



## Big Five Personality Analysis of Buya Hamka Through a Retrospective Biographical Psychology Approach

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### Abstract

This study aims to identify Buya Hamka's personality profile across the five dimensions of the Big Five Personality theory based on verified biographical analysis, to interpret its relationship with his contributions in religion, literature, and socio-politics, and to provide a methodological contribution to the biographical psychology of Indonesian Islamic figures. A retrospective biographical analysis approach was employed using publicly verifiable sources, including *Kenang-Kenangan Hidup* (1981), *Pribadi dan Martabat Buya Hamka* (1983), Darwis's academic biography (2008), and Hamka's own works; validity was maintained through source triangulation, whereby personality claims are only advanced when supported by at least two independent sources. Results indicate a very high profile on *Conscientiousness*, high on *Openness to Experience* and *Agreeableness*, moderate-to-high on *Extraversion*, and low on *Neuroticism*; the dominant combination of conscientiousness and openness underlies Hamka's intellectual productivity, literary innovation, and socio-political leadership. This article positions the Big Five-based retrospective biographical analysis as a framework for understanding how personality dimensions shape a figure's historical contributions, while offering an analytical model applicable to broader studies of Indonesian Islamic figures.

**Keywords:** Buya Hamka; Big Five Personality; Retrospective Biographical Analysis; Personality Psychology; Indonesian Islamic Figures

### Abstract

Penelitian ini bertujuan mengidentifikasi profil kepribadian Buya Hamka pada kelima dimensi Big Five Personality berdasarkan analisis biografi terverifikasi, menginterpretasikan kaitannya dengan kontribusi Hamka dalam bidang agama, sastra, dan sosial-politik, serta memberikan kontribusi metodologis pada psikologi biografi tokoh Islam Indonesia. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan analisis biografi retrospektif dengan sumber-sumber yang dapat diverifikasi secara publik, meliputi *Kenang-Kenangan Hidup* (1981), *Pribadi dan Martabat Buya Hamka* (1983), biografi akademik Darwis (2008), dan karya-karya Hamka sendiri; validitas dijaga melalui triangulasi sumber di mana klaim kepribadian hanya diajukan apabila didukung minimal dua sumber independen. Hasil analisis menunjukkan profil sangat tinggi pada *Conscientiousness*, tinggi pada *Openness to Experience* dan *Agreeableness*, moderat-tinggi pada *Extraversion*, serta rendah pada *Neuroticism*; kombinasi dominan antara *conscientiousness* dan *openness* mendasari produktivitas intelektual, inovasi sastra, dan kepemimpinan sosial-politik Hamka. Artikel ini mengangkat kerangka Big Five berbasis analisis biografi retrospektif sebagai pendekatan untuk memahami bagaimana dimensi kepribadian membentuk kontribusi historis tokoh, sekaligus menawarkan model analisis yang dapat dikembangkan dalam studi tokoh Islam Indonesia.

**Keywords:** Buya Hamka; Big Five Personality; Analisis Biografi Retrospektif; Psikologi Kepribadian; Tokoh Islam Indonesia

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## Introduction

The study of the personalities of great historical figures is one of the important approaches in psychology for understanding how individual character shapes their social, intellectual, and spiritual contributions. In Indonesia, national Islamic scholars have served not only as religious leaders, but also as intellectuals, literary figures, and agents of social change who helped shape the nation's identity. One of the most prominent figures in this context is Haji Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah, widely known as Buya Hamka (1908–1981). Hamka was a scholar, literary figure, historian, and activist who left a monumental legacy for Islamic civilization in Indonesia through more than a hundred written works, active involvement in the independence movement, and his contributions to the modernization of Islamic education.

Studies on Buya Hamka reveal an interesting pattern of development over time. In the early phase, research was largely directed toward biographical, theological, and intellectual aspects of his contributions to the history of Islam in Indonesia. Darwis compiled a comprehensive academic biography highlighting Hamka's life journey within a religious and nationalist framework, yet without systematically addressing its psychological dimensions. Rusydi Hamka's 1983 work *Pribadi dan Martabat Buya Hamka* presented a detailed personal portrait, including family dynamics and work ethic, but remained at a descriptive level.

Over the past five years, the direction of research has broadened with the emergence of three main tendencies. First, Islamic education studies that position Hamka as an educational thinker. Nurhasanah emphasizes that Hamka's educational concept is oriented toward the formation of *insan kamil* (the perfect human being) through the integration of intellectual, emotional, and spiritual dimensions.<sup>1</sup> Second, studies of character and morality aimed at mapping Hamka's personality values. Pradini and Nugroho identified key traits such as faith, mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*), and the capacity for critical and creative thinking.<sup>2</sup> Rizka et al. highlight the concept of *tazkiyatun nafs* as a process of personality formation that impacts psychological well-being.<sup>3</sup> An analysis of *Tafsir Al-Azhar* by Nazli reveals Hamka's consistency in emphasizing the values of moderation, rationality, and openness. U.K. Ramdhani's article also identifies psychological dimensions in Hamka's interpretive work, particularly concerning mental resilience and emotional regulation.<sup>4</sup>

These various studies have successfully enriched understanding of Hamka's ideas, social roles, and intellectual contributions. However, the psychological foundations that shaped the consistency of his thinking and the capacity of his leadership remain largely unexplored. The absence of systematic personality analysis grounded in established theory represents a significant gap in the existing literature. This situation opens space for a new approach that places personality as a key variable, employing the Big Five framework through verified retrospective biographical analysis.

The objectives of this study are: (1) to identify Buya Hamka's relative profile across the five dimensions of the Big Five Personality based on verified biographical analysis; (2) to interpret the relationship between that personality profile and Hamka's achievements and contributions in the fields of religion,

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<sup>1</sup> Fiqri Nurhasanah, Ibnudin Ibnudin, and Ahmad Syathori, "Konsep Pendidikan Menurut Buya Hamka Dan Relevansinya Dengan Pendidikan Islam Kontemporer," *Journal Islamic Pedagogia* 3, no. 2 (2023): 176–95.

<sup>2</sup> Nadia Pradini, "Buya Hamka Character Values In Forming Pancasila Student Profiles In Elementary," *Didaktika Taubidi* 10, no. 2 (2023): 189–202.

<sup>3</sup> Rizka Sarofah Rizka et al., "Tazkiyatun Nafs Terminology: Buya Hamka's View," *Journal of Research in Islamic Education* 5, no. 2 (2023): 118–27.

<sup>4</sup> Nazli Badrul Aini Ramdhani and Uqbatul Khair Rambe, "The Psychological Dimensions of the Story of Prophet Yusuf in Tafsir Al-Azhar by Buya Hamka," *Al-Fabmu: Jurnal Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Tafsir* 4, no. 2 (2025): 336–46.

literature, and socio-politics; and (3) to provide a methodological contribution to the development of biographical psychology of Indonesian Islamic figures.

This study employs a *retrospective biographical analysis* approach a method commonly used in personality studies to examine historical figures who cannot be interviewed directly.<sup>5</sup> This approach works by extracting behavioral patterns, significant decisions, and documented testimonies as the basis for inferring personality characteristics. In recent developments, this method is considered to have strong scientific validity when supported by structured methodological indicators, such as multifactorial analysis and source quality evaluation.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, the expansion of psychobiographical research into various non-Western contexts strengthens the relevance of applying it to Indonesian Islamic figures such as Haji Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah.<sup>7</sup>

Within the operational framework, personality is understood as a pattern of relatively stable behavioral tendencies, identified through consistency of action across various life contexts. This analysis classifies those behavioral indicators into the five main dimensions of the Big Five Personality: openness to experience (*openness*), conscientiousness (*conscientiousness*), extraversion (*extraversion*), agreeableness (*agreeableness*), and emotional stability as represented through neuroticism (*neuroticism*). Each dimension is understood as a continuum from low to high, relatively stable across a lifetime, and consistent across cultures. Based on this approach, the analysis does not rely on direct measurement using psychometric instruments, but rather on *behavioral evidence* that appears repeatedly in the biographical record, which is then mapped onto the five dimensions as the basis for personality inference.

The research data sources are limited to publicly verifiable documents: the autobiography *Kenang-Kenangan Hidup* (1981), Rusydi Hamka's memoir *Pribadi dan Martabat Buya Hamka* (1983), Darwis's academic biography (2008), and Hamka's own works as direct representations of his intellectual activity. The validity of inferences is maintained through the principle of source triangulation — the use of multiple independent sources to test the consistency of information and strengthen the credibility of findings.<sup>8</sup> Personality claims are drawn only from indicators that appear consistently across more than one source, thereby reducing subjective bias in the interpretation of historical data.

## Result and Discussion

### Biography of Buya Hamka

Haji Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah was born on February 17, 1908, in Sungai Batang, Maninjau, West Sumatra. He was the son of Abdul Karim Amrullah (his father) and Siti Safiyah, who came from a prominent family of Islamic scholars. His father was an Islamic reformist figure known as Haji Rasul, the founder of the Kaum Muda movement in Minangkabau. Hamka's childhood was filled with strict religious education, in which he studied the Qur'an and hadith from an early age. By the age of ten, he

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<sup>5</sup> Dean Keith Simonton, *Psychology, Science, and History: An Introduction to Historiometry*. (Yale University Press, 1990).

<sup>6</sup> I V Afanasyeva, I V Afanasyev, and A A Pavlenko, "Scientific-Biographical Method in Psychological and Legal Research: From Retrospective and Multivariate Analysis to Methodological Tools for Quality Assessment," *ПСИХОЛОГИЯ И ПРАВО* 14, no. 1 (2024): 198.

<sup>7</sup> Claude-Hélène Mayer, "Psychobiographical Trends: Untold Stories and International Voices in the Context of Social Change," *Journal of Personality* 91, no. 1 (2023): 262–65.

<sup>8</sup> Sylvester Donkoh and John Mensah, "Application of Triangulation in Qualitative Research," *Journal of Applied Biotechnology and Bioengineering* 10, no. 1 (2023): 6–9.

had already memorized the entire Qur'an, demonstrating his extraordinary intellectual capacity. He also studied at traditional Minangkabau surau (prayer halls), where he was taught both customary and Islamic values simultaneously.

As documented in *Kenang-Kenangan Hidup*, Haji Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah grew up in an environment steeped in the tradition of Islamic scholarship. His father's library, filled with classical texts, served not merely as a reading space but also as an early arena for the formation of critical and reflective thinking beyond the formal education of the surau and madrasah. This intensive engagement with classical literature accelerated the internalization of scholarly values from a young age. He completed his memorization of the Qur'an at the age of ten, which Rusydi Hamka noted as an early indicator of strong intellectual discipline and a cognitive capacity that developed more rapidly than that of his peers.

In 1927, Hamka moved to Jakarta and became actively involved in various reformist Islamic organizations, including Persatuan Islam. This move marked a transformative phase from self-directed learner to intellectual actor in the public sphere. He began writing for various media outlets and contributing to Islamic journals, which became vehicles for articulating his ideas and social critiques. In the 1930s, he served as editor of *Panji Islam*, a position that strengthened his role as a public intellectual while expanding his influence in the national Islamic discourse. His activities also extended within the Muhammadiyah organization, where he contributed to its leadership and the development of Islamic education that was more adaptive to social change.

Hamka married Siti Raham in 1933, and they had eight children. He was known as a disciplined yet caring father, frequently teaching his children about discipline and education. He also performed the Hajj in the 1950s, during which he received the title "Buya" from the Arab community in recognition of his wisdom and knowledge of Islam.

In his personal life, Hamka faced challenges such as poverty in his youth and political pressures. Nevertheless, he consistently maintained a balance between his public career and family life, often spending his evenings writing while keeping watch over his children as they studied.

During the Japanese occupation (1942–1945), Hamka was active in the underground resistance movement against the occupying forces. One of his legendary stories involves his refusal of a ministerial position offered by Soekarno out of concern over corruption, choosing instead to focus on Islamic preaching and education. After independence, he became a member of the Constituent Assembly and fought for the Jakarta Charter, which was ultimately not ratified, though he continued to advocate for Muslim rights.

Hamka was also known as the author of novels such as *Tenggelamnya Kapal Van der Wijck* (1938), which depicts the conflict between tradition and modernity in Minangkabau. The novel became a bestseller and inspired many readers. He also wrote *Di Bawah Lindungan Ka'bah* (1936), which recounts a Hajj pilgrimage and his spiritual reflections.

Hamka's involvement in the public sphere continued to grow through the post-independence era, demonstrating the consistency of his intellectual role across various phases of Indonesian history. He

contributed to the dynamics of national Islamic thought and was involved in the establishment of the Indonesian Ulema Council (Majelis Ulama Indonesia) in 1975, reflecting widespread recognition of his religious authority and national leadership. This sequence of experiences illustrates how Hamka's intellectual formation from an early age continued to develop, reinforced by his habit of self-directed learning, and ultimately found its expression in his active engagement within the dynamics of Indonesian Islamic thought.

One of his major contributions was in the reform of Islamic education, where he championed the use of the Indonesian language in religious instruction, rather than Arabic exclusively. This helped modernize Indonesian Muslims.

One independently documented event in Hamka's biography is his imprisonment (1964–1966) by the Old Order regime on political charges. Both Rusydi Hamka (1983) and Darwis (2008) record that during this period, rather than experiencing a productive standstill, Hamka completed the writing of *Tafsir Al-Azhar*, a 30-volume Qur'anic commentary that went on to become one of the most important works of Qur'anic exegesis in the Indonesian language.

Hamka also founded educational institutions. He established Universitas Muhammadiyah Jakarta (now Universitas Muhammadiyah Prof. Dr. Hamka) in 1958. He wrote more than 100 books, including *Sejarah Umat Islam* (1948), *Tasawuf Modern* (1939), and *Lembaga Hidup* (1950). He was renowned for his speeches that inspired younger generations to integrate Islam with modern knowledge. He was also active in radio and television, spreading Islamic teachings through his insightful lectures. He served as the first Chairman of the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) in 1975 and continued to produce works until the end of his life. He passed away on July 24, 1981, in Jakarta, and was laid to rest at the Kalibata National Heroes Cemetery.

### Big Five Personality Dimension Analysis of Buya Hamka

The biographical account presented above reveals behavioral patterns of Haji Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah that can be analyzed through the five personality dimensions of the Big Five Personality framework. This classification is constructed based on behavioral indicators that appear consistently across multiple sources and life contexts. The following table presents the relative profile of each dimension along with the key biographical indicators that form the basis of inference, which are subsequently elaborated through analytical discussion of each dimension.

**Table 1. Summary of Buya Hamka's Personality Profile**

Dimension	Relative Profile	Key Biographical Indicators	Supporting Biographical Sources
Openness	High	Innovation in literature and Qur'anic exegesis; social critique through <i>Tenggelamnya Kapal Van der Wijck</i> (1938); synthesis of Islam and modernity; use of the Indonesian language in Islamic preaching	Darwis (2008); Hamka's works ( <i>Tafsir Al-Azhar</i> , novels)

Dimension	Relative Profile	Key Biographical Indicators	Supporting Biographical Sources
Conscientiousness	Very High	Memorization of the Qur'an from age 10; productivity of more than 100 works; completion of <i>Tafsir Al-Azhar</i> while imprisoned; refusal of a ministerial position on principle	<i>Kenang-Kenangan Hidup</i> (1981); Rusydi Hamka (1983); Darwis (2008)
Extraversion	Moderate to High	Leadership in Muhammadiyah and MUI; public orator; active in radio and television preaching; high social interaction ability accompanied by a habit of solitary reflection	Rusydi Hamka (1983); Darwis (2008)
Agreeableness	High	Empathy toward the marginalized; role as mediator of cross-ideological conflicts; commitment to Muslim unity; respected across diverse groups	Darwis (2008); Rusydi Hamka (1983)
Neuroticism	Rendah	Emotional stability during imprisonment in 1964–1966; remained productive under political pressure; resilience in facing personal loss	Rusydi Hamka (1983); Darwis (2008)

The relative profile categorization in this table was determined through qualitative assessment based on two criteria: (1) indicator intensity, that is, the degree to which the behavioral indicators found reflect an extreme or moderate manifestation of a given dimension. For example, completing 30 volumes of Qur'anic commentary under conditions of imprisonment was judged to exceed the typical threshold of "high," and was therefore categorized as "very high"; and (2) cross-context and cross-source consistency, that is, how many independent sources confirm a given indicator across diverse situations. Dimensions whose indicators appear repeatedly under both normal conditions and conditions of extreme pressure are categorized higher than those that appear only in one type of situation. This categorization is interpretive in nature and does not refer to psychometric scores; it should therefore be read as a qualitative estimate grounded in documented biographical evidence, rather than as an absolute measurement.

### ***Openness to Experience***

Haji Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah demonstrated a high level of openness to experience, reflected in his intellectual courage and flexibility in responding to social realities. This openness did not stop at the mere acceptance of new ideas, but developed into an active capacity to evaluate, process, and reconstruct established understandings within society. This pattern reflects a broad, imaginative, and reflective cognitive orientation that allowed for the formation of a worldview not rigidly bound by conventional limits.

The strongest indicator is found in the novel *Tenggelamnya Kapal Van der Wijck*, which contains explicit social criticism of the rigidity of Minangkabau customary law and practices of lineage-based

discrimination. The psychological significance of this work lies in Hamka's position as a member of the very community he was critiquing. The decision to raise criticism against the internal social structure of his own community demonstrates the courage to take positions that do not always align with collective norms. This reflects the ability to maintain a critical distance from one's social environment, which in personality studies is understood as an important indicator of openness, as it involves the independent evaluation of ideas.

This openness correlates strongly with creative capacity. Sadana et al. found that *openness to experience* significantly predicts creativity, particularly in the dimensions of fluency, flexibility, and originality of divergent thinking.<sup>9</sup> This pattern is clearly evident in Hamka, who not only received new ideas but actively produced them across various intellectual mediums. His diverse creative activities, including writing novels, composing Qur'anic commentary, writing essays, and delivering Islamic preaching, reinforce the argument of Koutstaal et al. that a variety of creative experiences contributes directly to flexibility and originality of thinking, even beyond the influence of the trait of openness itself.<sup>10</sup> Hamka's openness thus operated dynamically in concert with creative experiences that recurred throughout his life.

This dimension can also be understood from a deeper cognitive perspective, which shows that *openness/intellect* is associated with brain network flexibility, particularly in the capacity to connect various functional units in an adaptive manner.<sup>11</sup> This finding is relevant to Hamka's ability to synthesize classical Islamic scholarly tradition with contemporary discourse, as well as to integrate linguistic, historical, and sociological perspectives within *Tafsir Al-Azhar*. This complex pattern of thinking demonstrates the capacity to manage multiple viewpoints simultaneously without reducing them simplistically.

The relationship between openness and creativity is also reciprocal. Research by Raya et al. explains that openness encourages engagement in creative activities, while creative experience itself expands openness to new experiences.<sup>12</sup> This pattern is evident in Hamka: his willingness to write social criticism directed at his own community demonstrates an initial openness, while his creative experiences in writing and preaching broadened his intellectual horizons. This cycle reinforced his adaptive capacity to respond to social change in a constructive manner.

The implications of this openness are also apparent in his stance toward social justice. Xu found that *openness to experience*, together with *agreeableness*, is a consistent predictor of support for social justice.<sup>13</sup> This finding provides an empirical basis for Hamka's critical attitude toward lineage-based

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<sup>9</sup> Divya Sadana et al., "Correlates of Creativity: An Association between Creativity, Personality, and Intelligence," *Gifted and Talented International* 39 (2021): 101–10, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15332276.2024.2407613>.

<sup>10</sup> Wilma Koutstaal et al., "Beyond Openness: A Variety of Creative Experiences Increases Flexibility and Originality of Visuospatial Divergent Thinking," *Creativity Research Journal* 37 (2024): 321–41, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10400419.2023.2300575>.

<sup>11</sup> Tyler Sassenberg, Adam Safron, and Colin DeYoung, "Stable Individual Differences from Dynamic Patterns of Function: Brain Network Flexibility Predicts Openness/Intellect, Intelligence, and Psychoticism," *Cerebral Cortex* 34 9 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.1093/cercor/bhae391>.

<sup>12</sup> Maison Abu Raya et al., "The Reciprocal Relationship between Openness and Creativity: From Neurobiology to Multicultural Environments," *Frontiers in Neurology* 14 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.3389/fneur.2023.1235348>.

<sup>13</sup> Xiaowen Xu et al., "Personality, Ideology, and Attitudes Toward Social Justice," *Journal of Personality* 94 (2025): 29–44, <https://doi.org/10.1111/jopy.13014>.

discrimination in Minangkabau society. His openness was not merely cognitive or aesthetic in nature, but also value-oriented, particularly in responding to social injustice.

In the context of religious communication, this openness was expressed in his choice to use the Indonesian language as the primary medium of Islamic preaching. This decision reflects the ability to read the needs of an audience while effectively adapting communication strategies. Al Giffari and Dermawan found that human-led preaching holds an advantage in relational depth and contextual adaptability.<sup>14</sup> Hamka's preaching practice demonstrated these characteristics through an approach that was communicative, contextual, and accessible to the broader public.

Openness is also reflected in his broad intellectual habits, including wide reading across literature from diverse backgrounds. This intensive pattern of self-directed learning indicates an internal drive to continually enrich knowledge and expand perspectives. These activities formed an integrative framework of thinking that enabled Hamka to produce cross-disciplinary works that remained relevant to social dynamics.

These patterns do not stand as isolated events, but form a continuity across the various phases of Hamka's life. His writing activities, his approach to interpreting religious texts, his choice of medium for preaching, and his responses to social issues all point in a consistent direction. There is a discernible tendency to open new spaces of meaning without severing the connection to the traditions he had mastered. The openness that emerges did not remain at the conceptual level, but manifested in concrete intellectual practice, particularly in the effort to connect religious texts with an ever-changing social reality.

The assessment of the *openness to experience* dimension is therefore not based on a single indicator, but on the consistency of patterns of thought and action that can be traced through his biographical record and his works. In this context, openness functions as a cognitive framework that shaped the way Hamka understood reality, constructed arguments, and carried out his role as a scholar, writer, and public intellectual.

### ***Conscientiousness***

Haji Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah demonstrated a very high level of diligence and self-discipline, and of all the dimensions in the Big Five Personality framework, this aspect appears to be the most dominant. The clearest indicator is found in his extraordinary intellectual productivity: more than one hundred book titles spanning Qur'anic commentary, novels, Islamic history, Sufi philosophy, and biography. Productivity on this scale demands consistency of work, structured time management, and long-term commitment that does not easily waver.

More decisive evidence emerges in an extreme situation, specifically during his imprisonment in 1964 to 1966. Under conditions that generally restrict intellectual activity, Hamka instead completed *Tafsir Al-Azhar*, a work comprising 30 volumes. This event not only demonstrates intellectual capacity, but also affirms the presence of self-discipline and goal-directedness that remained intact under pressure.

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<sup>14</sup> Haekal Adha Al Giffari and Andy Dermawan, "AI vs. Human-Led Da'wah: A Comparative Rhetorical Analysis of Islamic Preaching in the Digital Age," *DINIKA: Academic Journal of Islamic Studies*, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.22515/dinika.v10i1.11374>.

The ability to maintain a working rhythm in such circumstances constitutes a strong indicator of a very high level of conscientiousness.

This discipline was not situational in nature, but can be traced back to the earliest stages of his life. Memorizing the Qur'an at the age of ten demanded a high level of perseverance and self-control, while the habits of reading and writing he developed from adolescence reflect a consistent long-term orientation. This pattern continued across the various phases of his life, revealing a continuity in the way he managed both himself and his work.

These findings receive strong support from recent literature. A meta-analysis involving 267 sample groups with a total of 413,074 participants established *conscientiousness* as the most consistent and powerful predictor of academic achievement and productivity, surpassing all four other dimensions.<sup>15</sup> Meanwhile, Stritmatter, as cited in Amoozegar, defines individuals with high *conscientiousness* as those who are persistent, self-disciplined, organized, and possess a clear goal orientation, a description that precisely captures Hamka's working patterns.<sup>16</sup> What is worth examining further is the argument in the same literature that high *conscientiousness* can potentially inhibit creativity, due to the individual's tendency to complete tasks without pausing to consider new alternatives. However, in Hamka's case, the tension between equally high *conscientiousness* and *openness* produced directed creativity, a pattern that according to Mammadov emerges when both dimensions operate synergistically rather than canceling each other out.<sup>17</sup>

### ***Extraversion***

Haji Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah demonstrated a level of extraversion in the moderate to high range, reflected in his intense engagement in the public sphere alongside his ability to sustain intellectual activity in solitude. From an external standpoint, he presented himself as an active and influential public figure. His involvement in organizations such as Muhammadiyah and his role in the Indonesian Ulema Council demanded strong interpersonal communication skills and ease in interacting with diverse groups. His lecturing activities through radio and television further demonstrated a high level of social energy, through which he was able to reach broad audiences and convey ideas persuasively.

Hamka also had a tendency to work in solitude. His intensive writing routine, including the habit of spending hours reading and writing independently, reflects a need for personal reflective space. Intellectual activity of this kind was not merely supplementary, but constituted a central part of his productivity.

The combination of active engagement in the social sphere and the need for individual reflection indicates that Hamka's personality orientation was not fully anchored at either pole. He was capable

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<sup>15</sup> Rita Rani Bhattacharjee and Alajingi Ramkumar, "Effect of Big Five Personality Dimensions on the Academic Performance of College Students," *Frontiers in Psychology* Volume 16 (2025), <https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/psychology/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2025.1490427>.

<sup>16</sup> Azadeh Amoozegar et al., "An Examination of the Role of Big Five Personality Traits on Employee Creativity in Sudanese Public Universities: A Gender-Based Approach," *Frontiers in Psychology* Volume 16 (2025), <https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/psychology/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2025.1556637>.

<sup>17</sup> Rani Bhattacharjee and Ramkumar, "Effect of Big Five Personality Dimensions on the Academic Performance of College Students."

of functioning effectively in wide-ranging social interactions while simultaneously maintaining depth of thought in more private settings. This kind of pattern within the personality framework points to a moderate to high extraversion profile, with a strong balance between social expression and internal activity.

Hamka's extraversion profile is moderate to high, with nuances worth noting. His involvement in Muhammadiyah, his role as the first Chairman of MUI, and his lecturing activities through radio and television all demonstrate significant social energy. Yet Rusydi Hamka (1983) describes his father as someone who spent hours each day writing in solitude and immersing himself in the study of Sufism, a deeply personal inner journey.

This pattern invites further reflection when considered alongside findings from a systematic review in which Garzon-Lasso found that *extraversion* holds the strongest positive correlation with leadership among the five Big Five dimensions.<sup>18</sup> In Hamka's context, his moderate extraversion appears to have functioned as a gateway into the public sphere, while the intellectual productivity generated through solitary activity provided the substance that made his presence in that sphere meaningful.

### ***Agreeableness (Keramahan dan Empati)***

Hamka demonstrated high *agreeableness*, most clearly evident in his ability to communicate across ideological boundaries within the polarized landscape of Indonesian Islam, being respected simultaneously by both traditionalist and modernist groups. Darwis consistently documents this pattern throughout Hamka's socio-political journey. His commitment to Muslim unity and his role as a mediator reflect a high degree of empathy and cooperativeness. However, this *agreeableness* did not imply an absence of firmness: *Kenang-Kenangan Hidup* (1981) documents several moments in which Hamka took positions that ran counter to the mainstream when his principled values were at stake.

This pattern is consistent with the meta-analysis by Blake et al., which concluded that *agreeableness* correlates positively with leadership emergence and negatively with counterproductive behavior, consistent with Hamka's profile as a leader accepted across diverse groups.<sup>19</sup> Fosse found that high *agreeableness* functions as a buffer against the expression of anger, such that agreeable individuals tend to respond to pressure in more constructive ways.<sup>20</sup> This helps explain why the repeated political conflicts Hamka faced did not produce destructive responses, but instead reinforced his position as a figure trusted by various parties.

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<sup>18</sup> M. A. Nordin, N. M. D., Othman, N. A., & Talib, "Exploring the Association between Personality Traits and Leadership: A Systematic Literature Review," *Multidisciplinary Reviews* 9, no. 1 (2025), <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.31893/multirev.2026045>.

<sup>19</sup> Andrew B Blake et al., "Let's Agree about Nice Leaders: A Literature Review and Meta-Analysis of Agreeableness and Its Relationship with Leadership Outcomes," *The Leadership Quarterly* 33, no. 1 (2022): 101593, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2021.101593>.

<sup>20</sup> Thomas Hol Fosse et al., "Neuroticism as an Antecedent of Abusive Supervision and Laissez-faire Leadership in Emergent Leaders: The Role of Facets and Agreeableness as a Moderator," *Applied Psychology* 73, no. 2 (2023): 675–97, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1111/apps.12495>.

Wilmot's findings in a large-scale meta-analysis indicate that *agreeableness* is associated with various social functions such as self-transcendence, relational investment, teamworking, and social integration.<sup>21</sup> This pattern is reflected in Hamka's commitment to Muslim unity and his role as a mediator who maintained the balance of social relations. He was present not merely as a conveyor of ideas, but as a figure capable of nurturing social cohesion in situations of potential conflict.

Findings by Javalagi, Newman, and Li in the context of leadership show that *agreeableness* plays a significant role in leadership effectiveness in collectivist societies. This is directly relevant to the Indonesian context, where social relations and collective trust form the foundation of leadership legitimacy.<sup>22</sup> Hartel, Hoch, and Back add that *agreeableness* contributes to leadership effectiveness through the building of trust and emotional stability in social interactions. In Hamka's context, this pattern explains why he remained a trusted figure in conflict situations, even when he did not always present himself as the most verbally dominant voice.<sup>23</sup>

In conflict dynamics, Kallianou shows that individuals with high *agreeableness* tend to employ constructive conflict resolution strategies, emphasizing respect and the continuity of relationships.<sup>24</sup> This pattern is evident in the way Hamka responded to disagreements: he ensured that differences did not escalate into conflicts that would damage social cohesion. His empathy developed into the ability to position himself proportionally within complex relationships, so that the social interactions he built were stable and productive.

Nevertheless, personality dynamics are not one-dimensional. Bleckmann, Wiczorek, and Wagner show that conflict frequency is more strongly influenced by *neuroticism* than by *agreeableness*.<sup>25</sup> In Hamka's context, this helps explain that his ability to manage conflict derived not only from empathy, but also from the emotional stability he possessed. When he refused the ministerial position or resigned from the Indonesian Ulema Council, these decisions reflected a value-rooted firmness rather than a mere emotional response to social pressure.

From the perspective of stress regulation, Luo and colleagues found that *agreeableness* correlates negatively with the perception of psychological stress, with highly agreeable individuals tending to view pressure in a more adaptive manner.<sup>26</sup> Agbaria and Abu Mokh further add that *agreeableness* is associated

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<sup>21</sup> Michael Wilmot and D Ones, "Agreeableness and Its Consequences: A Quantitative Review of Meta-Analytic Findings," *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 26 (2022): 242–80, <https://doi.org/10.1177/10888683211073007>.

<sup>22</sup> Anoop Javalagi, Daniel Newman, and Mengtong Li, "Personality and Leadership: Meta-Analytic Review of Cross-Cultural Moderation, Behavioral Mediation, and Honesty-Humility.," *The Journal of Applied Psychology*, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.1037/apl0001182>.

<sup>23</sup> T Härtel, Felix Hoch, and M Back, "Differential Behavioral Pathways Linking Personality to Leadership Emergence and Effectiveness in Groups," *Personality & Social Psychology Bulletin* 51 (2024): 2166–82, <https://doi.org/10.1177/01461672241246388>.

<sup>24</sup> Marina Kallianou, "Agreeableness and Conflict Management in Daily Life: The Impact of Prosocial Traits on Psychological Adaptation," *Studies in Psychological Science*, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.56397/sps.2024.09.06>.

<sup>25</sup> Eva Bleckmann, L Wiczorek, and Jenny Wagner, "The Role of Agreeableness, Neuroticism, and Relationship-Specific Features in Self- and Other-Perceptions of Conflict Frequency in Adolescent Relationships with Parents and Peers," *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 53 (2024): 1630–45, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-024-01951-6>.

<sup>26</sup> Jing Luo et al., "The Stressful Personality: A Meta-Analytical Review of the Relation Between Personality and Stress," *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 27 (2022): 128–94, <https://doi.org/10.1177/10888683221104002>.

with problem-focused coping strategies, which encourage active responses to problems.<sup>27</sup> This pattern is visible in Hamka, who responded to political pressure through concrete and directed action rather than destructive emotional reactions.

In the context of social behavior, Jain and Rawa show that *agreeableness* plays a role in suppressing counterproductive behavior, particularly in the form of interpersonal aggression.<sup>28</sup> This is consistent with Hamka's profile of maintaining ethical conduct in disagreements, with no documented instances of personal attacks against others. Jiang and colleagues also found that *agreeableness* is associated with a low propensity for aggression through minimal malicious envy, reinforcing the portrait of Hamka as a figure not driven by motives of personal hostility.<sup>29</sup>

In closer interpersonal relations, this tendency is also visible in his family life. Rusydi Hamka describes Hamka as a warm and attentive father. Although this indicator comes from a single source, it nonetheless offers a picture that the relational patterns he built were not confined to the public sphere, but were present in everyday life. This suggests that his *agreeableness* was consistent and rooted in a stable disposition.

His commitment to Muslim unity, empathy toward marginalized groups, and the ability to maintain balance in social relations all indicate that *agreeableness* in Hamka carried strong moral and social dimensions. Zhu even shows that *agreeableness* can be associated with innovative behavior, meaning that a high interpersonal orientation does not inhibit creativity but can in fact proceed alongside it.<sup>30</sup> Hamka's intellectual openness and social empathy mutually reinforced each other in shaping his influence within society.

### **Neuroticism (Emotional Stability)**

Hamka demonstrated low *neuroticism*, evidenced by his ability to maintain emotional stability and productivity during his imprisonment in 1964 to 1966. This assessment is supported by the triangulation of three sources: Rusydi Hamka as a direct witness, Hamka's own reflections in *Kenang-Kenangan Hidup* which reveal a narrative tone that is reflective rather than reactive, and Darwis's account of the consistency of Hamka's responses in facing various crises.

This finding is consistent with the literature showing that low *neuroticism*, or emotional stability, is an important predictor of leadership effectiveness. Talib's systematic review found that *neuroticism* shows a notably negative correlation with leadership, making it one of the strongest predictors of leadership effectiveness alongside *extraversion*.<sup>31</sup> The same review also identified *agreeableness* as the dimension most weakly associated with leadership among the five, a finding that appears to contradict Hamka's profile,

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<sup>27</sup> Qutaiba Agbaria and Amnah Abu Mokh, "Coping with Stress During the Coronavirus Outbreak: The Contribution of Big Five Personality Traits and Social Support," *International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction* 20 (2021): 1854–72, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11469-021-00486-2>.

<sup>28</sup> Neha Jain and Anushri Rawa, "Predicting Counterproductive Work Behaviors: Examining the Role of Spiritual Intelligence and Personality Traits in Public and Private Sector Organizations," *Journal of Applied Business and Economics*, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.33423/jabe.v26i6.7389>.

<sup>29</sup> Xinsheng Jiang et al., "How the Big Five Personality Traits Related to Aggression from Perspectives of the Benign and Malicious Envy," *BMC Psychology* 10 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40359-022-00906-5>.

<sup>30</sup> Haidong Zhu et al., "The Relationship Between the Big Five Personality Model and Innovation Behavior: A Three-Level Meta-Analysis," *Behavioral Sciences* 15 (2025), <https://doi.org/10.3390/bs15091143>.

<sup>31</sup> Nordin, N. M. D., Othman, N. A., & Talib, "Exploring the Association between Personality Traits and Leadership : A Systematic Literature Review."

in which *agreeableness* is precisely one of the foundations of his social influence. This contradiction can be explained by considering context: those studies were generally conducted within modern hierarchical organizational leadership settings, whereas Hamka's leadership operated within a cultural-religious context that placed great value on trust and communal consensus, a context in which *agreeableness* carries high leadership value.

This assessment is supported by documentation from several mutually reinforcing independent sources. Rusydi Hamka, as a direct witness, describes his father's psychological condition during imprisonment as remaining calm, even accompanied by humor and sustained intellectual productivity.<sup>32</sup> This portrait indicates that pressure was not met with anger or a decline in emotional functioning, but remained under stable control. This testimony carries particular weight as it comes from an individual who was in close proximity to the subject throughout the period of crisis.

The consistency of this pattern is also visible in Hamka's own reflections through *Kenang-Kenangan Hidup*. In that work, various difficult experiences including poverty in his youth, the loss of loved ones, and tensions with political authorities are narrated in a tone that tends toward the reflective. The emphasis that emerges is directed more toward the making of meaning from experience than toward emotional release. This demonstrates that his emotional responses were not reactive in nature, but were structured within a broader framework of understanding.<sup>33</sup>

Darwis's account reinforces this picture by documenting the consistency of Hamka's responses in facing various crises throughout his life. The convergence of these three sources produces a recurring pattern, namely the ability to maintain emotional stability across different situations, whether under political pressure, personal hardship, or complex social dynamics. This consistent pattern provides a strong basis for placing the neuroticism dimension at a low level within his personality profile.<sup>34</sup>

Hamka's emotional stability was not confined to any single event, but was present as a recurring tendency across the various phases of his life. He remained capable of carrying out intellectual and social activities without displaying significant emotional disruption, even when facing repeated pressures. This pattern points to a mature capacity for emotional regulation, which played a role in sustaining the continuity of both his productivity and his social engagement. This tendency simultaneously completes the overall structure of his personality, placing emotional stability as one of the important foundations within the dynamics of Hamka's character.

### **Interaction Between Dimensions and Implications**

An analysis of the five dimensions reveals that Hamka's personality configuration cannot be understood in isolation. The combination of high *openness* and very high *conscientiousness* produces productive creativity, that is, the capacity not only to generate new ideas but also to discipline oneself to execute them into tangible works. The combination of high *agreeableness* and low *neuroticism* forms a stable pattern of social relations: the ability to build trust across ideological boundaries without being

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<sup>32</sup> Rusydi Hamka, *Pribadi Dan Martabat Buya Hamka* (Jakarta: Penerbit Noura, 2016).

<sup>33</sup> Hamka, *Kenang-Kenangan Hidup*, 1st ed. (Jakarta: Gema Insani, 2018).

<sup>34</sup> A Darwis, *Buya Hamka: Ulama Pejuang Dan Pengarang* (Jakarta: Republika, 2008).

distracted by emotional reactivity. Silva found that *conscientiousness* influences productivity not only directly, but also through the mediation of self-leadership, which determines how effectively an individual manages themselves in pursuing long-term goals, a mechanism that is biographically consistent with the way Hamka managed his life even under the most demanding conditions.<sup>35</sup>

The relationship between openness and conscientiousness produces a pattern of creativity that is both directed and sustained. Openness allows for the entry of diverse perspectives, drawn from both the classical Islamic scholarly tradition and the dynamics of modern thought, thereby enriching the intellectual framework brought to bear. Conscientiousness, on the other hand, ensures that this intellectual process remains on a consistent course, not halting at mere exploration, and not fragmenting into unstructured ideas. Hamka's intellectual productivity can be understood as the product of a balance between flexibility of thought and discipline in the execution of ideas.

The combination of high *agreeableness* and low *neuroticism* forms a pattern of social relations that is both stable and functionally effective. The ability to understand differing viewpoints, accompanied by emotional stability in the face of pressure, enabled Hamka to build relatively open communication in complex situations. The social relations he formed were not only broad in reach, but also resilient in the face of conflict, as they were not easily disrupted by excessive emotional responses. This pattern provided the basis for his social role as a mediator who was not merely accepted, but genuinely trusted by diverse parties.

The interaction between these dimensions also reveals a continuity between intellectual and social life. Ideas generated through a reflective process did not remain confined to private space, but were channeled into the public sphere through lecturing, writing, and organizational leadership. In this regard, the extraversion dimension, situated at a moderate to high level, functioned as a bridge between the internal and external worlds. Engagement in the public sphere allowed ideas that had been deeply processed to interact with social reality, thereby producing a broader impact.

The balance between reflective tendencies and social engagement also demonstrates that Hamka's intellectual activity was not isolated in nature. He did not merely construct ideas in individual space, but also tested them through real social interaction. This pattern strengthened the quality of the ideas produced, as they continuously underwent a process of dialogue with the conditions of society. The personality configuration that formed therefore supported not only productivity, but also the social relevance of the works he produced.

Viewed as a whole, the interaction between these dimensions forms a pattern that is relatively stable and adaptive across various life situations. Openness enables adjustment to change, conscientiousness maintains continuity of work, agreeableness strengthens social networks, emotional stability preserves balance of response, and extraversion extends the reach of influence. This pattern does not emerge partially, but as a mutually supportive system that shapes a consistent life orientation.

This configuration also provides a deeper explanation of Hamka's place in the history of Indonesian Islamic thought. He served not merely as an individual of high intellectual capacity, but as a figure capable of integrating thought, action, and social relations into a coherent whole. The ability to

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<sup>35</sup> Ana Junça-Silva and Andreia Camaz, "A Longitudinal Approach to Disentangle How Conscientiousness Creates Happy People: The Mediating Role of Self-Leadership and the Moderating Role of Perceived Leadership Effectiveness.," *Heliyon* 9, no. 6 (June 2023): e16893, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2023.e16893>.

maintain consistency across various contexts, whether under normal conditions or under pressure, indicates that the structure of his personality possessed a high degree of integration.

From a methodological standpoint, these findings demonstrate that a Big Five Personality-based approach can be used effectively to understand historical figures through documented biographical data. The analysis does not merely produce a description of individual traits, but also enables an understanding of how various personality dimensions interact in forming consistent patterns of action. This approach therefore contributes to the enrichment of psychobiographical scholarship, particularly in the context of Indonesian Islamic figures who have thus far been studied predominantly from historical or normative perspectives.

The personality analysis of Haji Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah through the Big Five Personality framework contributes to broadening the approach to the study of Islamic figures, which has long been more dominant within historical and normative domains. This approach enables a more systematic reading of the relationship between personality patterns and intellectual productivity, as well as between personality structure and the social roles performed. The findings indicate that a personality configuration marked by high openness, very strong conscientiousness, cooperative social relations, and sustained emotional stability played a role in shaping the consistency of Hamka's actions and the breadth of his influence within society.

These implications open space for the development of psychobiographical scholarship within the Indonesian Islamic context, particularly in understanding how personal character contributes to the dynamics of thought and leadership. The approach employed in this study also demonstrates that analysis grounded in validated biographical data can serve as a methodological alternative for examining historical figures who cannot be studied through psychometric instruments directly. This study therefore not only produces a description of a figure's personality, but also offers an analytical framework that can be replicated for the study of other figures in comparable contexts.

## **Conclusion**

This study successfully addressed the research questions posed by identifying the personality profile of Haji Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah through the Big Five Personality framework using a retrospective biographical analysis approach grounded in verifiable sources. The analysis reveals a relatively consistent personality configuration, with a very high level on the *conscientiousness* dimension, high on *openness to experience* and *agreeableness*, moderate to high on *extraversion*, and low on *neuroticism*.

Openness to experience is reflected in his creativity in the literary field, his willingness to engage in social critique, and his ability to integrate the Islamic scholarly tradition with the dynamics of modernity. The conscientiousness dimension emerges as the most dominant characteristic, evident in his self-discipline, high intellectual productivity of more than one hundred written works, and his ability to maintain consistency of purpose over the long term. This pattern explains how ideas did not remain at the conceptual level, but were realized in the form of systematic and sustained works.

On the extraversion dimension, Hamka was positioned at a moderate to high level, as seen in his involvement in organizational leadership, preaching activities, and broad public communication, while still maintaining space for personal reflection as the foundation of his thinking. The *agreeableness* dimension reveals a strong empathic and cooperative tendency, reflected in his ability to build cross-group communication and maintain social relations in complex contexts. Meanwhile, his low level of

*neuroticism* provided the basis for emotional stability, enabling Hamka to respond to pressure in a directed manner and remain productive, including in extreme situations such as his imprisonment, which gave rise to the monumental work *Tafsir Al-Azhar*.

The combination of *conscientiousness* and *openness* proved to be the most determinant factor in explaining Hamka's character as a figure who was both visionary and productive. Openness expanded the horizons of thought, while conscientiousness ensured the consistent realization of ideas. Emotional stability strengthened his resilience under pressure, while his relational capacity extended the reach of his social influence. This configuration indicates that Hamka's personality structure was formed as an integrated system encompassing intellectual capacity, consistency of action, and effectiveness of social relations.

These findings also confirm that a Big Five-based retrospective biographical analysis approach can be relevantly applied to the study of Indonesian Islamic figures. By limiting claims to data documented in more than one independent source and placing behavioral evidence as the basis of inference, this study seeks to maintain methodological integrity in psychobiographical research. Overall, this analysis demonstrates that a personality that is stable, open, and disciplined played an important role in shaping Hamka's intellectual and social contributions to the modernization of Islamic thought in Indonesia.

Based on the findings and limitations of the study, several developmental agendas can be pursued. First, comparative research examining the Big Five profiles of other Indonesian modernist Islamic scholars, such as Nurcholish Madjid and Ahmad Dahlan, has the potential to produce a broader personality mapping and to provide understanding of the psychological patterns that contributed to the Islamic reform movement in Indonesia.

Second, there is a need to develop more standardized analytical instruments or rubrics for converting biographical data into personality profile estimates in a more systematic manner. This effort is important for increasing the transparency of the inference process and for strengthening the replication of research in cultural contexts with distinctive characteristics, including the tradition of Nusantara Islam.

Third, further research should be directed toward more in-depth exploration of primary sources, such as personal correspondence, diaries, or other archival documents, which can provide more detailed behavioral evidence. Access to more granular data will strengthen the validity of the analysis and enable the development of more comprehensive psychobiographical scholarship.

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