-van Keulen and colleagues examined the effectiveness of psychotherapy

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65 (2026): 132–157, published online August 12, 2025, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10943-025-02406-3.

[38] Megan Westhead and Anna Georgiades, "The Role of Spirituality and Religiosity in the Maintenance and Recovery of Psychosis: A Systematic Review," *Early Intervention in Psychiatry* 19, no. 7 (2025): e70061, https://doi.org/10.1111/eip.70061.

integrating religion or spirituality compared with standard psychotherapeutic approaches.[39] Their review highlights the importance of placing religiously and spiritually informed interventions within a professional framework with accountable procedures and evaluation. Nevertheless, findings about therapies specifically designed and tested in clinical studies cannot be directly transferred into claims of effectiveness for Hamka's Sufi practices without separate investigation.

Within these boundaries, Hamka's contribution to mental health can be understood in three areas. First, the reflective dimension provides a framework through which individuals can understand their values, goals, and orientation in life. Second, the ethical dimension strengthens awareness of self-control, social relationships, responsibility, and character formation. Third, the spiritual dimension offers religious language through which to articulate meaning, hope, and a relationship with God. These dimensions may provide supportive resources that complement professional care when they are consistent with an individual's needs, beliefs, and circumstances.

This role becomes particularly important when mental health is viewed as a public health challenge. The WHO's 2025 World Mental Health Today report highlights the substantial global need for mental health services, while limitations in staffing, funding, and access mean that many people still do not receive adequate support.[40] These circumstances call for stronger professional services and supportive social environments. In this context, Hamka's thought may be developed as one source of ethical education and spiritual literacy that is compatible with seeking psychological and medical assistance.

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[39] Annette J. Bouwhuis-van Keulen et al., "The Evaluation of Religious and Spirituality-Based Therapy Compared to Standard Treatment in Mental Health Care: A Multi-Level Meta-Analysis of Randomized Controlled Trials," *Psychotherapy Research* 34, no. 3 (2024): 339–352, https://doi.org/10.1080/10503307.2023.2241626.

[40] World Health Organization, *World Mental Health Today: Latest Data* (Geneva: World Health Organization, 2025), https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240113817

Overall, the analysis demonstrates that Hamka's Sufi thought is relevant to contemporary discussions particularly because it attends to moral and social dimensions and meaning in life, which may receive less emphasis when mental health is examined only through clinical symptoms. Such relevance, however, does not make Sufism a comprehensive explanation of the causes of mental disorders or a substitute for professional intervention.

The study's principal contribution is its reconstruction of Hamka's ethics of spiritual cultivation through the relationships among an understanding of human beings, the foundations of moral knowledge, processes of character formation, and an orientation toward the good life. This reconstruction enables Hamka's thought to be placed in a more proportionate dialogue with modern mental health: Sufism offers a framework of values and moral-spiritual cultivation, while mental health sciences provide clinical and empirical foundations for understanding and treating mental disorders.

Thus, their relationship need not be understood as a competition to explain all human concerns, but as a possibility for interdisciplinary dialogue that respects differences in epistemological foundations, methods, and fields of application. It is this position that reveals the philosophical contribution of *Tasawuf Modern* to contemporary discussions of human well-being.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that Hamka's thought in *Tasawuf Modern* offers a framework for cultivating the soul oriented toward balance among reason, desire, moral character, and spirituality as a foundation for human happiness. In Hamka's perspective, diseases of the heart such as ghadab (uncontrolled anger), haqad (hatred), and hasad (envy) are forms of moral-spiritual imbalance that can affect individual conduct and social relationships. However, these concepts cannot be directly equated with mental disorders in the clinical sense, because they differ in their conceptual foundations, methods of identification, and scope.

In Hamka's thought, cultivation of the soul involves five principal practices: establishing positive social relationships, developing habits of thinking, regulating desire and anger, working in an orderly manner, and engaging in self-evaluation. These five principles constitute a process of moral education emphasizing the interconnections among awareness, habituation, self-control, and character formation. Philosophical analysis reveals three interrelated foundations: an ontological dimension that regards human beings as an integration of physical and spiritual life; an epistemological dimension that brings together revelation, reason, experience, and self-reflection as foundations of moral knowledge; and an ethical dimension that regards virtue and happiness as the ends of cultivating the soul.

The principal contribution of this study lies in reconstructing Hamka's ethical-spiritual framework for cultivating the soul through the integration of ontological, epistemological, and ethical dimensions. The framework shows that modern Sufism comprises more than teachings on purifying the soul: it also provides philosophical foundations for character formation, self-control, and a meaningful life orientation. In the context of contemporary mental health, Hamka's thought is relevant as a source of moral reflection, greater meaning in life, and spiritual support that may complement psychological and medical approaches. This relevance, however, does not imply that Sufism can replace the diagnosis or clinical treatment of mental disorders.

Accordingly, this study underscores the importance of critical dialogue between Sufi philosophy and mental health sciences without obscuring their respective epistemological boundaries. The study is limited by its conceptual, literature-based design and therefore cannot establish the empirical effectiveness of Hamka's principles of soul cultivation. Future research may adopt comparative or empirical approaches to examine how Hamka's ethical-spiritual values are understood and practiced in strengthening psychological well-being. Such inquiry would enable Hamka's thought to contribute to the development of contemporary Islamic philosophy through a critical, contextual, and interdisciplinary approach.

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