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Reconstructing Hamka's Philosophy of Islamic Education through the Integration of Sufism and Morality

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Abstract

The fragmentation of intellectual, moral, and spiritual development remains a significant philosophical challenge in contemporary Islamic education. Although holistic education is frequently presented as an educational ideal, the conceptual relationship between spiritual cultivation, ethical agency, and human formation has not always been sufficiently articulated. This article examines the philosophical thought of Hamka (Haji Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah) to reconstruct an integrative framework of Islamic education grounded in the relationship between Sufism, morality, and human formation. Employing qualitative library research, philosophical inquiry, and critical hermeneutics, the study analyzes four major works by Hamka: *Tasawuf Modern*, *Falsafah Hidup*, *Lembaga Budi*, and *Lembaga Hidup*. The findings are organized into three interrelated conceptual dimensions: spiritual orientation, ethical embodiment, and holistic human formation. The analysis argues that spiritual cultivation provides an inward normative orientation for human conduct, morality translates spiritual commitments into responsible ethical action, and education facilitates the continuing formation of intellectually reflective, spiritually conscious, and morally responsible individuals. The article further develops a conceptual model in which these dimensions function as mutually reinforcing elements rather than isolated educational objectives. Its principal theoretical contribution is the reconstruction of Hamka's dispersed reflections into an integrated philosophy of human formation, while distinguishing the researcher's conceptual synthesis from Hamka's explicit formulations. The study concludes that Hamka's thought offers a valuable philosophical resource for rethinking Islamic education beyond cognitive achievement and behavioral conformity toward the formation of morally responsible and spiritually grounded human beings.

INTRODUCTION

Education constitutes a fundamental process through which human beings

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develop intellectual capacities, moral dispositions, spiritual consciousness, and social responsibility. Within the Islamic intellectual tradition, education is not merely concerned with the transmission of knowledge or the acquisition of technical competencies. It is also directed toward the cultivation of human character and the development of a meaningful relationship between the individual, God, and society (Mustakova-Possardt, 2004; Yahya et al., 2025). Consequently, the philosophical foundation of Islamic education must address a fundamental question: what kind of human being should education seek to cultivate?

This question has become increasingly important amid contemporary educational developments characterized by technological acceleration, instrumental rationality, competitive achievement, and the growing emphasis on measurable learning outcomes (Juthi et al., 2025a). Although these developments have expanded access to knowledge and improved educational opportunities, they have also generated concerns regarding the relationship between intellectual achievement and moral responsibility. The ability to acquire information and demonstrate technical competence does not necessarily guarantee ethical maturity, spiritual awareness, or responsible social conduct. Education may therefore produce intellectually capable individuals without adequately addressing the deeper dimensions of human formation (Cirkony et al., 2022; Wollscheid & Tripney, 2021).

The problem is not simply the absence of moral or religious instruction. Rather, it concerns the fragmentation of educational objectives. Intellectual development, moral education, and spiritual formation are frequently treated as separate components of educational practice. Spirituality is sometimes reduced to religious activities, morality to behavioral regulation, and intellectual development to academic achievement. When these dimensions are separated, education risks losing its integrative purpose: the formation of the human person as a coherent unity of intellectual, spiritual, and ethical capacities (Hartinah et al., 2025; Juthi et al., 2025b; Surbakti et al., 2024).

Within this context, the intellectual legacy of Hamka (Haji Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah, 1908-1981) provides a significant philosophical resource for reconsidering the relationship between spirituality, morality, and education. Hamka was an Indonesian Muslim intellectual whose writings addressed theology, Sufism, ethics, philosophy, literature, and social life. His intellectual contributions are particularly relevant to Islamic education because they explore the relationship between religious consciousness, human conduct, self-development, and responsibility in worldly existence (Aljunied, 2018; Amir, 2025; Munirah, 2019).

Hamka's philosophical reflections on human life cannot be understood adequately through a single work. His ideas concerning spirituality, morality, and human development are distributed across several writings. *Tasawuf Modern* provides an important foundation for understanding his reflections on spiritual cultivation, happiness, and the relationship between religious consciousness and worldly life. *Falsafah Hidup* offers broader reflections on human existence, the direction of life, and the cultivation of wisdom. Meanwhile, *Lembaga Budi* and *Lembaga Hidup* provide important textual resources for examining moral character, ethical conduct, and human responsibility (Hamka, 1941, 2015a, 2015b).

These works suggest that Hamka's understanding of spirituality cannot simply be separated from the practical and ethical *dimensions* of human existence. His approach to Sufism invites an examination of how inward spiritual cultivation relates to the formation of moral dispositions and responsible conduct. This relationship is particularly important because spirituality that remains disconnected from ethical

practice risks becoming merely symbolic, while morality without deeper spiritual orientation may be reduced to external conformity.

Previous scholarship has explored several dimensions of Hamka's intellectual contributions. Studies by Supriyadi and Jannah have examined the relationship between Hamka's modern Sufism and character *education* (Supriyadi & Jannah, 2019). Research by Syam and colleagues has discussed the relevance of Hamka's Sufi thought to Islamic education in Indonesia (Syam et al., 2025). More recently, Gunarsih, Yusgiantara, and Baidi have analyzed the integration of spirituality and ethical education in Hamka's thought (Gunarsih et al., 2025). Other studies have investigated Hamka's moral philosophy, educational humanism, and the relationship between spiritual cultivation and character formation.

These studies establish that Hamka's contribution to Islamic education has received considerable scholarly attention. However, the existence of previous integrative studies requires a more precise formulation of the present research contribution. The originality of this article does not rest on the assumption that spirituality and morality have never been discussed together in Hamka's thought. Rather, it lies in reconstructing the philosophical relationship between spiritual orientation, ethical agency, and human formation as a coherent educational argument. The central issue addressed in this article is the relationship between inward spiritual transformation and the development of ethical human agency. More specifically, the article investigates how Hamka's reflections on Sufism and morality can be interpreted as mutually related dimensions of human formation and how this relationship can contribute to the philosophical reconstruction of Islamic education (Putra et al., 2026; Wahab et al., 2026).

The study is guided by three research questions: How does Hamka conceptualize spiritual cultivation and moral development in his major writings? How can the relationship between Sufism, morality, and human formation be reconstructed into an integrated philosophical framework of Islamic education? What theoretical implications does this reconstruction offer for contemporary discussions of holistic Islamic education? This article advances the argument that Hamka's thought can be reconstructed through three interrelated dimensions: spiritual orientation, ethical embodiment, and holistic human formation. Spiritual orientation provides the inward foundation for understanding human purposes and responsibilities. Ethical embodiment translates spiritual commitments into moral judgment and responsible conduct. Human formation represents the educational process through which intellectual, spiritual, and ethical capacities are developed in an integrated manner.

The article makes three contributions to the philosophy of Islamic education. First, it provides a cross-textual interpretation of Hamka's writings on Sufism, morality, and human existence. Second, it develops a conceptual relationship between spiritual cultivation and ethical agency that extends beyond the identification of religious and moral values. Third, it proposes an integrative framework for understanding human formation as a central purpose of Islamic education. Importantly, the three-dimensional framework is a philosophical reconstruction developed by the researcher. It is not presented as a formal model explicitly formulated by Hamka. Its validity depends on the coherence of the interpretation and the extent to which it is supported by the primary texts.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs qualitative library research using a philosophical and critical hermeneutical approach to examine Hamka's ideas on Sufism, morality, and

human formation. The primary sources consist of four major works: *Tasawuf Modern*, *Falsafah Hidup*, *Lembaga Budi*, and *Lembaga Hidup*. Secondary sources include relevant scholarly books and peer-reviewed journal articles addressing Hamka's intellectual contributions, Islamic ethics, Sufism, and the philosophy of Islamic education.

Data were collected through documentary analysis and close reading of the selected texts, focusing on three main dimensions: spiritual orientation, ethical embodiment, and holistic human formation. The analysis involved identifying relevant concepts, categorizing textual findings, comparing ideas across Hamka's works, and interpreting their philosophical relationships. Critical hermeneutics was employed to understand the concepts within their textual and historical contexts while distinguishing Hamka's original ideas from the researcher's conceptual reconstruction (Bell & Taylor, 2004; Sultan, 2018).

The findings were synthesized into an integrative conceptual framework explaining the relationship between Sufism, morality, and Islamic education. Analytical validity was strengthened through cross-textual comparison and examination of relevant secondary literature (Saefullah, 2024; Sari et al., 2026). As a qualitative philosophical study, this research does not establish empirical causal relationships or measure educational outcomes; rather, it develops a theoretical interpretation of Hamka's thought and its contribution to contemporary Islamic educational philosophy.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Spiritual Orientation: Sufism as the Foundation of Inner Human Formation

The first finding of this study concerns the significance of spiritual orientation in Hamka's understanding of human development. An examination of *Tasawuf Modern* indicates that his treatment of Sufism provides an important foundation for understanding the inward dimensions of human existence. Spirituality is not merely a matter of religious symbolism or the performance of ritual practices. It also concerns the cultivation of inner awareness, the regulation of human desires, and the development of a meaningful orientation toward life (Hamka, 2020).

Hamka's treatment of Sufism can be examined through the relationship between spiritual consciousness and worldly existence. This relationship is important because spiritual cultivation should not automatically be interpreted as withdrawal from social and practical responsibilities. Rather, the philosophical question concerns how inward discipline influences the way individuals understand their desires, evaluate their actions, and respond to the demands of everyday life. Within this interpretation, Sufism functions as an inward orientation that gives meaning to human existence. The cultivation of the spiritual dimension enables individuals to examine the purposes underlying their actions rather than merely respond to external expectations. Spiritual development therefore concerns not only the acquisition of religious knowledge but also the transformation of the individual's orientation toward life (Hamka, 1941, 2015a, 2020).

This interpretation has significant implications for Islamic education. Education that emphasizes intellectual achievement without attending to inward formation may produce individuals who possess extensive knowledge but lack sufficient reflection on the purposes and ethical consequences of its application (Subotnik et al., 2011). Conversely, spiritual instruction that is disconnected from intellectual development and social responsibility risks becoming an isolated religious activity (Tumiran et al., 2025). Hamka's conception of modern Sufism provides a basis for questioning these divisions. Spirituality can be understood as a dimension of

human formation that gives normative direction to intellectual and practical activities. However, this proposition must be established through close examination of Hamka's original discussions rather than inferred solely from the general theme of *Tasawuf Modern* (Hamka, 2020, 2020).

The educational significance of this finding lies in the recognition that spiritual development is not an additional component placed outside the educational process. It concerns the formation of the inward orientation through which individuals understand knowledge, evaluate desires, and determine the purposes of their conduct.

Ethical Embodiment: From Spiritual Consciousness to Moral Responsibility

The second finding concerns the relationship between spiritual cultivation and moral conduct. Hamka's *Lembaga Budi* provides an important textual foundation for examining his understanding of moral character, while *Falsafah Hidup* and *Lembaga Hidup* provide broader perspectives on human conduct and responsibility. The central argument is that spiritual consciousness acquires ethical significance when it is expressed through responsible action. A person may possess religious knowledge and participate in spiritual practices, yet these characteristics alone do not necessarily demonstrate moral maturity. Ethical formation requires the ability to translate inward commitments into conduct that reflects responsibility, self-discipline, and consideration for others (Hamka, 1941, 2015b). This relationship can be understood through the concept of ethical embodiment. Ethical embodiment refers to the process through which moral commitments become visible in judgment, decisions, habits, and social relationships (Deligonul & Cavusgil, 2025; Ellis, 2026). In the present reconstruction, this concept functions as the connecting dimension between spiritual orientation and practical human conduct.

Three analytical aspects are particularly relevant. First, moral awareness concerns the ability to recognize ethical dimensions in human actions. Individuals must understand that their decisions have moral implications and cannot be evaluated solely in terms of personal interests or immediate benefits. Second, moral disposition concerns the development of relatively enduring tendencies that guide individuals toward responsible conduct. Moral dispositions are not limited to the knowledge of ethical rules but involve the internalization of values through reflection and practice. Third, ethical responsibility concerns the actual implementation of moral commitments in relationships and social life. Ethical responsibility becomes meaningful when individuals demonstrate consistency between their declared values and their actions. These three aspects are analytical categories developed by the researcher. They should not be interpreted as terminology that Hamka necessarily used in precisely the same form (Hamka, 1941, 2015a, 2020, 2020).

The relationship between spirituality and morality also challenges the reduction of moral education to behavioral conformity. External compliance may result from supervision, institutional pressure, or fear of punishment. Although these mechanisms may contribute to social order, they do not necessarily demonstrate the development of independent moral judgment (Alshehri et al., 2021; Qosim & Siri, 2025). An educational philosophy informed by Hamka's thought should therefore examine how moral understanding becomes an inward disposition and how that disposition is expressed through responsible action. In this sense, the purpose of moral education is not merely to produce individuals who obey established rules, but to cultivate individuals who understand, reflect upon, and take responsibility for their

actions (Hamka, 2015b, 2020). This interpretation also raises an important critical question: can spirituality be considered educationally meaningful if it does not contribute to ethical responsibility? The present article argues that, within the proposed reconstruction, spiritual and ethical development must be interpreted in relation to one another. Their relationship is not automatic, but it constitutes an essential educational task.

Holistic Human Formation: Education as an Integrative Process

The third finding concerns the concept of holistic human formation. The analysis of Hamka's writings suggests that his reflections on spirituality and morality can be brought into dialogue with a broader understanding of human development (Aljunied, 2018; Hamka, 2015a, 2020). Human formation in this article refers to the continuing process through which intellectual capacities, spiritual consciousness, moral dispositions, and social responsibilities are developed in relation to one another. It is not simply the acquisition of knowledge or the formation of particular behavioral habits. From this perspective, education must address the relationship between what individuals know, what they believe, how they evaluate their actions, and how they participate in social life. Intellectual development without moral orientation may become detached from ethical responsibility. Spiritual aspiration without practical expression may remain disconnected from everyday conduct. Moral instruction without reflection may produce conformity rather than genuine ethical maturity (Caidi et al., 2026; Monteiro et al., 2025).

Hamka's writings provide an interpretive basis for examining these relationships. *Falsafah Hidup* is particularly relevant to the question of human existence and the direction of life, while *Lembaga Budi* and *Lembaga Hidup* provide resources for understanding moral conduct and social responsibility. The central educational proposition is that human formation should be understood as an integrated process rather than as the separate development of intellectual, spiritual, and moral competencies. This argument also requires a distinction between holistic formation and the mere accumulation of educational objectives. A curriculum may contain intellectual subjects, religious instruction, and character education without necessarily producing an integrated educational experience. Integration requires a conceptual relationship between these dimensions and an educational environment that supports their development (Hamka, 1941, 2015a).

The present study therefore interprets human formation as a process involving three mutually related dimensions:

1. Spiritual orientation, which provides an inward and normative direction for human existence.
2. Ethical embodiment, which translates inward commitments into moral judgment and responsible conduct.
3. Intellectual and social development, through which individuals develop the capacity to understand, reflect, participate, and act responsibly.

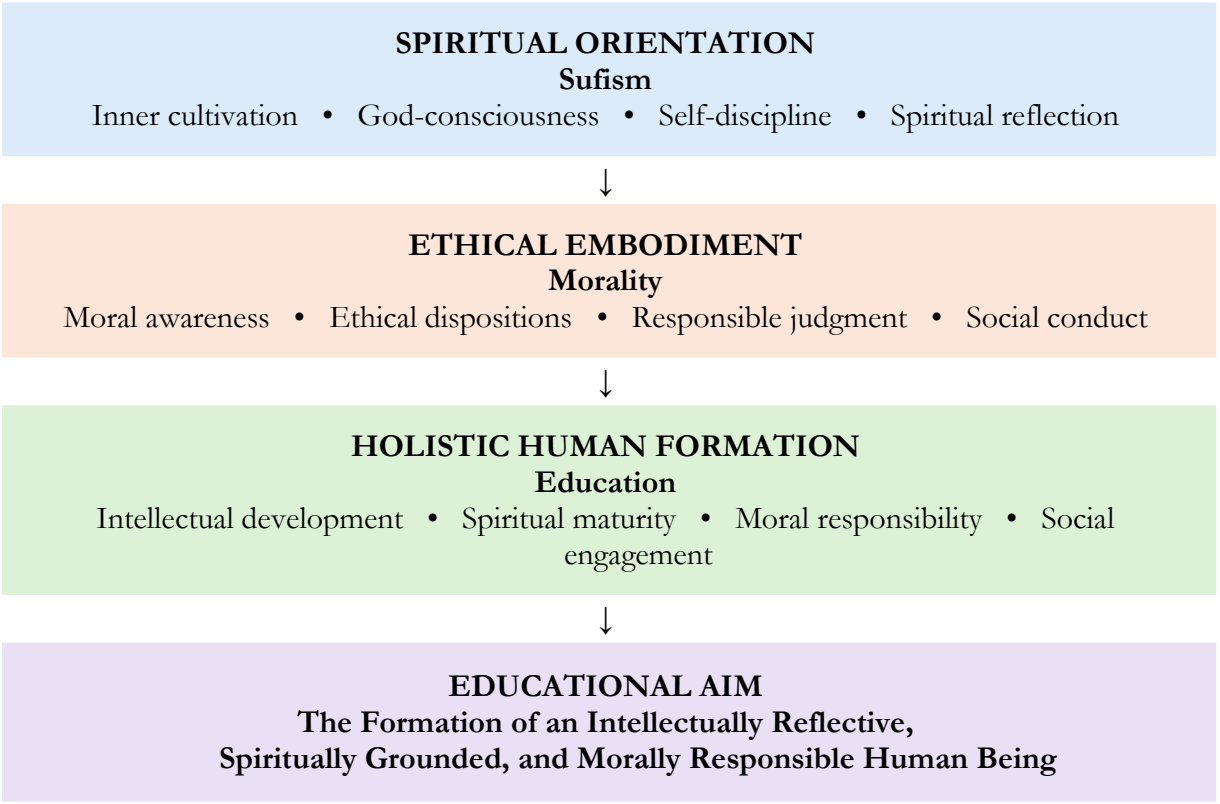
The third dimension should not be treated as a separate replacement for the first two. Rather, it represents the broader educational process within which spiritual and ethical development becomes meaningful.

Reconstructing the Integration of Sufism, Morality, and Human Formation

Based on the preceding analysis, this study proposes an integrative conceptual framework for reconstructing Hamka's philosophy of Islamic education. The

framework consists of three interconnected dimensions: spiritual orientation, ethical embodiment, and holistic human formation (Hamka, 2015a, 2015b, 2020, 2020).

Figure 1.
Conceptual Reconstruction of Hamka's Philosophy of Islamic Education



The arrows in this framework indicate conceptual relationships rather than a fixed chronological sequence or empirically established causal mechanism. The three dimensions are analytically distinguishable but mutually reinforcing. Spiritual orientation provides the inward normative horizon through which human purposes and actions are evaluated. Ethical embodiment connects this inward orientation with concrete conduct. Human formation represents the broader educational process through which individuals develop the capacities to maintain and critically examine their spiritual and ethical commitments. The relationship is also reciprocal. Ethical practice can reveal inconsistencies between professed spiritual values and actual behavior, thereby encouraging further reflection and self-cultivation. Educational experiences can likewise challenge existing assumptions and require more mature ethical judgment.

Consequently, the proposed framework should not be interpreted as a simple linear progression from spirituality to morality and then to education. It is better understood as an integrative relationship in which spiritual reflection, ethical practice, and educational development continually interact. The framework also introduces an important distinction between Hamka's original ideas and the researcher's reconstruction. Hamka's writings provide the primary conceptual materials, while the three-dimensional structure is developed as an analytical synthesis to clarify their educational relationship.

Implications for Contemporary Islamic Education

The reconstructed framework has several implications for contemporary Islamic education. First, Islamic education should reconsider the relationship between intellectual achievement and spiritual orientation. Knowledge should not be evaluated exclusively in terms of its instrumental benefits but also in relation to the purposes and responsibilities associated with its use. Second, moral education should move beyond behavioral regulation. Educational institutions should provide opportunities for moral reflection, ethical discussion, responsible decision-making, and the internalization of moral commitments (Ciptadi et al., 2025; Fajria & Fahmi, 2026).

Third, spiritual development should be connected to everyday conduct. Religious activities should not be isolated from questions of honesty, justice, social responsibility, and respect for others. Spiritual consciousness becomes educationally meaningful when it informs the way individuals participate in personal and social life (Haydar & Noorhayati, 2026; Khorofi, 2023; Yandri & Juliawati, 2025). Fourth, teachers should be understood not merely as transmitters of knowledge but also as participants in the formation of an ethical educational environment (Mengki et al., 2026). The consistency between institutional values and educational practices becomes an important condition for the credibility of moral education. Fifth, educational assessment should recognize the limitations of measuring moral and spiritual development exclusively through external behavioral indicators. Although observation and behavioral assessment may provide useful information, they cannot fully represent the inward dimensions of human formation (Walker, 2002). These implications do not constitute an empirically validated instructional model. They represent theoretical directions that may guide further research into curriculum development, teacher education, and educational practice.

Critical Evaluation and Limitations of the Reconstruction

Although Hamka's thought provides valuable resources for reconstructing an integrative philosophy of Islamic education, several critical considerations must be acknowledged. First, the integration of spirituality and morality should not be romanticized. Religious identity and participation in spiritual practices do not automatically guarantee ethical conduct. The relationship between spiritual orientation and moral responsibility must remain an educational and ethical challenge.

Second, the concept of holistic human formation requires further conceptual clarification. The integration of intellectual, spiritual, and moral development should not imply that all dimensions of human existence can be measured through a single educational framework. Each dimension has its own characteristics and requires appropriate forms of interpretation and evaluation. Third, the application of Hamka's ideas to contemporary education requires historical sensitivity. Hamka wrote within a particular intellectual, social, and religious context. His concepts must therefore be interpreted critically rather than transferred directly into contemporary educational systems without further examination (Aljunied, 2018; Amir, 2025; Rozi et al., 2024).

Fourth, the present framework remains a philosophical reconstruction. It does not demonstrate that implementing the proposed framework will necessarily improve student achievement, character, or spiritual development. Such claims require empirical research. Despite these limitations, the reconstruction offers a basis for further philosophical and pedagogical investigation. Its contribution lies in articulating a conceptual relationship among spiritual orientation, ethical agency, and

human formation that can be examined, debated, and developed in subsequent research.

CONCLUSION

This study has reconstructed Hamka's philosophical thought concerning the relationship between Sufism, morality, and human formation as an integrative framework for Islamic education. The analysis demonstrates that Hamka's writings provide important conceptual resources for understanding the relationship between inward spiritual cultivation, ethical responsibility, and the broader development of the human person. The first dimension, spiritual orientation, emphasizes the significance of inward cultivation, God-consciousness, self-discipline, and the meaningful direction of human life. Through this dimension, spirituality provides a normative foundation for evaluating human purposes and conduct. The second dimension, ethical embodiment, concerns the translation of spiritual commitments into moral awareness, ethical dispositions, responsible judgment, and social conduct.

The third dimension, holistic human formation, positions education as a continuing process through which intellectual, spiritual, and moral capacities are developed in an integrated manner. The principal contribution of this study is the reconstruction of these three dimensions into a conceptual framework that explains the relationship between spiritual orientation, ethical agency, and human formation. Rather than treating Sufism, morality, and education as separate educational objectives, the framework interprets them as mutually reinforcing dimensions of a broader philosophical conception of human development.

This reconstruction also challenges educational approaches that measure success primarily through intellectual achievement or external behavioral conformity. From the perspective developed in this article, Islamic education should facilitate the formation of individuals who possess intellectual competence, spiritual awareness, moral maturity, and social responsibility. Nevertheless, the proposed framework should be understood as an interpretive reconstruction rather than a formal educational model explicitly formulated by Hamka. Its theoretical validity depends on further examination of the primary texts and critical engagement with existing scholarship.

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