

# SUFISM AS A GENERATION (Z) SOLUTION: A REVIEW OF HAMKA'S THOUGHTS FROM A MULTIDIMENSIONAL CONTEXT

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**Abstract:** Tasawwuf, as a dimension within Islam that is often overlooked, emerges as a relevant solution for Generation Z in facing the complexities of the modern world. In Hamka's thought, tasawwuf is seen as a multidimensional approach that offers a way out of the moral and ethical value crises rampant in contemporary society. This research aims to explore the contribution of tasawwuf in addressing the challenges of our times. A qualitative research method is used with a descriptive-analytical approach. The main findings indicate that tasawwuf teachings provide a foundation for creating harmony in human life. Essentially, tasawwuf aims to guide individuals towards a deeper closeness with God, which in turn shapes a more ethical and responsible society. In the context of a constantly changing modern society, tasawwuf plays a key role as a controller for humans against the currents of modernization. By rooting itself in strong spiritual values, tasawwuf is capable of guiding Generation Z towards moral perfection and maintaining the integrity of noble values in everyday life.

**Keywords:** Tasawuf, Gen Z, Hamka

## Introduction

Generation Z grew up amidst the rapid development of global technology, on the one hand they have wider access to knowledge

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and information, but on the other hand they are also faced with a moral, ethical and unclear meaning of life crisis that is endemic in contemporary society. The outbreak of materialism and hedonism has made this generation increasingly lose its spiritual direction. With this context comes the need for *guna* as a solution in providing balance and fulfilling spiritual needs.

Advances in science, technology and rationalist philosophy are only able to provide material-physical satisfaction, but fail to fill the transcendent spiritual values that can only be achieved through obedience to God or through religion, which is His teaching.<sup>1</sup> Modernization and the influence of science, intentionally or not, have given rise to excessive rationalism, leading to secular views. More and more people are trapped in materialism, resulting in a lack of peace of mind because they have not been able to satisfy their endless thirst for materialism. Until in the end it will experience frustration and has led humans to a multidimensional crisis. In this case humans lose their moral grip and lose their life orientation.<sup>2</sup>

In addition, the impact of modernization raises a critical attitude towards religion and often leads to the underestimation of the role and function of religion. Religion can be believed when its teachings make sense or are rational and in accordance with the progress of modern science, besides that religion must be able to answer the challenges of modernity. If religion is unable to answer these problems, then humans no longer need religion, because science has solved human problems without involving religion as the regulator of their lives.<sup>3</sup>

Sufism is often considered as a deviant teaching or contrary to Islamic shari'a and is considered as *khurafat*, superstition and heresy and the like.<sup>4</sup> Sufism is an esoteric dimension of Islam that offers solutions that are relevant to contemporary society, especially the Z

<sup>1</sup> Fahrudin F. "Melacak Kedalaman Tasawuf Modern Hamka di Tengah Arus Modernitas". *Jurnal Penelitian Keislaman*, Vol. 16, No. 2, (2020): 131, <https://doi.org/10.20414/jpk.v16i2.2327>.

<sup>2</sup> Nur Azizah dan Miftakhul Jannah, "Spiritual Masyarakat Modern Dalam Tasawuf Buya Hamka", *Academic Journal of Islamic Principles and Philosophy*, Vol. 3, No. 1, (2022): 86-87, <https://doi.org/10.22515/ajipp.v3i1.5007>.

<sup>3</sup> Fahrudin F, "Melacak Kedalaman Tasawuf Modern Hamka di Tengah Arus Modernitas", 131.

<sup>4</sup> Muhammad Azhar dan Hamim Ilyas, *Pengembangan Pemikiran Keislaman Muhammadiyah: Purifikasi dan Dinamisasi*, (Yogyakarta: PP Majelis Tarjih dan PPI & LPPi UMY, 2000), 120.

generation. Under these conditions, Muslim intellectual treasures are increasingly needed, both historically and theologically. Related to the plague of materialism, Sufism guides people's lives by releasing themselves from lust and worldly desires that are not in accordance with religious teachings and making humans realize the presence of God.<sup>5</sup> Spirituality is a spiritual need in contemporary society, the power of spirituality provides peace of mind, until in Sufism there is a servant's unity with the Creator.

### Definition of Sufism

Etymologically, experts have different opinions about the root of the word Sufism, such as:

1. The word suffah which means the porch of the mosque or the overhang of the Prophet's mosque which was inhabited by Anshar friends, this is because the practice of Sufism experts is in accordance with what is practiced by Anshar friends, namely living in simplicity and getting closer to Allah SWT.<sup>6</sup>
2. The word Shaf means row. Some experts consider this to be the root of the word tasawwuf because tasawwuf experts are a line of people or groups who clean their hearts, so that they are at the forefront of the side of Allah SWT.
3. Shafa means clean, Sufism aims to clean the soul to clean yourself to Allah SWT.
4. Shufanah means a strong wood that survives in the desert. It means that the teachings of Sufism survive in turbulent situations when Muslims are influenced by materialism. Like the strong shufannah wood that survives in the middle of the desert.
5. Theosophy comes from the Greek language which means the science of divinity (Theology), because Sufism discusses a lot about divinity.
6. Shuf means fleece, as used by Sufism experts at that time / early wore simple clothes made of fleece (wool).<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Nur Azizah dan Miftakhul Jannah, "Spiritual Masyarakat Modern Dalam Tasawuf Buya Hamka", 88.

<sup>6</sup> Julian Baldick, *Islam Mistik: Mengantar Anda ke Dunia Tasawuf*, (Jakarta: Serambi, 2002), 42.

<sup>7</sup> HM. Amin Syukur, *Menggugat Tasawuf: Sufisme dan Tanggung Jawab Sosial* Abad 21, (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2002), 44-46.

Linguistically, tasawwuf is the 5th form masdar (تَصَوَّف) of the root word (ص-و-ف) which indicates the first person to use wool (shuf). The person who does so is called a shufi or mutashawwifun (isim fa'il 5th form). From all these definitions, it can be concluded that Sufism is a part of Islamic shari'a that contains methods to get closer or unite a servant with his Lord.<sup>8</sup>

### Hamka's Perspective on Sufism

The practice of Sufism has been carried out since the time of the Prophet Muhammad SAW, until now it has undergone many changes. Since the 11th century until now the practice of Sufism in Islam has increasingly transformed. Initially synonymous with tarekat, but now in the 20th century AD the concept of "modern Sufism" emerged and Buya Hamka was the first to introduce this concept.<sup>9</sup>

According to Hamka, Sufism is the heart that brings life to the body. However, Hamka also observed that many concepts and practices of Sufism deviated from Islamic law that developed in society. Hamka still respects and realizes that not all concepts from religion can be accepted by modern society which prioritizes intellect and ratios.<sup>10</sup> Only rational religious concepts are acceptable to them. According to Hamka, Sufism can be negative if it is not in accordance with the Qur'an and Sunnah, where some Sufis forget and even hate the world. Conversely, Sufism can be positive if practiced in accordance with the Qur'an and Sunnah by balancing the relationship with Allah while maintaining social harmony.<sup>11</sup>

Hamka emphasizes modern Sufism involves where humans are not only solemn in worship, but also balanced in social affairs both including science and technology. This proves that Islam is not left behind from the progress of civilization. Hamka distinguished between philosophical Sufism he developed with popular Sufism, he criticized Sufism that deviated from the teachings of the Qur'an and

<sup>8</sup> Arba'in Nawawi atau Abu Abdullah Muhammad al Mughirah dan Abu Husain Muslim al Qusyairi, al-Lu'lu' wa al Marjan Jilid I, (Ihya al-Kutub al Arabiyah), 2.

<sup>9</sup> Siti Nurjanah dan Akbar Tanjung H, "Aktualisasi Tasawuf Buya Hamka Di Era Postmodern", IJITP, Vol. 5, No. 1, (2023): 77.  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.24042/ijitp.v5i1.18108>.

<sup>10</sup> Karel A. Steenbrink, "Hamka (1908-1981) on the Integration of Islamic Ummah of Indonesia", Studia Islamica, Vol. 1, No. 3, (1984): 134.  
<https://doi.org/10.15408/sdi.v1i3.851>.

<sup>11</sup> Hamka, Tasawuf Modern, (Jakarta: Republika, 2015), 7-8.

Hadith, such as the phenomenon of the cult of teachers, guardians and figures considered holy in society. Hamka considered this to be the cause of the decline of thinking and the backwardness of Muslims.<sup>12</sup> Tasawwuf, which is understood to stay away from the luxuries of the world according to Hamka, is not the true teaching of Islam, the real Islam actually encourages enthusiasm in work and struggle.<sup>13</sup>

In modern Sufism there are several aspects that are in accordance with the dynamics of modern society. First, the ultimate happiness pursued by humans sometimes experiences ease and vice versa, this can be achieved through clean i'tikad or pure belief. Second, Hamka emphasizes the importance of balance between spiritual and physical health, when the soul is in a healthy condition, physical health will also be reflected.<sup>14</sup>

Third is the concept of Qana'ah, accepting what is enough. The fourth is tawakal to Allah SWT, by submitting all decisions and endeavors to the Lord of the universe.<sup>15</sup> True sincerity is to carry out obedience to Allah SWT to get closer to Him and only expect His pleasure alone, in the sense that it is not to get praise from others.

In modern Sufism, Hamka attempts to give the meaning of Sufism as an old discipline with modern-day relevance. According to him, the essence of Sufism is the purification of the soul, avoiding ugliness, misery and calamity. Hamka wanted Sufism to not only be a theory or concept, but to be implemented in the daily life of modern society.<sup>16</sup>

## **Characteristics and Challenges Faced by Generation Z**

Generation Z is defined as the group born between 1997-2013, often called the digital native generation because they are accustomed to living alongside digital technology from an early age.

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<sup>12</sup> Sutoyo, "Tasawuf Hamka dan Rekonstruksi Spiritualitas Manusia Modern", *ISLAMICA: Jurnal Studi Keislaman*, Vol. 10, No. 1, (2015): 114. <https://doi.org/10.15642/islamica.2015.10.1.108-136>.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 115.

<sup>14</sup> Silawati, "Pemikiran Tasawuf Hamka Dalam Kehidupan Modern", *An-Nida': Jurnal Pemikiran Islam*, Vol. 40, No. 2, (2015): 122. <http://dx.doi.org/10.24014/an-nida.v40i2.1502>

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 23.

<sup>16</sup> Muhammad Ainun Najib, "Epistemologi Tasawuf Modern Hamka", *Dinamika Penelitian*, Vol. 18, No. 2, (2018): 320. <https://doi.org/10.21274/dinamika.2018.18.2.303-324>.

Gen Z reflects the influence of their digital era such as, First, Generation Z is known to be tech-savvy which means skilled in using technology, growing up in the digital era and intersecting with various computer devices and applications, in that their ability to master technology can be considered an innate ability.<sup>17</sup>

Secondly, Generation Z tends to be active in social media, this causes less attention to ethics in communication. Third, with active social media, they tend to share many things in their lives by ignoring privacy, of course carrying risks if not properly supervised. Fourth, generation Z prefers to learn independently and develop themselves. Fifth, Generation Z is known to have a high tolerance for differences. Finally, they are impressionable and susceptible to influences from the environment or social media.<sup>18</sup>

The problem that plagues generation Z is moral degradation.<sup>19</sup> Technological advances cause problems such as the waning quality of faith, not being able to think ahead and low discipline. Many Gen Zs lack manners (how to talk and dress), juvenile delinquency such as free sex and drugs are very far from moral values.<sup>20</sup> This degradation occurs as a form of decline, so moral degradation is the process by which a previously high moral level, declines to lower values and quality of life, resulting in deviation.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Husnul Qodim, "Pendidikan Akhlak Sufi Buya Hamka: Solusi Pembangunan Karakter bagi Generasi Z", *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, Vol. 11, No. 1, (2022): 525. <https://doi.org/10.30868/ei.v11i01.2178>.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, 526.

<sup>19</sup> Moral comes from the Latin "mores" which refers to customs or ways. In terminology, morals are interpreted as concepts regarding the evaluation of good and bad actions, attitudes, obligations, character values, ethics, and the like. Fahmi Ridla, Muslimah, "Identifikasi Pendidikan Moral Generasi Z di Masa Pandemi", *Proceedings*, Vol. 1, No. 1, (2021): 118.

<sup>20</sup> Frieswaty, Tjutjun Setiawan, Yanto Paulus Hermanto, "Mengatasi Degradasi Moral Anak Remaja Akibat Pengaruh Media Sosial", *Kharisma: Jurnal Ilmiah Teologi*, Vol. 3, No. 1, (2022): 42-43. <https://doi.org/10.54553/kharisma.v3i1.81>

<sup>21</sup> Agung Prihatmojo, "Pendidikan Karakter di Sekolah Dasar Mencegah Degradasi Moral di Era 4.0", *Jurnal Riset Pedagogik*, Vol. 4, No. 1, (2020): 143-144. <https://doi.org/10.20961/jdc.v4i1.41129>.

## **The Relevance of Sufism in Providing Solutions for Generation Z from a Multidimensional Context Spiritual and Material**

The experience of spirituality in religion is basically a journey into one's own self. Although modern society uses advanced technology to the extent that they feel they have explored the world, even to other planets, they are still poor in inner wandering to recognize themselves as spiritual beings. The advancement of science and technology has made man forget his spiritual nature, resulting in alienation from God. This is called spiritual emptiness, which is caused by a materialistic lifestyle that makes it difficult for humans to find their true selves and the deep meaning of life.

The spirituality that exists in humans can be awakened through the development of the esoteric dimension in religion, known as Sufism. Hamka taught three main concepts, namely, zuhd, patience, and *îthâr*. Zuhd or zuhud means living simply, not greedy for the world and wealth. Someone who is zuhud will not compete fraudulently because he realizes that it is prohibited by God. Hamka concluded that Sufism, which contains true zuhud and is carried out through worship and the right *i'tikad*, is able to function as an effective moral guidance medium.<sup>22</sup> Sufism offers a solution to the spiritual void of modern society by teaching the essence of religion which has an impact on inner happiness and shari'a discipline at the same time.

Hamka stated that worldly happiness is a step towards the happiness of the hereafter and spiritual happiness is related to physical happiness. Sufficient material wealth can calm the heart and mind which in turn creates happiness. Hamka also explained the importance of humans using reason in interpreting nature and material. If you have the nature of *qana'ah* then the wealth of the world will not be criticized.<sup>23</sup> By having the nature of *qana'ah*, one can achieve ultimate wealth. Ultimate wealth is related to physical and mental needs and health. The more one pursues materialism by ignoring religion, the poorer one's soul will be and the more disturbed one's spirit will be. Hamka emphasized the importance of four

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<sup>22</sup> Sutoyo, "Tasawuf Hamka dan Rekonstruksi Spiritualitas Manusia Modern", 123-125.

<sup>23</sup> Hamka, *Tasawuf Modern*, 269.

virtues: courage (shaja'ah), honor ('iffah), the virtue of knowledge (hikmah), and justice.<sup>24</sup>

The best traits are those that are in the middle, avoiding extremes both up and down.<sup>25</sup> In addition to understanding the source of happiness, Hamka emphasizes the importance of knowing the source of calamity and its causes. The first is limited reason and knowledge or without faith. Second, hatred that makes the view of things negative. Third, pessimism that eliminates the meaning and hope of life, as if life is meaningless.<sup>26</sup> Happiness in Islam includes the intellect and the mind, the mind encourages wise thinking by appreciating the favors given by God. While the mind directs to good and right actions.

### **Social Dimension and Practical Life**

The practice of modern Sufism is relevant to the behavior of generation Z who are proactive in seeking world happiness with steps that are in accordance with what the Qur'an and sunnah teach, in which there are recommendations to use time as well as possible for useful purposes. Hamka explained that Muslims must carry out worldly duties as part of spiritual fulfillment. A true Sufi is not one who distances himself from public life, but actively calls for goodness, helps fellow human beings and liberates the oppressed.

Modern Sufism emphasizes the importance of providing mutual assistance (ta'awun) to fellow humans. This practice aims to form a perfect Sufi soul (insan kamil) and carry out the teachings of Islam as a whole (kaffah). This perspective is what Hamka calls the function of tasawwuf. This tasawwuf emphasizes the need for self-involvement in society and is more dynamic than the old Sufism which interpreted zuhud as something less dynamic. Modern zuhud is lived through three stages: first, leaving everything that is forbidden (layman's zuhud). The second is to abandon what is excessive. And third, abandoning that which turns away from Allah.

Hamka observed that Muslims had not received the light of philosophy for a long time, which caused their way of thinking to become backward and sometimes philosophy itself was often hated

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 176.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, 177.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 357-360.

by Muslims.<sup>27</sup> True Sufism according to Hamka is carried out religious activities in accordance with the Qur'an and sunnah, but also in the form of activities with the aim of empowering Muslims to overcome the economic crisis, science to form the mentality of the people.

Hamka offers in his Sufism. First, ultimate happiness. Second, ethics. Third, the happiness of property, here the real wealth is to suffice what is there. Regarding mental health, Hamka said the balance between the two. Self-control to overcome the onset of mental illness, several things are needed, such as associating with believers, restraining lust and anger, working regularly and correcting one's own disgrace.<sup>28</sup>

## Conclusion

Generation Z faces challenges such as mental stress or moral degradation. Hamka's Tasawuf offers a way to find peace through spiritual practices. One of them is qana'ah which teaches not to get caught up in excessive consumptive life. Hamka's modern Sufism aims to restore the true meaning of Sufism as purification of the soul and development of praiseworthy morals in order to achieve true happiness. According to him, a person needs to undergo a rational and spiritual path to achieve this happiness.

With these symptoms of society, it is increasingly clear that Hamka's modern Sufism is very worthy of reference. Because people are affected by the materialistic Western tradition, on the other hand there are people who are complacent about the old Sufistic tradition, with the assumption that by leaving worldly life, they will find inner happiness.

Hamka believed that humans cannot live without spiritual values. Only religion through its esoteric dimension can fulfill human spiritual needs. If materialism is prioritized, a "modern man" is formed who is far from good values such as, too much pursuit of worldly pleasures and lack of time for worship, ultimately resulting in soul emptiness and spiritual emptiness.

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<sup>27</sup> Hamka. *Renungan Tasawuf*. (Jakarta: Pustaka Panjimas, 1986), 15.

<sup>28</sup> Silawati, "Pemikiran Tasawuf Hamka Dalam Kehidupan Modern", 123.

- Agung Prihatmojo, "Pendidikan Karakter di Sekolah Dasar Mencegah Degradasi Moral di Era 4.0", *Jurnal Riset Pedagogik*, Vol. 4, No. 1, (2020). <https://doi.org/10.20961/jdc.v4i1.41129>.
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