



Tawhid in Hamka's Thought: A Critique of Contemporary Islamic Conservatism

Delavia Andrea Fererli^{1*}, Amril²

^{1,2} Universitas Islam Negeri Imam Bonjol Padang

*Corresponding author, e-mail: amrilmag@uinib.ac.id

Abstract

This study examines the concept of tawhid in Hamka's thought and its relevance in responding to contemporary Islamic conservatism, which is characterized by textualist, understanding, a rejection of rational and contextual approaches, and exclusive attitude. Using a qualitative approach thorough literature review and conceptual content analysis of Hamka's works, this study finds that tawhid in Hamka's thought is the unity of Allah in the form of belief, speech and action. Tawhid is not merely theological but also encompasses rational, ethical, and social dimensions. Tawhid is posited as an integrative principle believe to harmonized faith, reason, and action. In this context, tawhid offers a critical alternative framework by strengthening the role of reason, rejecting exclusive truth claims, and emphasizing ethical values in social life. Therefore, tawhid in Hamka's thought provides a foundation for a more rational, open, and contextual understanding of religion, while affirming its relevance to contemporary conservatism.

Keywords: Tawhid, Hamka, Islamic Conservatism, Contextual Islam

Received May 03, 2026 Revised June 09, 2026 Published June 30, 2026



This is an open-access article distributed under the Creative Commons 4.0 Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited. ©2018 by author.

Introduction

In the history of Islamic thought in Indonesia, it has been documented that there have been complex dynamics in its development, among these development is the emergence and growth of religious conservatism. (A. R. Rahman, 2017) Upon closer examination, some researchers argue that the cause of the emergence of Islamic conservatism stems from a theological approach that relies heavily on literal texts and bases religious views on specific interpretive authorities, which results in restriction on the role of reason and diminishes the importance of *ijtihad*. (Bamualim, 2018)

Conservatism in contemporary Islamic studies is understood as an approach that tends to revive literal interpretations of religious texts and also refuses rational and contextual ways of thinking in interpreting Islamic doctrines. Bruinessen considers this phenomenon to be the result of a crisis in religious authority, in which the scope of *ijthad* is limited due to the monopolization of religious interpretation by certain groups. (Bruinessen, 2011)

While literalist conservatism in interpreting religious texts continues to assert its presence within the Islamic intellectual tradition, there also exists an approach to religious understanding that promotes dynamism and contextualization in response to the evolving times, emphasizing the harmony between revelation and reason as the foundation for interpreting religious principles. This is known as the tradition of Islamic modernism. (F. Rahman,

2017) Within this framework, the approaches within the tradition of Islamic thought mentioned earlier, namely the conservative and modernist approaches, reveal epistemological differences and tension in how Islamic beliefs are understood in the contemporary era.

This wave of conservatism is generally characterized by a tendency to interpret religious teachings literally and rigidly, accompanied by an exclusive attitude toward other groups and resistance to rational and contextual approaches in religious interpretation. (Makruf & Jahroni, 2024) In many cases, such patterns of religiosity not only narrow the space for intra- and interfaith dialogue but also have the potential to foster intolerance, and to a certain extent, may lead to radicalism. (Qodir & Singh, 2023) Thus, the rise of religious conservatism poses a distinct challenge to efforts to maintain social harmony. Therefore, conceptual efforts are needed to reintroduce a religious understanding that is not only rooted in and dependent on texts but is also capable of addressing the challenges of the times in a rational, inclusive, and contextual.

In this context, one religious perspective that is not merely based on textual sources but is also contextual in nature is the thought of Hamka (Haji Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah). His religious thought, grounded in tawhid, offers an integrative understanding of religion that unites faith, reason, and action. (Fererli, 2025) Hamka rejects a fatalistic approach to religion and emphasizes the importance of rationality and human responsibility in life. (Amir & Rahman, 2025) From this perspective, tawhid does not merely stop at the level of belief but serves as the foundation for a dynamic and open-minded approach to life.

There are several related studies that discuss Hamka, including a study conducted by Muhammad Dwi Fajri et al. In his paper titled *Teologi Filantropi Perspektif Buya Hamka*, he found that the teachings of tawhid are closely linked to actions, particularly in the practice of philanthropy or generosity. (Dwifajri, 2020) Another study was also conducted by Muhammad Dwi Fajri et al. In the study titled *The Concept of Tawhid Education in the Family Environment: A Study of Hamka's Perspective* it was found that in his thoughts on Tawhid, Hamka emphasized that monotheism shapes the soul of a believer to be strong and steadfast, fostering spiritual freedom, personal independence, and the absence of fear in the face of life's difficulties, as well as the courage to confront all hardships, so that there is no distinction between life and death, as long as one seeks the satisfaction of Allah SWT. (Fajri & Saepudin, 2023)

Next is a study conducted by Luthfi Maulana titled *Women's Theology in Qur'anic Exegesis: Hamka's Intellectual Perspective*. In his study, he examines Hamka's views on the relationship between theology and women, his findings indicate that Hamka paid close attention to women's rights and obligations without distinguishing based on social status. (L. Maulana, 2016).

Based on previous studies regarding Hamka's thought, it can be observed that, to date, most research has focused on the descriptive aspects of the concept of tawhid or theology, and has not explicitly examined its potential for

contextualization within contemporary religious practice particularly as an alternative to addressing religious conservatism. Therefore, based on this gap, this article aims to examine the concept of tawhid in Hamka's thought and to contextualize Hamka's concept of tawhid as an alternative in addressing conservative ideologies, which constitute one of the phenomena of contemporary Islamic religiosity.

Although previous studies have examined various aspects of Hamka's theology, including its relation to philanthropy, education, women's issues, and moral development, little attention has been given to the potential of Hamka's concept of tawhid as a critical framework for responding to contemporary Islamic conservatism. Existing studies generally focus on describing the theological dimensions of tawhid without exploring its epistemological, ethical, and social implications in contemporary religious debates. Therefore, the novelty of this article lies in its attempt to reconstruct Hamka's concept of tawhid as a comprehensive intellectual framework and to demonstrate its relevance as a theological critique of contemporary Islamic conservatism. By linking Hamka's theology with current discussions on religious authority, exclusivism, and interpretive rigidity, this study contributes to the broader discourse on contemporary Islamic thought and religious moderation.

Method

This study employs a qualitative library research method to examine the concept of tawhid in Hamka's thought and its relevance to contemporary Islamic conservatism. A conceptual and interpretive approach is adopted because the study focuses on exploring the theological ideas articulated by Hamka and their significance within contemporary religious discourse. The primary sources of this study consist of Hamka's works that discuss theology, faith, ethics, and social life, namely *Falsafah Ketuhanan*, *Lembaga Hidup*, *Pelajaran Agama Islam*, *Studi Islam*, and *Tafsir al-Azhar*. Secondary sources include books, journal articles, and previous studies related to Hamka's thought, Islamic theology, and contemporary Islamic conservatism.

The data were analyzed using conceptual content analysis. (Krippendorff, 2018) The analysis focused on Hamka's major works discussing tawhid, reason, religion, and social life. The unit of analysis consisted of thematic passages containing explicit discussions of tawhid and its implications. The analysis began by identifying and coding passages related to tawhid, reason, religious authority, religious interpretation, and social ethics. While these categories were derived from the research questions, additional themes emerging from the texts were also incorporated into the analysis. The coded materials were then grouped according to conceptual similarities in order to identify recurring patterns in Hamka's understanding of tawhid. Based on these themes, a conceptual reconstruction was carried out to develop a comprehensive understanding of tawhid within Hamka's thought. The reconstruction shows that, for Hamka, tawhid is not limited to the affirmation of God's oneness but also encompasses epistemological, ethical, and social dimensions.

To examine the contemporary relevance of this concept, the reconstructed understanding of tawhid was compared with several characteristics of Islamic conservatism widely discussed in the literature, such as exclusive truth claims, rigidity in religious interpretation, and limited openness to differing viewpoints. (Bruinessen, 2011) Through this comparison, the study seeks to demonstrate how Hamka's concept of tawhid can serve as a theological foundation for a more open, moderate, and inclusive understanding of religion.

Results and Discussion

Biography of Haji Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah (Hamka)

According to Aljunied, the Islamic thought of Haji Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah, commonly known as Hamka (1908–1981), (Aljunied, 2019) is in fact inseparable from the social and intellectual background life experiences that formed his Islamic orientation. Born in Sungai Batang, Maninjau, West Sumatra, Hamka grew up in a family of reformist scholars. (Rush, 2018) His father, Abdul Karim Amrullah (Haji Rasul), was a key figure in the Kaum Muda movement in Minangkabau, which advocated for the purification of Islamic teachings and the rejection of religious practices mixed with superstition and innovation (*bid'ah*). (Tamara et al., 1996) In addition, the socio cultural context of Minangkabau, which was marked by tensions between adat (custom) and Islamic reform, further shaped Hamka's critical attitude toward religious traditions that were not aligned with the principle of tawhid. (Hamka, 2016) This environment laid the initial foundation for Hamka's critical and rational religious thought.

From a youthful age, Hamka had been exposed to the intellectual dynamics of Islam that were developing during his time. While his formal education was relatively limited, he gained his intellectual formation through a tradition of self-study, interactions with Islamic scholars, and his experience living in Java. In Yogyakarta, he studied under figures such as H.O.S. Tjokroaminoto and Ki Bagus Hadikusumo, who introduced him to the idea of Islam as a social force and a reform movement. (Hamka, 2018) He was also influenced by the ideas of Islamic modernist thinkers from the Middle East, such as Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida, which strengthened his orientation toward rationality, reform, and contextual interpretation of Islamic teachings. (Puspitasari, 2024) The experiences he gained while exploring religious studies led him to a more comprehensive understanding of Islam, for him, Islam was not just merely set of laws, but rather a value system that dynamically influences life.

Hamka's religious understanding, which reflects his rational approach to interpreting religious teachings, is evident not only in his intellectual journey but also in his life experiences. Explicitly, Hamka demonstrated a critical stance in rejecting irrational religious practices, these action are documented in his

autobiography, including an instance during his hajj pilgrimage, where he criticized the superstitious practices observed among his companions. (Hamka, 2018) This story clearly demonstrates how Hamka remained consistent in his understanding of tawhid, which manifested itself in the form of a principle that rectifies faith while freeing humanity from reliance on anything other than Allah.

One of the key turning points in the development of Hamka's thought was when he joined the mainstream organization Muhammadiyah. His involvement in Muhammadiyah led him to participate in various forms da'wah activities and become a leader within the organization. He carried out these activities with a spirit of rational, ethical, and socially oriented Islamic understanding. Thus, with this spirit, he became actively involved in issues related to society, so that Hamka did not merely act as a religious scholar but was a public intellectual closely connected to the community.

Not only was he directly involved, but he also utilized other media to convey his religious understanding through written works, several of his works, such as *Tafsir al-Azhar*, *Tasawuf Modern*, and *Falsafah Hidup*, demonstrate his contribution to the development of Islamic thought that integrates theological dimension with social reality. (F. Maulana, 2021)

The Concept of Tawhid in Hamka's Thought

Tawhid, as the core of Islamic teachings, holds fundamental position in Hamka's religious thought, because tawhid serves as the driving force behind all kinds of religious practice. The understanding of tawhid is not based solely on a theological affirmation of the oneness of God, it's also a fundamental principle in human life, serving as an ethical basis for living Muslim life. Thus, by recognizing tawhid as a core teaching of Islam, religion will never lose its essence, just as Hamka analogized that a religion without tawhid is like parched land devoid of living things. (Hamka, 2017)

Not only did he speak of the importance of tawhid as the foundation of Islamic doctrines, but Hamka also held the view that tawhid serves as a spirit of liberation for humanity from various forms of bondage, not merely social bondage but also intellectual stagnation, which leads to blindly following religious practices lacking a firm foundation. Thus, tawhid serves as an emancipatory force that encourages rational thought and demonstrates that human beings have the right to connect directly with Allah without any intermediaries. (Hamka, 1982a) Thus, tawhid can be understood not only as a theological norm, but also as possessing a liberating dimension in intellectual and spiritual aspects, functioning as a critical principle to oppose any authority

that restricts such freedom particularly in understanding religion and in any form whatsoever.

Tawhid in Hamka's thought is conceptually divided into three principles. First, this principle entails the belief that the universe was created and as governed by Allah. second, humans bear a moral responsibility that they will face on the Day of Judgement. In other words, this principle is a belief in the unseen realm. And Third is the principle affirming that tawhid must be manifested in the form of righteous deeds, not only in an individual context but also in a social one. These three principles in Hamka's thought imply that tawhid must not only be believed in, but also demonstrated through concrete actions. (Hamka, 1982a) The integrative nature of Hamka's principle of tawhid demonstrates the interconnection between metaphysical beliefs, ethical responsibility, and social involvement.

According to Hamka, when examined from an anthropological perspective, human fundamentally possesses a natural awareness that there is only one God, what we know as monotheism. Therefore, humanity's primary task is to safeguard and uphold this monotheistic belief. This task is to safeguard and uphold this monotheistic belief so that it is not tainted by other beliefs, thus, it can be said that humans are not tasked with seeking God. (Hamka, 2017) However, in the process of strengthening one's faith, Allah has granted humans the freedom to think for themselves in their search for the truth, even though reason has its limitation, which must be accepted. (Gusnanda & Nuraini, 2020) Thus, it is clear that Hamka strongly emphasized the need to strike a balance between intellectual freedom and an awareness of human limitation in the presence of God as an essential aspect of monotheism.

In another part, Hamka interprets tawhid was not merely as a verbal declaration, but as something that must be realized through the actions of a Muslim. He emphasized not only tawhid as a matter of heartfelt belief and verbal declaration, but also in the actions of the Muslim people. As Hamka states, "Verbal claims without proper action are meaningless." (Hamka, 1996) Based on Hamka's statement, it can be understood that Hamka strongly emphasized concrete actions in the realization of the genuine tawhid, making this an indirect critique of religious phenomena that are limited to mere symbolism.

In Hamka's thought, the awareness of God's oneness gives rise to a perspective that fosters a sense of equality among human beings, since all humans share the same origin. In this way, tawhid in Hamka's thought does not focus solely on the individual dimension, but also gives special attention to its powerful social implication. Thus, tawhid serves as the foundation for

universal values such as brotherhood, justice, and equality. Tauhid rejects all forms of discrimination, domination, and oppression that contradict the principles of humanity. (Hamka, 1996) In this regard, tawhid provides an ethical basis for building an inclusive and egalitarian social order.

Furthermore, tawhid also possesses transformative power in shaping human character and the human soul. According to Hamka, when viewed from the perspective of psychology, tawhid fosters a free, courageous individual who does not submit to any power other than Allah. (Hamka, 2017) This makes tawhid a source of moral strength capable of freeing people from fear of worldly power and social pressure. (Hamka, 2002) Such a perspective highlights the psychological dimension of tawhid as a source of inner resilience and moral autonomy.

In a socio-political context, Hamka viewed tawhid as the foundation for liberation from oppressive power structures. For Hamka, a follower of tawhid recognizes that ultimate sovereignty belongs exclusively to Allah, leaving no room for the domination of one human being over another. As he argues, there is “no enslavement of the subjects by the King” and “no tyranny of the ruler over the ruled” (Hamka, 1982b). This theological principle translates into a strong commitment to social equality: since all human beings share the same origin, they are brothers and sisters regardless of class, nationality, or race. Hamka therefore rejected any claim to superiority based on lineage, wealth, rank, or social status. Through this integration of theological monotheism, social equality, and human dignity, Hamka articulated a vision of tawhid that challenges hierarchical social structures, authoritarian political systems, and other forms of domination that undermine human freedom.

Thus, Tawhid rejects the sacralization of human power and affirms that absolute sovereignty belongs solely to Allah. Consequently, Tawhid has critical implications for practices of injustice, including colonialism, tyranny, and social inequality. It is this awareness of Tawhid that fosters a critical stance toward all forms of domination that degrade human dignity. (Hamka, 1992)

Ultimately, the concept of tauhid in Hamka’s thought can be understood as an integrative value system that unites theological dimensions particularly the harmony between faith and reason as well as ethical and social dimensions within a single, cohesive framework. With this, tawhid is not merely a normative affirmation of the oneness of God, but rather foundation for making human beings fair, rational, and free in their lives, thus tawhid can be understood as a means to comprehensively realize a better orientation for human life. Therefore, it can be understood that tawhid functions as guiding principle for human in establishing relationships, whether with Allah or with

fellow human beings, where this manifestation is evident in actions within the context of spirituality or social responsibility.

In this way, it can be understood that tawhid in Hamka's thought influences humanity to free itself from shackles of the intellect that foster a spirit of resistance against domination in any form, from religious rigidity to social injustice. These characteristics demonstrate that tawhid serves as a transformative force, functioning as an alternative paradigm in addressing contemporary religious challenges, particularly those related to religious conservatism that fosters a spirit of exclusivism.

Tawhid as a Critique of Contemporary Islamic Conservatism

To systematically analyze how Hamka's concept of tawhid addresses contemporary Islamic conservatism, this study employs an analytical framework that identifies three critical dimensions of contestation between Hamka's integrative approach and conservative Islamic thought. These three dimensions—epistemological, truth claim, and ethical-social—represent key areas where tensions manifest in contemporary Islamic practice. By organizing the critique along these dimensions, this study provides a structured theoretical framework that moves beyond descriptive analysis toward demonstrating how Hamka's tawhid offers a coherent alternative paradigm that directly counters conservatism across multiple registers simultaneously. This multi-dimensional framework represents the study's primary theoretical contribution, offering scholars a conceptual tool for understanding not only Hamka's thought but also the broader dynamics of contemporary religious authority and interpretation in Islamic contexts.

This study proposes an Integrative Tawhid Framework as a conceptual model for understanding how Hamka's conception of tawhid responds to contemporary Islamic conservatism. The framework argues that tawhid in Hamka's thought operates simultaneously at three interconnected levels: epistemological, truth-claim, and ethical-social. At the epistemological level, tawhid encourages the integration of reason and revelation; at the truth-claim level, it prevents the monopolization of religious truth by locating absolute truth exclusively in God; and at the ethical-social level, it promotes justice, openness, and respect for diversity. These dimensions are mutually reinforcing and together form a coherent alternative to contemporary expressions of Islamic conservatism.

The concept of tawhid in Hamka's thought, which functions in both theological and social dimension, can serve as a critical perspective for examining rigid and exclusive forms of religiosity. In the context of contemporary Islam, particularly over the past two decades, (A. R. Rahman,

2017) a religious phenomenon known as Islamic conservatism has emerged. (Arifianto, 2020) Etymologically, conservatism refers to the effort to preserve and maintain while simultaneously limiting change. (Zulfadli, 2023) Islamic conservatism is often characterized by a tendency toward literalism, a rejection of rationality, and the assertion of a singular claim to truth. (Bamualim, 2018)

In line with this, Martin van Bruinessen explains that the term conservatism refers to various phenomena that reject modernist, liberal, or progressive reinterpretations of Islamic teachings and tend to uphold established religious doctrines and social structures. (Sebastian et al., 2021) This wave of Islamic conservatism appears to differ from the views of one of the leading Islamic reformers in Indonesia, Haji Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah known as Hamka. Although his thought is rooted in the texts namely the Quran and the hadith Hamka possesses a modernist spirit that is open to interpretation to ensure it remains relevant to the challenges of the contemporary era. The following are several points of Hamka's monotheistic thought that can be contextualized as an alternative to Islamic conservatism:

First, tawhid as an epistemological principle. In Hamka's thought, positions reason as a vital tool for understanding religious teachings, namely Al-Qur'an and Hadith. Thus tauhid strongly emphasizes rationality as a fundamental aspects of religious life. This appears consistent with the framework of Islamic modernism, as reflected in the views of Fazlur Rahman, who holds that Islamics modernism integrates revelation and reason in interpreting religious texts in a contextual and dynamic manner. (F. Rahman, 2017) for this reason, Hamka believed that reason which plays a crucial role in understanding religious teachings must be utilized to the fullest, particularly in the pursuit of truth. (Hamka, 1982b) Thus, the essence of faith can prevent people from being passive in their religious practice and encourage them to think deeply, reflect, and deeply comprehend revelation, so that religious practice is no longer basen on mere imitation.

Within this framework, Hamka strongly criticized religious rigidity, which stifles the freedom of thought among Muslims. For Hamka, rigidity is a form of intellectual stagnation that risks reducing Islamic teachings to something rigid and out of context a situation he equated with dimming the light of religion. (Hamka, 2017) When religious teachings are understood narrowly through a single interpretation deemed final, the space for ijihad is closed off and the dynamics of Islamic thought experience a decline. As Syafii Maarif said regarding Hamka, Hamka was a defender of the principle of ijihad in understanding religion so that it remains fresh and dynamic in providing answers to the demands of an ever changing era. (Pusat Studi Buya Hamka, 2019)

Furthermore, Hamka's emphasis on the role of reason indicates an effort to avoid literalist tendencies in understanding religious teachings. (Daneshgar & Nurtawab, 2023) In contemporary Islamic studies, literalism is often associated with a conservative stance that rejects rational and contextual approaches to religious interpretation. (Zulfadli, 2023) In this context, tauhid in Hamka's thought can be understood as an epistemological critique of religious practices that tend to be rigid and stifle the space for *ijtihad*.

In the context of Islamic conservatism, the values inherent in Hamka's conception of tawhid are highly relevant as an alternative to the tendency among some Muslims who interpret Islamic texts literally. (Bruinessen, 2011) as Zulfadli notes in his research, a literal interpretation of religious texts risks neglecting the historical, social, and cultural context in which the revelation was received. Consequently, the resulting understanding tends to be rigid and struggles to adapt to the changing times. (Zulfadli, 2023) The literal approach to understanding religious texts can be seen in one of its outcomes, which interprets religious teaching exclusively, leaving no space for alternative interpretations, and thus ultimately limiting the breadth of intellectual understanding of religious teachings. Such an approach ultimately makes religious practices insular and incapable of addressing the complexities of modern society.

A religious perspective that leads to exclusivity, when viewed through the lens of Hamka's concept of tawhid, is in fact contrary to the very spirit of tawhid itself. According to Hamka, tawhid has the capacity to awaken the intellect and encourage people to utilize their rationality in understanding reality and revelation as signs of His Greatness. (Hamka, 1996) as Yusof wrote in his research, Hamka viewed reason not as a rival to revelation, but rather as complementary partner in the seeking of truth. (Yusof, 1997) Thus, it can be explained that the rejection of the role of the reason in understanding religion can, in fact, limit the true meaning of tawhid.

Moreover, just as the integration of revelation and reason in Hamka's concept of tawhid has direct methodological implications for the understanding of Islamic teachings. To understand religion, one must go beyond a literal reading of texts instead consider the context and purpose of those teachings, thereby fostering a process of critical reflection. Therefore, in order to foster a more open, dialogical and contextual approach to religion, an understanding of tawhid is essential as a crucial foundation.

Thus, it can be understood that in his conception of tawhid, Hamka positions reason as a crucial element in affirming the Oneness of Allah and understanding the teachings of Islam, thereby encouraging Muslims to remain

dynamic in their religious understanding. A literalist approach, which tends to downplay the role of reason, is feared to be unable to grasp the reality of revelation and reason in a contextual manner. Thus in this context, tawhid in Hamka's thought can serve as an alternative paradigm to counter religious conservatism, opening space for rationality to understand Islamic teachings that are more adaptive and relevant to the challenges of the modern era.

In this respect, Hamka's emphasis on reason and critical reflection resonates with the concerns raised by Mohammed Arkoun, who criticized the closure of Islamic thought and advocated a more open and critical engagement with religious tradition.(Arkoun & Lee, 2019) Although emerging from different intellectual contexts, both thinkers view intellectual openness as essential for preventing religious thought from becoming rigid and detached from contemporary realities.

Second, tawhid and claims of singular truth. In Hamka's conception of tawhid, what is worth nothing is how he positions tawhid as the absolute truth that belongs solely to Allah. (Pusat Studi Buya Hamka, 2019) the truth sought by human beings is attained through a search based on their understanding of revelation, which yields a variety of interpretations using different approach. These various interpretations are derived from revelation, the truth of which is absolutely acknowledge by Islam.

Thus, when viewed in terms of interpretations stands at the second level within Islamic teachings. Therefore, in essence, a particular interpretation should not be regarded as an absolute truth that negates the truth of other interpretations, thereby ultimately making that particular interpretation absolutely binding. Within this framework, tawhid can serve as a principle to counter the tendency to position a particular interpretation as an absolute truth in religious life. In the study of contemporary Islam, the preference to claim a single truth is often associated with the phenomenon of conservatism, which seeks to monopolize religious authority and restrict the space for interpretation. (Bruinessen, 2011)

One of the defining characteristics of contemporary Islamic conservatism is its endency to assert the sole validity of a particular interpretation, thereby limiting religious diversity. Claims asserting the existence of a single truth particularly regarding interpretation of Islamic texts, give rise to conditions that can threaten religious diversity and foster exclusivity in religious practice, (Noer, 1982) where a specific interpretations is regarded as the definitive standard, while interpretations outside of it are rejected. This results in a perspective that no longer views interpretive diversity as an inevitable manifestation of Muslim intellectual diversity, rather diversity is seen as

something that must be restricted. When viewed at the level of religious authority, this can close the space for dialogue in the search for deeper truth and hinder the dynamics of thought within Islam.

The phenomenon single truth is not merely conceptual but also manifests in religious practices within the public sphere. In several cases, religious practices carried out by a minority group tend to face obstacles or even opposition from other groups on the grounds of doctrinal deviation. This indicates that certain religious interpretations seem to gain legitimacy in setting the boundaries of orthodoxy. This results in the religious expressions of other groups especially if those groups are minorities being deemed unacceptable. Thus, upon further analysis, the claim of single truth does not merely stop at the theological level but gradually influences the social order, thereby reducing religious freedom and eroding the essence of the space for dialogue in religious life. (Farida, 2014)

This completely contradicts Hamka's opinion, who firmly believes that diversity is an undeniable reality, as Hamka wrote, "It is a fact that we are made up of various groups. Sometimes we debate and swap ideas; sometimes we compete for market share and influence. Because of these differences, we sometimes forget our true mission, which is to devote ourselves to God." (Hamka, 2001)

Upon closer analysis, Hamka's quote reveals that the core issue in Muslims does not lie in diversity of views but in the claim of a single truth, which causes people to become overly fixated on asserting that truth rather than on worship. A shift in the function of interpretation has also occurred, what was originally intended to help Muslims understand religious teachings has become merely a tool to defend specific interpretive claims as absolute.

Thus, the contextualization of Hamka's concept of tawhid which affirms Allah's authority as the sole absolute truth conveyed in His revelation serves as an alternative to the claim of exclusive truth in Islamic conservatism, thereby preventing the closure of space for dialogue in religious life. Because authority in religion plays a significant role as a guide for Muslims in practicing their religious life. (Azizah & Rahman, 2025) Tawhid demands the awareness that differences in interpretation are inevitable, so it is inappropriate to use them as claims authority or as a basis for dominating or negating others.

Hamka's rejection of exclusive truth claims also parallels the arguments of Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, who maintained that religious interpretation is always a human activity and therefore cannot be equated with absolute divine truth. (Zaid, 2016) From this perspective, the monopolization of religious truth risks transforming particular interpretations into unquestionable authorities, thereby narrowing the space for intellectual and religious diversity.

Third, tawhid and ethical social action. At the practical level, tauhid in Hamka's thought does not stop at the dimension of belief, but also demands its manifestation in social life. Just as tawhid is an acknowledgment of the oneness of Allah, it also has ethical implications regarding how we treat our fellow human beings, who are His creation. (Hamka, 1996) within this framework, tawhid encourages people to be open, fair, and respectful toward one another. This is because, fundamentally, tawhid underlies every good deed of a Muslim. As Hamka states in the following, "Since a Muslim's worldview is based on Tawhid (the Oneness of God), every aspect of his life and all his creative energy are always centered on God whether consciously or unconsciously, whether by instinct or through rational awareness." (Hamka, 1992)

Hamka also emphasized that true faith must be demonstrated through concrete action rather than through debates over doctrinal correctness. In his *Tafsir al-Azhar*, he articulated this conviction forcefully: those who spend their time arguing about the correctness of their teachings while neglecting to practice them are ultimately wasting their lives, for "what you praise with your statement will leave no mark in your deeds" (Hamka, 2001). This statement demonstrates that an excessive preoccupation with exclusive truth claims can obscure the ethical essence of tawhid. For Hamka, religiosity is not measured by the assertion of doctrinal superiority but by the extent to which faith is translated into moral conduct and social responsibility. In this regard, tawhid requires harmony between belief and action, making ethical practice the primary expression of genuine religious commitment.

Various studies indicate that exclusive religious practices appear in the public sphere through various form of social behaviour that lead to restriction on religious freedom. Examples include opposition to the construction of places of worship, the use of legal instruments related to blasphemy against religious minorities, and social segregation based on religious identity. Social pressures in the form of negative labelling, intimidation, and even persuasion against certain group are inevitable, resulting in narrow space for dialogue in religious life. This phenomenon indicates that the boundaries of religious identity are becoming increasingly rigid, leading to intolerance. (Pribadi, 2021)

Thus, in this context, social relationship with little space for dialogue are a phenomenon that arises from the exclusivity stemming from claims to a single truth. (Mufid, 2016) this causes tawhid, as foundation belief, to lose its ethical significance. Tawhid, which should foster humility in treating fellow human beings, is instead misused to belittle people. (Hamka, 1996) such an exclusive attitude, as Bruinessen points out, is closely linked to a form of conservatism that hinders the development within religious communities. (Bruinessen, 2011)

As previously discussed, in religious life, differences are an inevitability. In addressing these differences, an appropriate attitude is needed to avoid futile action. Therefore, a deep understanding of religion is required, particularly regarding tawhid, because true tawhid will easily resolve differences and foster a positive attitude in individual religious practices as well as in constructive dialogue.

Thus, Hamka's conception of tawhid can be categorized as a transformative form of tawhid. In Hamka's thought, tawhid not only encompasses teachings of faith and governs the relationship between humans and God, but also provides guidelines for interacting with fellow human beings. Furthermore, faith is demonstrated not only through adherence to Islamic teachings and words but also through actions that reflect human values, such as justice, respect, and mutual appreciation.

The ethical and social dimensions of Hamka's tawhid can also be read alongside contemporary Islamic thinkers such as Abdullah Saeed and Khaled Abou El Fadl. Saeed emphasizes the importance of contextual interpretation in addressing contemporary social realities, (Saeed, 2007) while Abou El Fadl criticizes authoritarian approaches that monopolize religious authority and suppress interpretive plurality. (Abou El Fadl, 2006) In this regard, Hamka's understanding of tawhid as a foundation for justice, openness, and social responsibility provides a theological basis for resisting exclusivist and authoritarian tendencies in contemporary religious life.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, tawhid in Hamka's thought can be understood as the affirmation of God's oneness through belief, speech, and action. This understanding demonstrates that faith, reason, and action form an inseparable unity in realizing a Muslim's commitment to tawhid. Beyond this theological formulation, the study proposes an Integrative Tawhid Framework consisting of three interconnected dimensions: epistemological, truth-claim, and ethical-social. Through these dimensions, tawhid functions not only as a doctrine of faith but also as a foundation for religious reasoning, interpretive openness, and social ethics. This framework provides a conceptual model for understanding how Hamka's integrative approach to tawhid offers a coherent alternative to contemporary Islamic conservatism by challenging literalism, exclusive truth claims, and socially exclusionary forms of religiosity.

Nevertheless, this study has several limitations. It focuses primarily on a textual analysis of Hamka's works and therefore does not examine how his ideas have been received and implemented within contemporary Muslim communities. In addition, the study does not provide a systematic comparison

between Hamka's thought and that of other contemporary Muslim thinkers who have addressed similar concerns regarding religious authority and religious interpretation. Future research may therefore undertake comparative studies between Hamka and thinkers such as Mohammed Arkoun, Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, Abdullah Saeed, and Khaled Abou El Fadl in order to enrich our understanding of Hamka's position within contemporary Islamic discourse. Further studies may also explore the practical relevance of Hamka's concept of tawhid in addressing contemporary religious and social challenges across diverse Muslim contexts.

Reference

- Abou El Fadl, K. (2006). *Selamatkan islam dari muslim puritan*. Penerbit Serambi.
- Aljunied, K. (2019). *Hamka and Islam: Cosmopolitan Reform in the Malay World*. Cornell University Press.
- Amir, A. N., & Rahman, T. A. (2025). Hamka's reformist epistemology: Modernist genealogies, hermeneutical strategies, and the making of Islamic renewal in the Malay-Indonesian world. *KURIOSITAS*, 132–142.
- Arifianto, A. R. (2020). Rising Islamism and the struggle for Islamic authority in post-reformasi Indonesia. *TRaNS: Trans-Regional and-National Studies of Southeast Asia*, 8(1), 37–50.
- Arkoun, M., & Lee, R. D. (2019). *Rethinking Islam: Common questions, uncommon answers*. Routledge.
- Azizah, R. N., & Rahman, Y. (2025). The Reason for Freedom in Religious Authority (A Study of Mustafa Akyol's Perspective in Contemporary Islam). *Jurnal Kawakib*, 6(2), 320–338.
- Bamualim, C. S. (2018). *Kaum Muda Muslim Milenial: Konservatisme, Hibridasi Identitas dan Tantangan Radikalisme*. Center For The Study of Religion and Culture (CSRC) Pusat Kajian Agama dan
- Bruinessen, M. van. (2011). *What Happened to the Smiling Face of Indonesian Islam?: Muslim intellectualism and the conservative turn in post-Suharto Indonesia*.
- Daneshgar, M., & Nurtawab, E. (2023). *Malay-Indonesian Islamic studies: A Festschrift in honor of Peter G. Riddell*. Brill.
- Dwifajri, M. (2020). Teologi Filantropi Perspektif Buya HAMKA. *Al-Urban*, 4(1), 31–45.
- Fajri, M. D., & Saepudin, D. (2023). The Concept Of Tauhid Education In The Family Environment: Study Of Hamka's Perspective. *Profetika: Jurnal Studi Islam*, 24(01), 33–45.
- Farida, A. (2014). Respon Organisasi Massa Islam Terhadap Syiah Di Bandung Jawa Barat: Islamic Mass Organizations's Responses To Shi'a A Muslims In Bandung, West Java. *Penamas*, 27(2), 159–176.
- Fererli, D. A. (2025). Exploring Tauhid as The Balance of Faith, Reason, and Worship in Hamka's Intellectual Thought. *Majalah Ilmu Pengetahuan Dan Pemikiran Keagamaan Tajdid*, 28(1).

-
- Gusnanda, G., & Nuraini, N. (2020). Menimbang Urgensi Ukhuwah Wathaniyah dalam Kasus Intoleransi Beragama di Indonesia. *Jurnal Fuaduna: Jurnal Kajian Keagamaan Dan Kemasyarakatan*, 4(1), 1–14.
- Hamka. (1982a). *Dari Lembah Cita-Cita* (6th ed.). Bulan Bintang.
- Hamka. (1982b). *Studi Islam* (1st ed.). Pustaka Panjimas Indonesia.
- Hamka. (1992). *Pandangan Hidup Muslim* (4th ed.). PT Bulan Bintang.
- Hamka. (1996). *Pelajaran Agama Islam* (12th ed.). PT Bulan Bintang.
- Hamka. (2001). *Tafsir Al-Azhar Jilid 2* (4th ed.). Pustaka Nasional Pte Ltd.
- Hamka. (2002). *Dari Hati Ke Hati; Tentang: Agama, Sosial-Budaya, Politik* (1st ed.). Pustaka Panjimas.
- Hamka. (2017). *Falsafah Ketuhanan* (1st ed.). Gema Insani.
- Hamka. (2018). *Kenang-Kenangan Hidup* (1st ed.). Gema Insani.
- Hamka, R. (2016). *Pribadi dan Martabat Buya Hamka*. Noura (PT Mizan Publika).
- Krippendorff, K. (2018). *Content analysis: An introduction to its methodology*. Sage publications.
- Makruf, J., & Jahroni, J. (2024). From Islamic modernism to Islamic conservatism: The case of West Sumatra Provinces, Indonesia. *Cogent Social Sciences*, 10(1), 2406297. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2024.2406297>
- Maulana, F. (2021). Akhlak Dalam Perspektif Buya Hamka. *Jurnal Al Makrifat*, 6(2).
- Maulana, L. (2016). Teologi Perempuan dalam Tafsir Al-quran: Perspektif Pemikiran Hamka. *Musawa Jurnal Studi Gender Dan Islam*, 15(2), 273–296.
- Mufid, F. (2016). Radikalisme Islam dalam Perspektif Epistemologi. *Addin*, 10(1), 61–82.
- Noer, D. (1982). *Gerakan Modern Islam di Indonesia 1900-1942* (2nd ed.). PT Pustaka LP3ES Indonesia.
- Pribadi, Y. (2021). *Kebangkitan konservatisme Islam: Politik identitas dan potret demokrasi di Indonesia*.
- Pusat Studi Buya Hamka. (2019). *Ensiklopedia Buya Hamka: Percikan Pemikiran, Penafsiran, Pemahaman, dan Imajinasi Autentik Buya Hamka* (1st ed.). Suara Muhammadiyah.
- Puspitasari, R. (2024). Understanding Buya Hamka dan Tafsir Al-Azhar. *AR-ROSYAD: Jurnal Keislaman Dan Sosial Humaniora*, 2(2), 1–17.
- Qodir, Z., & Singh, B. (2023). The Contestation of Contemporary Islam: Conservative Islam versus Progressive Islam. *ESENSIA: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Ushuluddin*, 23(2), 147–165.
- Rahman, A. R. (2017). Perkembangan Islam di Indonesia Masa Kemerdekaan (Suatu Kajian Historis). *Lensa Budaya: Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu-Ilmu Budaya*, 12(2).
- Rahman, F. (2017). *Islam & modernity: Transformation of an intellectual tradition* (Vol. 15). University of Chicago Press.
- Rush, J. R. (2018). *Adicerita Hamka* (2nd ed.). Gramedia Pustaka Utama.
- Saeed, A. (2007). Trends in Contemporary Islam: A Preliminary Attempt at a Classification. *Muslim World*, 97(3).
-

-
- Sebastian, L. C., Hasyim, S., & Arifianto, A. R. (2021). *Rising Islamic Conservatism in Indonesia*. New York: Routledge.
- Tamara, N., Sanusi, B., & Djauhari, V. (Eds.). (1996). *Hamka Di Mata Hati Umat* (3rd ed.). Pustaka Sinar Harapan.
- Yusof, W. S. W. (1997). *Hamka's "Tafsir al-Azhar": Qur'anic exegesis as a mirror of social change*. Temple University.
- Zaid, N. H. A. (2016). *Tekstualitas Al-Qur'an: Kritik Terhadap Ulumul Qur'an*. IRCiSoD.
- Zulfadli. (2023). *Gerakan Konservatisme Islam Lokal di Sumatera Barat Pasca Orde Baru*. Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah.