The Relevance of Modern Sufism in Confronting the Phenomenon of Dehumanization Caused by the Modern Lifestyle

Mudzalifah Sri Dewi Masitho[1], Nailatin Fauziyah[2]

[1,2]Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Ampel Surabaya
e-mail: mudzalifahsridewimasitho@gmail.com [1], nailatinfauziyah@uinsa.ac.id[2]

ABSTRACT

Modern lifestyles can lead to the phenomenon of dehumanization, which often leads to a decline in the quality of human relationships and a loss of existential meaning in everyday life. An increasingly materialistic and individualistic lifestyle can also neglect human and spiritual aspects, causing a crisis of identity and psychological well-being. In such a situation, contemporary Sufism offers relevant perspectives and methods to address these issues. As part of the Islamic mystical tradition, Sufism emphasizes the importance of a direct relationship with God, self-introspection, and the search for deep meaning. By adapting and interpreting Sufism in accordance with modern times, Sufism can offer an alternative to the dehumanizing tendencies that often occur in societies that are overly focused on materialism and the routine of daily life. The main focus will be on the basic principles of Sufism that can be applied in everyday life and how these can restore and strengthen neglected aspects of humanity. Therefore, it is hoped that modern Sufism can provide a profound and comprehensive solution to overcome dehumanization and restore balance in contemporary life.

Keywords: lifestyle, dehumanization, modern Sufism

INTRODUCTION

Modernity has brought about profound changes in the way humans think, act, and live their lives. Technological advancements, the globalization of information, and the ever-increasing demands for efficiency and productivity have led to a fast-paced and highly competitive lifestyle. However, behind these impressive achievements lies a troubling consequence: the weakening of humanitarian and spiritual values. One of the most critical symptoms reflecting this condition is dehumanization. The concept of dehumanization refers to a state in which individuals are treated—or treat others—as mere objects, rather than as whole human beings with intrinsic value and dignity. Bandura (1999) describes dehumanization as a mechanism of moral disengagement in which perpetrators of violence disconnect empathy and strip away the humanity of their victims in order to justify acts of oppression

or aggression. In the context of modern life, dehumanization manifests in various forms: such as inhumane treatment in the workplace, the commodification of the human body through social media, and a growing sense of social indifference in human relationships.

Fromm (1955) portrayed modern humans as *homo consumens*—individuals whose identity and existence are defined by what they own and consume, rather than by noble values or meaningful relationships. This depiction illustrates how modernity has created individuals who are alienated not only from others, but also from themselves. This sense of alienation triggers an identity crisis, inner emptiness, and contributes to the rising prevalence of psychological and social disorders.

This phenomenon of dehumanization reflects a growing spiritual crisis, especially as the dimensions of life's meaning and the transcendental connection with God are increasingly neglected. It is within this context that Sufism—particularly modern Sufism (neo-Sufism)—becomes a relevant subject of study. Sufism does not merely focus on the vertical relationship between humans and God; it also emphasizes the importance of soul purification (*tazkiyatun nafs*), self-awareness (*muraqabah*), and social empathy (*rahmah*) as foundational elements of human character. According to Nasr (2001), Sufism represents the purest form of Islamic spirituality and serves as a bridge between the material and the transcendental realms in a balanced manner.

Modern Sufism, as explained by Haidar Bagir (2016), is a form of re-actualization of Sufi values that have been adapted to the challenges of contemporary life. It is no longer confined to an ascetic lifestyle detached from worldly affairs, but instead serves as an ethical and spiritual guide for navigating the complexities of worldly life. In this way, modern Sufism offers a relevant approach to addressing dehumanization—through the cultivation of inner awareness, the reinforcement of compassion, and the reorientation of life toward meaning and spiritual wholeness.

RESEARCH METHODS

The method used in this study is a qualitative approach. The research adopts a library research method, as outlined by Zed (2004), with the following stages: (1) determining the focus of the study, namely dehumanization and modern Sufism; (2) searching for sources through journals, books, and scholarly articles available on Google Scholar and Garuda; (3) selecting relevant literature; and (4) conducting content analysis to construct a theoretical framework. The data sources are drawn from the works of Bandura (1999) on dehumanization, Fromm (1955) on the crisis of humanity, as well as Haidar Bagir (2016) and Nasr (2001) on modern Sufism as a spiritual solution to the problems of contemporary life.

The analytical method employed in this study is descriptive-analytical. This approach is intended to help readers easily understand and gain a clear picture of the issues discussed within the chosen theme, as well as to connect various existing problems with the theories applied in order to attain clarity regarding the research being conducted.

RESULTH AND DISCUSSION
Modern Lifestyle

The modern lifestyle is a phenomenon strongly influenced by technological advancement, urbanization, and globalization, all of which have significantly transformed the way people live. In this context, society has become increasingly dependent on technology, with high mobility and a fast-

paced way of living emerging as dominant features. Today's modern lifestyle is also marked by a rise in individualism, where personal freedom and aspirations are placed at the forefront. Additionally, the trend toward instant consumption, the pressure to be able to do everything, and the growing focus on both physical and mental health further shape the patterns of modern living. However, in the midst of these advancements, spirituality appears to be losing its place in the competitive race to achieve the best, the highest, and even the most. (Marsela, 2017:21)

The modern lifestyle offers many conveniences and efficiencies across various aspects of life, including work, communication, and access to information. However, on the other hand, the changes brought by the modern lifestyle are often accompanied by various challenges, such as increased stress levels, pollution, a crisis of spirituality, and various negative impacts on the environment (Widianti, Galib, & Abubakar, 2025). While on the other side, the modern lifestyle also opens up access to cultural diversity and new experiences, enriching daily life. Overall, the modern lifestyle serves as a manifestation of the progress of the times, bringing both benefits and challenges. It demands that individuals find a balance between technological advancement and personal and social well-being.

The modern lifestyle is greatly influenced by technological advancements, economic progress, and socio-cultural changes. This phenomenon is marked by several key characteristics, such as the dominance of technology in daily life, materialism, individualism, and the pursuit of instant pleasure (hedonism). On one hand, the modern lifestyle offers benefits such as easy access to information, work efficiency, and an improved standard of living. However, on the other hand, this lifestyle also brings significant negative impacts, particularly in the realms of spirituality and humanity.

For example, the increased use of technology, while enabling virtual connections with distant family or friends, often creates alienation or social isolation due to a decrease in face-to-face interactions. Additionally, the modern lifestyle has become a focal point of discussion in contemporary society (Sohail Aslam & Maqsood Ahmad, 2021).

Lifestyle has become part of human secondary needs, which can change along with the times, depending on an individual's desire to modify their way of life. Lifestyle can be seen from how people dress, their habits, and other behaviors. The modern lifestyle is one in which new patterns of human behavior emerge, with a focus on living openly and embracing progress in any field. People are also more inclined to make breakthroughs to create innovations in order to keep up with technological advancements and the unstoppable flow of social life (Yuniati, 2020:1). In this era of globalization, a global lifestyle has emerged, where people tend to pursue opportunities to satisfy self-actualization needs, while also displaying a materialistic orientation that drives individuals to measure happiness based on material possessions, which ultimately results in social and psychological pressure. Excessive individualism also leads to people caring less about others, reducing solidarity and empathy (Lestari & Achdiani, 2024).

The modern lifestyle brings various positive impacts, such as the convenience of daily activities through advanced technology, improved quality of life through access to education, healthcare, and better economic opportunities, as well as globalization that broadens perspectives and enhances

connectivity among individuals from different parts of the world. However, the modern lifestyle, which prioritizes materialism, efficiency, and technology, carries the risk of significant negative consequences. One of these is the phenomenon of dehumanization, where human values are eroded due to an excessive focus on worldly achievements. Additionally, a spiritual crisis often arises alongside a decline in religious and moral awareness, diverted by an obsession with material success.

Social alienation is another consequence, where the decreasing face-to-face interaction diminishes the quality of emotional relationships among individuals. Furthermore, psychological pressure can also increase due to the competition in meeting high living standards, ultimately leading to stress, depression, and mental exhaustion. Therefore, a spiritual approach such as modern Sufism becomes relevant in restoring the balance between worldly life and spiritual needs, so that the negative impacts of the modern lifestyle can be minimized.

Dehumanisasi

Dehumanisasi berasal dari kata *de* dan *humanisasi*. "Humanisasi" merupakan sebuah pemikiran atau tindakan yang memanusiakan manusia, atau dalam kata lain, melihat dan memperlakukan manusia dengan manusiawi. Sedangkan *de* adalah kebalikan dari manusiawi. Sehingga dapat disimpulkan bahwa makna dehumanisasi adalah suatu pemikiran, pandangan, atau perilaku yang merendahkan dan menghilangkan harkat manusia dengan menilai manusia lain secara negatif. (Anon, n.d.)

Dehumanization can also be seen as a regression of values. These values include aspects such as goodness, truth, and aesthetics. If these values are absent, dehumanization will emerge, manifesting as hedonism, materialism, arrogance, and even justifying any means to achieve something. People will lose the noble culture that has been passed down by their ancestors for centuries. (Abdillah, 2017:2)

In Sigmund Freud's view of humans, dehumanization can be defined as a very negative and pessimistic way of thinking that strips away the dignity or inherent nature of humans. This means that humans still possess good potential, even though they may engage in negative actions throughout their lives, which reflect their personalities. (Pebrianti 2022)

In the context of the phenomenon of modern lifestyle, dehumanization often occurs as a result of changes in values and lifestyles that are overly oriented toward materialism, individualism, and hedonism. This leads humans to prioritize material aspects, technology, and efficiency, causing human values to often be overlooked.

Dependency on wealth or social status as a measure of happiness often makes people lose a deeper meaning of life. Relationships between individuals become shallow because they are more focused on personal interests. The modern lifestyle, which emphasizes independence, often sacrifices the aspect of togetherness. People become more preoccupied with themselves and neglect the needs of others.

Although technology makes life easier, human interactions replaced by virtual relationships create emotional distance between individuals and weaken empathy. On the other hand, hedonism encourages people to forget moral and spiritual values, leading their behavior to be oriented toward instant gratification.

The modern lifestyle has become one that is closely related to dehumanization, reflecting the interaction between social change and technology, which has significantly altered

the way humans relate to themselves, others, as well as their social and work environments. In this context, human values such as empathy, emotional connection, and attention to long-term well-being are increasingly eroded.

Dehumanization has wide-ranging impacts, both for the victims and the perpetrators. For victims, dehumanization can lead to the loss of human rights, psychological trauma, discrimination, or even violence and genocide. Meanwhile, for the perpetrators, dehumanization can erode empathy and moral sensitivity, fostering aggressive behavior that damages social relationships. Throughout history, cases of dehumanization have occurred in various forms, such as slavery, which viewed slaves as property, colonialism, which considered indigenous people as "primitive," and racism and xenophobia, which continue to develop to this day.

Dehumanization in modern life brings various harmful negative impacts, both at the individual and societal levels. At the individual level, dehumanization leads to the loss of empathy, affection, and awareness of moral values. This makes humans tend to become more selfish and less caring toward others. In addition, dehumanization also contributes to an increased sense of alienation, where individuals feel disconnected from their social environment, even though they may appear connected through technology.

At the societal level, dehumanization triggers social fragmentation, such as the decline of solidarity, increasing social inequality, and discrimination against certain groups. Interpersonal relationships weaken because they are more often measured by profit or personal gain. This can also worsen social tensions due to the diminishing sense of mutual respect and appreciation for diversity.

To face dehumanization, efforts are needed to restore the lost human values.

Modern Sufism

Modern Sufism emerged as a response to the complexities of contemporary life, aiming to make classical spiritual teachings relevant to the needs of modern society. It is rooted in the tradition of classical Sufism but focuses more on the application of Qur'anic teachings in daily life, prioritizing practices of introspection, self-awareness, and empathy. One of the figures who popularized modern Sufism is Hamka, who emphasized the balance between social piety and spirituality, as well as the importance of actively participating in society without isolating oneself. Hamka taught that modern Sufism does not require withdrawing from the world, but rather encourages living in it with good intentions.

Modern Sufism is more practical, emphasizing the balance between worldly and spiritual life. It includes values such as sincerity, simplicity, and gratitude to counter materialism, and teaches how to face life's pressures and anxiety through spiritual practices like dhikr and introspection. In a fast-paced and materialistic modern life, modern Sufism helps individuals find inner peace and overcome dehumanization that often arises from excessive technology, consumerism, and individualism.

Modern Sufism is essentially not very different from Sufism itself, but it leans more toward how Qur'anic teachings are applied in daily life and how we behave in this life so that social inequality does not occur in society. It can be interpreted that modern Sufism leaves behind the practice of withdrawing from worldly life and replaces it with engagement in the social order of the community. It puts more attention on social life and encourages active participation in it. (Nurul Insani and Dharmawan n.d.)

One of the figures who pioneered the emergence of modern Sufism is Hamka. According to Hamka, the concept of Sufism is a spiritual concept that is built while still considering social piety, meaning that humans should be strong and devout in their worship, yet also maintain balance in social and economic affairs, as well as in the preservation of knowledge and technology, so that Islam does not appear to be left behind in the development of civilization. (Amir and Maksum n.d.:19) In this regard, Hamka made significant contributions to the development of the modern Sufi concept by offering a new perspective on classical Sufi teachings that better aligns with the understanding and needs of today's society.

One of the main characteristics of modern Sufism is its practical and universal approach. Modern Sufism not only encourages a deep relationship with God but also teaches the importance of empathy, social justice, and ecological awareness. In a modern life that tends to be busy and full of pressure, modern Sufism teaches humans to train the heart, control desires, and live life with full awareness (mindfulness). Values such as sincerity, gratitude, and simplicity become guidelines to combat greed, stress, and dissatisfaction that often arise due to the modern lifestyle.

The main characteristics of modern Sufism include the simplification of spiritual practices without reducing their essence, an emphasis on the balance between outward and inward aspects, as well as the contextualization of Sufi teachings with contemporary   issues.

Modern Sufism places greater emphasis on the attitude of *ihsan*, both *ihsan* toward Allah and *ihsan* toward fellow human beings, wherein this attitude of *ihsan* can lead to happiness in both the world and the hereafter. This is the application of the results of our worship and relationship with Allah, as well as our relationship with fellow human beings (Komarudin 2018). Likewise, Hamka possesses his own distinctive characteristics, namely modernity in practicing Sufism. What is meant by modernity is providing an understanding that is relevant to the current modern era. According to Hamka, practicing Sufism does not require isolating oneself from social crowds (Ihsan and Indallah n.d.:18) and instead involves viewing the world more positively. The meaning of "positive" here is not about avoiding the world, but rather actively participating in it. In other words, living together without letting the world reside in the heart.

Modern Sufism serves as a guide for contemporary society to discover deeper meaning and purpose in life as a means to confront the phenomenon of dehumanization that often arises from modern lifestyles. Modern Sufism also holds significant relevance in addressing the phenomenon of dehumanization caused by modern ways of living. Dehumanization resulting from technological advancement, consumerism, and excessive individualism can diminish human dimensions such as empathy, spiritual crisis, and interpersonal relationships. In this context, Sufism, as a spiritual tradition in Islam, focuses on self-development, purification of the heart, and a deeper relationship with God.

Modern Sufism brings various positive impacts to the lives of individuals and society. At the individual level, modern Sufism helps a person find inner peace and true happiness that is not dependent on material wealth. Practices such as dhikr (remembrance of Allah), muhasabah (introspection), and muraqabah (awareness of God's presence) help individuals cope with the pressures of modern life, such as stress

and anxiety, while also enhancing spiritual quality.

Modern Sufism, which is the actualization of Islamic values in the context of contemporary life, offers solutions to materialism and moral degradation. In the face of the dominance of materialistic and consumerist lifestyles, modern Sufism teaches the values of zuhd (asceticism) and qana'ah (contentment) to help people detach themselves from excessive attachment to worldly things, thereby creating a more meaningful life. Additionally, modern Sufism provides solutions to the pressures of modern life that often lead to stress and mental health issues through practices such as dhikr (remembering Allah), muraqabah (awareness of Allah), and tazkiyah al-nafs (purification of the soul), which soothe the heart and help manage emotions.

Modern Sufism is highly relevant in addressing the phenomenon of dehumanization, as it emphasizes the importance of balance between the worldly and spiritual life. In this modern lifestyle, which tends to be materialistic and places pressure on individuals to achieve economic and social success, Sufism introduces the concept of zuhd (asceticism), which means not being excessive in worldly matters. This helps individuals detach from excessive consumerism, which often leads to dehumanization by measuring humans based on the material possessions others have. It also reminds individuals that worldly life is not the ultimate goal, encouraging them to focus not only on worldly achievements but also on spiritual development.

In the Sufi tradition, there is the concept of tazkiyah al-nafs (purification of the soul). Dehumanization is often caused by the loss of human values such as empathy, self-awareness, loss of life purpose, and a sense of community. Modern humans often

experience a loss of purpose, which leads to an inability to determine the direction they should take in life. This inability makes modern humans unprepared to face competition and change. They often forget that within themselves lies a spiritual dimension that requires care, ultimately causing them to forget their true identity and become preoccupied with the pursuit of worldly pleasures (Anbiya 2023:7). Through tazkiyah al-nafs, modern humans are trained to control their ego, strengthen empathy, and restore their awareness of being human.

At the social level, modern Sufism encourages the formation of a more harmonious society. Values such as love, solidarity, and empathy help strengthen relationships between individuals, thereby reducing social conflicts and enhancing cooperation in community life. Additionally, modern Sufism is also relevant in addressing global challenges, such as the environmental crisis. The awareness that humans are khalifah (stewards) on earth encourages individuals to maintain the balance of nature and avoid excessive exploitation of resources.

The relevance between the impact of modern lifestyle and modern Sufism lies in how Sufism can provide a spiritual solution to address the challenges and crises brought about by modern living. In this era of individualism, modern Sufism encourages the values of ukhwah (brotherhood) and empathy towards others, strengthening more meaningful social relationships.

Furthermore, technology, which often becomes a source of isolation and addiction, can also be used positively through digital da'wah to spread the teachings of Sufism to a wider audience. In the context of environmental sustainability, modern Sufism is also relevant by instilling values of responsibility towards Allah's creation and the importance of harmony with nature.

Modern Sufism emphasizes simple living as an effort to counter materialism. Simplicity does not mean neglecting the world, but rather using it as a means to draw closer to God and to care for the needs of others. In modern Sufism, worldly life is not ignored but is managed with full awareness. Individuals are taught to work hard, but to maintain a sincere intention and avoid getting caught up in worldly ambitions.

Modern Sufism can be applied in various aspects of life to address the negative impacts of dehumanization. In the family, Sufism teaches the importance of affection, sincere communication, and attention to family members. This can strengthen emotional bonds within families, which are often neglected due to modern busyness. In the workplace, principles of modern Sufism such as sincerity and justice can be applied to create a more humane work environment. Instead of solely pursuing productivity, relationships among workers should be built on mutual respect. In social life, modern Sufism encourages individuals to actively engage in helping others. Values such as solidarity and social concern help repair social fractures caused by individualism. The awareness that humans are khalifah (stewards) on earth encourages individuals to maintain environmental balance.

In the midst of a fast-paced and pressure-filled life, modern Sufism helps individuals find a higher purpose and meaning in life through a spiritual connection with Allah Swt, providing true happiness that does not depend on worldly aspects. In the era of globalization, modern Sufism is also relevant because it teaches universal values such as love, justice, and tolerance, which serve as the foundation for creating harmony amidst cultural, religious, and national diversity.

Thus, modern Sufism contributes theoretically by expanding the study of Sufism from a personal spiritual realm to a socio-humanitarian realm. This study shows that the values of modern Sufism are not only relevant for the development of the individual's inner self but also capable of providing a solution-oriented approach to the phenomenon of dehumanization caused by modern lifestyles. The novelty of this article lies in the integration of the theory of dehumanization with contextual Sufi practices, which has rarely been explicitly combined in the literature. This approach also opens up new possibilities for the development of more applied Sufi studies to address contemporary social issues. (Rohman, 2024)

CONCLUSION

The phenomenon of dehumanization due to modern lifestyles presents a major challenge that threatens human values. Modern Sufism emerges as a solution to address this issue by offering a relevant and practical spiritual approach. Through modern Sufism, humans are invited to return to essential values such as love, empathy, and spiritual awareness, without having to abandon the modern world. By applying modern Sufism in daily life, a balance between worldly and spiritual needs can be achieved, enabling humans to live a more meaningful life.

REFERENCES

Abdillah, Rijal. 2017. "Analisis Teori Dehumanisasi Pendidikan Paulo Freire." *Jaqfi: Jurnal Aqidah dan Filsafat Islam* 2(1):1–21. doi: 10.15575/jaqfi.v2i1.4247.

Amir, Amir, and Muh Nur Rochim Maksum. n.d. "Tasawuf Modern Hamka Solusi Problematika Spiritualitas Manusia Modern." *Tajdida: Jurnal Pemikiran*

Dan Gerakan Muhammadiyah 19(2):94–110.

Anbiya, Ahmad Zainal. 2023. "Tazkiyatun Nafs Dalam Mengembalikan Fitrah Manusia Modern." *Islamic Counseling: Jurnal Bimbingan Dan Konseling Islam* 7(1):133–48.

Anon. n.d. "Dehumanisasi Kegiatan Belajar Mengajar Mata Pelajaran IPS Semester IIPada Mts. Al-Azhar Tuwel Kecamatan Bojong Kabupaten Tegal - Neliti." Retrieved September 19, 2024 (https://www.neliti.com/publications/61291/dehumanisasi-kegiatan-belajar-mengajar-mata-pelajaran-ips-semester-ii-pada-mts-a).

Fatah, Wahyudi. 2020. "Humanisme Gus Dur: Pergumulan Islam dan Kemanusiaan, Sebagai Jawaban Dehumanisasi di Era Disrupsi." 14(19).

Ihsan, Nur Hadi, and Sayyid Muhammad Indallah. n.d. "Kemoderenan Dalam Konsep Tasawuf Modern Buya Hamka."

Komarudin, Didin. 2018. "Konsep Tasawuf Modern dalam Pemikiran Nasaruddin Umar."

Masela, Minggus Salvinus. 2017. "Pengaruh Gaya Hidup Modern Terhadap Interaksi Sosial Pada Remaja Sma Wisnuwardhana Malag." *PSIKOVIDYA* 28–42.

Nurul Insani, Aulia, and Heriyanto Dharmawan. n.d. "Tasawuf Modern."

Pebrianti, Nia Putri. 2022. "Dehumanisasi Pandangan Sigmund Freud Tentang Manusia: Analisis Tafsir al-Azhar Buya Hamka." Universitas Islam Negeri Fatmawati Sukarno, Bengkulu.

Utomo, Prio. 2021. "Nilai Kerja dalam Pendekatan Tasawuf dan Pengaruhnya Sebagai Bimbingan Pribadi-Sosial Terhadap Pembentukan Karakter Masyarakat Modern." 1(2).

Yuniati, Ketut. 2020. "Gaya Hidup Modern Dalam Perspektif Kontruksi Sosial Media Massa." *COMMUNICARE* 1(2).

Lestari, R. N., & Achdiani, Y. (2024). Sosietas : Jurnal Pendidikan Sosiologi Pengaruh Globalisasi Terhadap Gaya Hidup Individualisme Masyarakat Modern, *14*(November), 117–128.

Rohman, M. (2024). Memaknai Tasawuf Sebagai Paradigma Pemikiran Islam Klasik dan Modern, *10*(2), 174–190.

Sohail Aslam1, Maqsood Ahmad2, H. F. A. and S. E. (2021). Konsep Takwa Emha Ainun Najib dan Aktualisasinya Pada Problematika Kehidupan Modern. *Journal GEEJ*, *7*(2), 1–18. Retrieved from http://www.joi.isoss.net/PDFs/Vol-7-no-2-2021/03_J_ISOSS_7_2.pdf

Widianti, A., Galib, M., & Abubakar, A. (2025). Konsep Kesehatan Fisik dan Mental Perspektif Al- Qur ' an dalam Konteks Kehidupan Modern, *11*(1), 307–316.