

## **Moral Education in Buya Hamka's Tafsir Al-Azhar: Qur'anic Values and Contemporary Islamic Pedagogy**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study analyzes Buya Hamka's concept of moral education in Tafsir Al-Azhar and identifies the Qur'anic moral values embedded in his interpretation. It employs a descriptive qualitative design through library research and tafsir-based textual analysis. The primary source is Tafsir Al-Azhar, supported by Hamka's other works and relevant studies on Islamic education, moral education, and Indonesian Qur'anic exegesis. Data were collected through documentation and analyzed using qualitative content analysis through coding, categorization, and thematic synthesis. The findings show that Hamka's moral education is grounded in the integration of faith, knowledge, and righteous action. It forms three domains of moral responsibility: morality toward God, morality toward oneself, and morality toward fellow human beings. These domains are developed through exemplary conduct, habituation, advice, spiritual supervision, purification of the soul, and rational reflection. The study concludes that Hamka's moral education offers a contextual Qur'anic framework for contemporary Islamic pedagogy by linking personal piety, family-based formation, social responsibility, and digital moral literacy.

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## **Introduction**

Moral education is a central foundation of Islamic education. In the Islamic worldview, education is not merely a process of transferring knowledge or developing intellectual competence, but also a process of forming human beings who possess faith, ethical awareness, spiritual discipline, and social responsibility. Halstead (2007) explains that Islamic moral education is distinctive because morality is closely connected to religious consciousness and the internalization of values. Similarly, Sahin (2018) argues that Islamic education should be understood through its theological, spiritual, intellectual, and ethical traditions rather than reduced to a purely instructional process. Therefore, the success of education in Islam cannot be measured only by cognitive achievement, but also by the formation of morally responsible persons.

The urgency of moral education has become increasingly visible in contemporary society. Modernization, technological advancement, and digital transformation have expanded access to knowledge and communication, but they have also generated new ethical challenges related to responsibility, self-control, human dignity, and social interaction. UNESCO (2021) emphasizes that technological development requires ethical frameworks that protect dignity, fairness, transparency, and responsibility. In this context, Islamic education is expected to strengthen moral formation so that learners are not only intellectually competent but also spiritually grounded and ethically responsible.

In the Indonesian Islamic intellectual tradition, Buya Hamka, whose full name was Haji Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah, is one of the most influential Muslim scholars of the twentieth century. He was known not only as a Qur'anic exegete, but also as a preacher, writer, reformist thinker, and public intellectual. His thought is important because it combines Qur'anic commitment, modernist reasoning, Indonesian social experience, and moral concern. Studies on Hamka's interpretation have shown that his exegetical orientation reflects a strong engagement with modernity, social life, religious moderation, and contextual Islamic thought (Basri & Muhammad, 2023; Firdausiyah, 2021; Zulkarnaini & Badawi, 2021).

Among Hamka's works, *Tafsir Al-Azhar* is his most monumental contribution to Indonesian Qur'anic exegesis. This tafsir originated from his religious lectures at Al-Azhar Mosque in Jakarta and was later completed during his imprisonment. It is widely recognized for its accessible Indonesian language, social orientation, and strong ethical emphasis (Hamka, 2015; Firdausiyah, 2021). Rather than presenting Qur'anic interpretation only as linguistic, legal, or theological commentary, Hamka often connects Qur'anic verses with everyday life, family education, social responsibility, moral character, and the challenges of modern society (Basri & Muhammad, 2023). This makes *Tafsir Al-Azhar* highly relevant as a source for reconstructing Islamic moral education.

Previous studies have examined Hamka's educational and exegetical thought from various perspectives. Basri and Muhammad (2023) discuss *Tafsir Al-Azhar* in relation to religious moderation in Indonesian exegesis. Zulkarnaini (2021) analyzes Hamka's contextual interpretation in relation to feminist exegesis. Zulkifli and Rhosyidy (2024) examine the dimensions of modern Sufism in Hamka's interpretation of the verses of maqamat. Firdausiyah (2021) studies the modernization of Qur'anic interpretation in *Tafsir Al-Azhar*, while Zulkarnaini and Badawi (2021) show the influence of Muhammad Abduh's reformist thought on Hamka's interpretation.

More specifically, several studies have discussed Hamka's educational thought in relation to moral and character formation. Chaer and Suud (2020) analyze child education in Hamka's interpretation of Q.S. Luqman/31: 12–19 and show that Hamka's educational model includes faith education, filial piety, worship education, moral education, and *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar*, which are actualized through the family, school, and society. Ciptadi et al. (2025) specifically discuss moral education according to Hamka in Surah Luqman 12–19 and conclude that Hamka's moral education contains the values of tawhid, respect for parents, social interaction, and the practice of moral values in daily life. Akwam et al. (2024) further relate Hamka's character education in *Tafsir Al-Azhar* to contemporary Indonesian education, especially religious moderation, student-centered learning, and the Pancasila Student Profile. Meanwhile, Trisnani et al. (2025) examine Hamka's concept of hikmah in *Tafsir Al-Azhar* as a response to the crisis of adab, emphasizing the role of spiritual intelligence, critical thinking, and exemplary conduct in forming civilized individuals.

These studies confirm the relevance of Hamka's thought for Islamic education and character formation. However, they tend to focus on particular Qur'anic passages, specific educational themes, religious moderation, gender, Sufism, reformist influence, or the concept of hikmah. A systematic reconstruction of Hamka's moral education as an integrated Qur'anic pedagogical framework

remains insufficiently developed. In particular, there is still a need to connect Hamka's theological foundation of morality, domains of moral responsibility, pedagogical methods, and contemporary relevance into a coherent model for Islamic education.

Based on this gap, this study is directed by two research questions. First, how is the concept of moral education formulated by Buya Hamka in Tafsir Al-Azhar? Second, what moral education values are contained in Hamka's interpretation? The novelty of this study lies in its attempt to synthesize Hamka's Qur'anic moral thought into an integrated framework for contemporary Islamic pedagogy. This study argues that Hamka's moral education is rooted in the inseparability of faith, knowledge, and action, and that this framework remains relevant for strengthening character formation in contemporary Muslim education, including in the family, school, society, and digital public sphere.

## **Methods**

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach through library research. This design was selected because the object of the study is textual and conceptual, namely Buya Hamka's interpretation of moral education in Tafsir Al-Azhar. Qualitative inquiry is appropriate for research that seeks to interpret meaning, examine texts, and construct conceptual understanding from non-numerical data (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The primary data source of this study is Hamka's Tafsir Al-Azhar, especially the interpretations of Qur'anic verses related to faith, worship, gratitude, self-purification, humility, justice, responsibility, parental respect, social brotherhood, and ethical interaction. Secondary sources include Hamka's other works, particularly Lembaga Budi and Tasawuf Modern, as well as books and journal articles concerning Islamic education, moral education, Qur'anic exegesis, and Hamka's thought (Hamka, 2015, 2016, 2020).

Data were collected using documentation. Document analysis is a systematic procedure for reviewing and evaluating written materials as meaningful qualitative data (Bowen, 2009). In this study, relevant passages from Tafsir Al-Azhar were identified, selected, and examined based on their moral-educational content. Supporting literature was used to strengthen interpretation and situate Hamka's thought within broader discussions of Islamic education and Indonesian Qur'anic exegesis.

Data analysis was conducted through qualitative content analysis. Content analysis allows researchers to interpret textual data through systematic coding, categorization, and thematic inference (Krippendorff, 2018; Schreier, 2012). The analysis involved several stages: reading the selected texts, identifying moral-educational units of meaning, coding recurring themes, grouping them into categories, and synthesizing them into an integrated conceptual framework. The main analytical categories were morality toward God, morality toward oneself, morality toward fellow human beings, pedagogical methods of moral formation, and contemporary relevance.

To strengthen the trustworthiness of interpretation, source triangulation was conducted by comparing Hamka's interpretation in Tafsir Al-Azhar with his broader ethical and spiritual ideas in Lembaga Budi and Tasawuf Modern, as well as with relevant scholarly studies on Hamka's exegetical thought (Basri & Muhammad, 2023; Firdausiyah, 2021; Zulkifli & Rhosyidy, 2024). Through this

procedure, the study seeks to provide a systematic and academically accountable interpretation of Hamka's concept of moral education.

## Results and Discussion

### *The Concept of Moral Education in Buya Hamka's Tafsir Al-Azhar*

The findings show that Hamka's concept of moral education is grounded in the integration of faith, knowledge, and righteous action. Moral education is not understood as external politeness or social etiquette alone, but as the manifestation of inner faith and spiritual consciousness. In Hamka's perspective, a person's conduct reflects the condition of the soul, the strength of faith, and the depth of moral understanding. Therefore, moral education must begin with theological awareness and must be directed toward the formation of a morally responsible human being (Hamka, 2015, 2016).

In *Tafsir Al-Azhar*, Hamka consistently connects morality with the recognition of God's authority and the awareness of accountability before Him. This makes moral education fundamentally spiritual. A person acts morally not only because of social expectations or fear of punishment, but because of consciousness of being a servant of God and a moral agent. This view is consistent with Halstead's (2007) argument that Islamic moral education links ethical conduct with religious consciousness and the internalization of values.

Hamka's interpretation also shows that faith must produce moral consequences. Faith is not an abstract belief detached from practical life. It must be reflected in honesty, patience, humility, justice, responsibility, compassion, and social concern. Conversely, knowledge that is not guided by morality may become harmful. In *Lembaga Budi*, Hamka emphasizes the importance of moral character as the foundation of human dignity and social life (Hamka, 2016). This indicates that education must not only sharpen the intellect but also discipline the heart and guide behavior.

This concept aligns with the broader tradition of Islamic education, which views knowledge as inseparable from *adab* and moral responsibility. The purpose of knowledge in Islamic pedagogy is not merely mastery of information, but the formation of persons who recognize truth, act justly, and live responsibly (Halstead, 2007; Sahin, 2018). Hamka's contribution lies in his ability to translate this principle into a modern Indonesian context. His moral education is Qur'anic in foundation, rational in explanation, and socially contextual in application.

The concept of moral education in Hamka's interpretation is not limited to the inculcation of ethical rules, but refers to a comprehensive process of forming the whole person. This process begins with *tawhid*, develops through worship and self-discipline, and is actualized in social responsibility. In this regard, Hamka's thought is consistent with the Qur'anic model of education found in Luqman's advice to his son, where moral formation begins with the prohibition of *shirk*, continues with gratitude to God and parents, and is followed by worship, patience, humility, and ethical social interaction (Chaer & Suud, 2020; Ciptadi et al., 2025). This structure shows that moral education in Hamka's interpretation moves from theological consciousness to personal discipline and then to social ethics.

This finding strengthens the argument that Hamka's moral education is integrative. It combines vertical piety with horizontal responsibility. A person who has good morality is not only one who performs ritual worship, but also one who respects parents, controls speech, avoids arrogance, maintains social harmony,

and acts responsibly in society. Therefore, Hamka's moral education cannot be reduced to individual piety; it is also a social project for building civilized human beings and ethical communities. This orientation is also reflected in recent studies that relate Hamka's character education to Indonesian educational values such as moderation, balance, tolerance, independence, cooperation, and social responsibility (Akwam et al., 2024).

In this sense, moral education in Hamka's thought has three important characteristics. First, it is theological because it is rooted in tawhid and accountability before God. Second, it is holistic because it involves the mind, heart, and behavior. Third, it is contextual because moral values are applied in family, educational, and social life. Therefore, moral education cannot be treated as a separate subject or a ceremonial discourse. It must become an organizing principle of Islamic education.

### ***Moral Values in Hamka's Interpretation: God, Self, and Society***

The textual analysis of Tafsir Al-Azhar identifies three central domains of moral education: morality toward God, morality toward oneself, and morality toward fellow human beings. These three domains form an integrated moral structure in Hamka's Qur'anic pedagogy.

The first domain is morality toward God. In Hamka's moral-educational framework, the relationship with God (*habl min Allah*) is the foundation of all ethical life. Moral education begins with tawhid because tawhid shapes a person's worldview, sense of purpose, and moral accountability. Without tawhid, moral behavior can become unstable because it depends merely on social pressure, personal interest, or changing cultural norms (Hamka, 2015; Halstead, 2007).

Hamka's interpretation of verses related to worship and piety shows that worship is not limited to ritual acts. Worship is a comprehensive orientation of life toward God. Prayer, gratitude, patience, sincerity, repentance, and reliance upon God are not isolated religious practices, but moral exercises that shape the soul. Through worship, individuals learn discipline, humility, dependence on God, and responsibility. In this sense, worship has pedagogical value because it trains the self to live within a moral order.

Gratitude is one of the most important values in morality toward God. Hamka interprets gratitude not merely as verbal praise, but as an ethical response to divine blessing. A grateful person uses knowledge, wealth, health, and social position responsibly. Gratitude prevents arrogance and cultivates humility. In education, gratitude can be developed through reflective learning, spiritual habituation, and awareness that all human capacities are trusts from God (Hamka, 2015, 2016).

Another important value is patience. Hamka does not understand patience as passivity or resignation. Rather, patience is moral strength, perseverance, and self-control in facing difficulty. This interpretation reflects the modern Sufi dimension of Hamka's thought, in which spirituality is not withdrawal from worldly life but ethical strength to live responsibly within it (Hamka, 2020; Zulkifli & Rhosyidy, 2024). Patience trains learners to resist impulsive behavior, manage desire, and remain committed to truth.

The second domain is morality toward oneself. Hamka places strong emphasis on self-purification, self-control, responsible use of reason, emotional discipline, and protection from destructive desires. In his interpretation, the human being possesses both noble and destructive potentials. Education must

strengthen the noble potential and control destructive tendencies (Hamka, 2015, 2020).

The concept of tazkiyat al-nafs is central to this domain. Hamka's interpretation of verses concerning purification of the soul emphasizes that moral success depends on the ability to cleanse the inner self from arrogance, envy, hypocrisy, greed, and uncontrolled desire. Moral failure begins when the soul is neglected. Therefore, education must not only develop external competence but also train the inner life. This perspective challenges educational models that prioritize measurable achievement while neglecting character, spirituality, and emotional maturity.

Hamka also emphasizes the responsible use of reason. As a modern Muslim intellectual influenced by reformist thought, he values rational reflection in understanding religion and morality. In moral education, reason helps individuals understand the wisdom behind moral commands. Learners should not merely imitate moral behavior mechanically; they should understand why honesty, justice, humility, and responsibility are necessary for human dignity and social harmony. Zulkarnaini and Badawi (2021) show that Hamka's exegetical orientation was influenced by modern reformist currents, especially the intellectual legacy of Muhammad Abduh and Tafsir Al-Manar. This rational dimension makes Hamka's moral education relevant to modern pedagogy.

The third domain is morality toward fellow human beings. Hamka's moral education is not individualistic. Although it begins with faith and self-purification, it must be expressed in social life. In Tafsir Al-Azhar, Hamka frequently connects Qur'anic verses with social relations, community harmony, justice, mutual respect, and public responsibility (Hamka, 2015; Basri & Muhammad, 2023).

Hamka's interpretation of social verses, especially those related to brotherhood, equality, and mutual recognition, highlights the importance of humility and respect. Human beings are created in diverse groups and communities not to despise one another, but to know and cooperate with one another. For Hamka, this Qur'anic vision is deeply relevant to Indonesian society, which is culturally and religiously diverse. Moral education must therefore cultivate tolerance, humility, and social responsibility.

Justice is also central in Hamka's moral education. A morally educated person is not only personally pious but also socially fair. This means that moral education should develop sensitivity toward injustice and responsibility to protect the dignity of others. Compassion is another important value. Hamka's interpretation often connects Qur'anic morality with care for the weak, respect for parents, kindness to neighbors, and solidarity with society. Compassion is not merely emotional sentiment; it is a moral orientation that leads to concrete action.

These three moral domains show that Hamka's moral education forms a complete ethical structure. Morality toward God gives theological foundation, morality toward oneself forms inner discipline, and morality toward others builds social responsibility. The three domains cannot be separated because a person's relationship with God must be reflected in personal integrity and social ethics.

### ***Pedagogical Methods of Moral Formation in Hamka's Thought***

Hamka's concept of moral education is not only theoretical; it also contains pedagogical methods for moral formation. The main methods identified in this study are exemplary conduct, habituation, moral advice, supervision, purification of the soul, motivation and warning, and rational reflection.

The first method is exemplary conduct (*uswah hasanah*). Moral education is most effective when educators embody the values they teach. Teachers, parents, and leaders must become living examples of honesty, discipline, humility, patience, and responsibility. In Hamka's view, moral instruction without example loses its force (Hamka, 2016). This principle is consistent with the Islamic moral-educational view that values must be internalized through lived practice, not merely transmitted verbally (Halstead, 2007).

The second method is habituation (*ta'wid*). Good character emerges through repeated practice. Learners must be trained to perform good actions consistently until they become part of their character. Habituation connects knowledge with action and transforms moral values into lived behavior. In the family and school context, habituation can be developed through regular worship, polite speech, honesty, discipline, shared responsibility, and care for others.

The third method is moral advice (*mau'izhah*). In Hamka's interpretation of Luqman's advice to his son, moral education is presented through wisdom, affection, and dialogue. Advice must not be delivered harshly or mechanically. It must touch the heart and awaken moral consciousness. Effective advice combines truth, compassion, and sensitivity to the learner's condition (Hamka, 2015).

The fourth method is supervision (*muraqabah*). This does not mean oppressive control, but moral guidance and awareness that God observes human conduct. In educational practice, supervision should help learners develop internal accountability rather than fear of external punishment. This method is important because moral education aims to build self-regulation and responsibility.

The fifth method is purification of the soul (*tazkiyat al-nafs*). Moral education must address the inner roots of behavior. Arrogance, envy, greed, hypocrisy, and anger should be treated through spiritual discipline, reflection, worship, repentance, and self-control (Hamka, 2020; Zulkifli & Rhosyidy, 2024). This method emphasizes that moral behavior begins from the purification of inner life.

The sixth method is rational reflection. Hamka values the use of reason in understanding religious and moral values. Learners should be guided to understand the meaning and wisdom of moral teachings. This approach prevents blind imitation and strengthens moral conviction. It also shows that Hamka's moral pedagogy is compatible with modern educational concerns about critical thinking and reflective learning.

These methods demonstrate that Hamka's moral education is both spiritual and pedagogical. It is spiritual because it begins with the purification of the heart and awareness of God. It is pedagogical because it requires examples, repeated practice, dialogue, guidance, and intellectual reflection. Trisnani et al. (2025) show that Hamka's concept of *hikmah* involves deep understanding of the Qur'an, critical thinking, and emulation of good behavior. This supports the view that moral formation in Hamka's thought is not coercive but reflective, dialogical, and transformative. Moral education, therefore, should not be taught as abstract doctrine alone but must be practiced within the lived culture of family, school, and society.

### ***Contemporary Relevance for Islamic Education and Digital Moral Literacy***

Hamka's moral education remains relevant for contemporary Islamic education because it responds to the fragmentation often found in modern

educational systems: knowledge is separated from morality, religious instruction is separated from daily conduct, and school learning is separated from family and society. Hamka's framework offers an integrative response by connecting faith, reason, moral habit, family formation, and public ethics.

First, Hamka's concept strengthens the theological foundation of character education. Character is not merely a social construct, but a responsibility before God. This gives moral education depth and transcendental meaning. In this framework, learners are guided not only to behave well in front of others, but to develop inner accountability before God.

Second, Hamka's thought emphasizes the unity of cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions. Learners must know moral values, feel committed to them, and practice them consistently. This aligns with contemporary educational concerns about holistic learning and the integration of knowledge, values, and practice (Sahin, 2018).

Third, Hamka's moral education is contextually Indonesian. His tafsir speaks to Muslim communities living within cultural diversity, social change, and national life. This makes his thought useful for developing Islamic education that is both Qur'anic and socially grounded (Basri & Muhammad, 2023; Firdausiyah, 2021).

Fourth, Hamka's moral education is also relevant to contemporary digital life. In the digital era, moral challenges are no longer limited to face-to-face interaction but also appear in online communication, social media debates, religious content circulation, and digital preaching. The values emphasized by Hamka—truthfulness, humility, self-control, wisdom, responsibility, and social compassion—can serve as an ethical foundation for Muslim engagement in digital spaces. This is important because social media can become a medium for da'wah and education, but it can also produce conflict, misinformation, harsh religious expression, and weak verification of religious content.

Studies on Islamic communication ethics emphasize that Muslims need to apply *tabayyun*, provide valid information, maintain respectful language, and avoid spreading hoaxes in digital communication (Jenuri et al., 2021). Mastori and Islamy (2021) also argue that social media da'wah requires ethical values derived from Islamic teachings so that religious messages are delivered responsibly and do not create hostility. Therefore, Hamka's moral education can be extended into a framework of digital moral literacy: learners must not only understand religious values but also practice them in online communication through verification, politeness, humility, and responsibility.

In this context, the relevance of Hamka's moral education lies in its ability to bridge classical Qur'anic values and contemporary ethical challenges. The principle of *muraqabah* can strengthen digital self-control; *tazkiyat al-nafs* can prevent arrogance and self-display in religious expression; *mau'izhah* can guide ethical communication; and rational reflection can help learners evaluate information critically before accepting or sharing it. Thus, Hamka's framework may contribute to the development of Islamic education that is responsive to digital transformation while remaining rooted in Qur'anic morality.

Fifth, Hamka's framework supports collaboration among family, educational institutions, society, and digital spaces. Moral education cannot succeed if these environments work separately. The formation of character requires consistency between what is taught at home, practiced at school,

reinforced in society, and expressed responsibly in digital interaction. Thus, the relevance of Hamka's moral education lies not only in its doctrinal content but also in its pedagogical structure.

## Conclusion

This study concludes that Buya Hamka's concept of moral education in Tafsir Al-Azhar is built upon the integration of faith, knowledge, and righteous action. Moral education, in Hamka's view, is not merely the transfer of ethical knowledge but the formation of the whole person through theological consciousness, purification of the soul, rational reflection, habituation, and social responsibility. The study identifies three main domains of moral education: morality toward God, morality toward oneself, and morality toward fellow human beings. These domains are developed through pedagogical methods such as exemplary conduct, habituation, advice, supervision, purification of the soul, motivation and warning, and rational reflection. The contribution of this study lies in reconstructing Hamka's moral thought as a Qur'anic pedagogical framework that is relevant to contemporary Islamic education. Theoretically, this study enriches the discourse on Islamic moral education by showing how Qur'anic exegesis can be developed into a systematic model of character formation. Practically, it offers guidance for families, schools, and communities in strengthening moral education, including in digital contexts where truthfulness, humility, verification, and responsible communication are increasingly needed. Future research may examine the implementation of Hamka's moral education in Islamic schools, pesantren, family education, or digital religious literacy programs.

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