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## The Urgency of Humility (*Tawadhu'*) in Moral Education: An Analysis of the Concept of Humility in Islam

Muhammad Ghozil Aulia<sup>1</sup>, Mahmud Arif<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1&2</sup>Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kalijaga, Yogyakarta

Email : [24204011024@student.uin-suka.ac.id](mailto:24204011024@student.uin-suka.ac.id), [drmahmud.arif@uin-suka.ac.id](mailto:drmahmud.arif@uin-suka.ac.id)

### Abstract

**Introduction to the Problem:** In the modern era, which is filled with individualism and existentialism, humility (*tawadhu'*) has become a rare but essential value. The imbalance between self-achievement and spiritual awareness often leads to arrogance, social conflict, and moral degradation. **Purpose:** This article aims to examine the meaning and urgency of humility and its relationship with self-actualization from an Islamic perspective. **Design/methods/approach:** This study uses a qualitative method based on library research. Data was collected through a review of literature related to the concepts of *tawadhu'* and self-actualization in Islam. **Findings:** This study found that humility is not an obstacle to self-actualization but rather a moral balancing force to prevent the process of self-actualization from leading to arrogance. *Tawadhu'* encourages individuals to develop holistically, with a focus on benefiting others and seeking the pleasure of Allah SWT. **Research implications/limitations:** The limitation of this study lies in its qualitative, text-based approach, which does not include empirical field data. **Originality/value:** This article offers an integrative perspective between Islamic creed-ethics teachings and self-actualization theory in psychology, which is rarely explored in depth in contemporary moral-spiritual studies. The added value of this article is its emphasis on humility as a filtering mechanism in self-actualization, as well as the basis for social harmony and the formation of a healthy academic culture.

**Keywords :** *Tawadhu'*, self-actualization, Moral.

### Introduction

Faith and morality are two main dimensions in Islamic teachings that cannot be separated from one another. Strong faith will be reflected in noble behavior and character, one of which is humility (Azty et al., 2018). In a social context, humility serves as a crucial foundation for fostering harmonious relationships among people (Arifin et al., 2025). Therefore, discussions about humility are not only theologically relevant but also socially significant.

Humility (*tawadhu'*) is a manifestation of self-awareness that all human strengths and abilities come from Allah SWT. Humility does not mean negatively belittling oneself, but rather being fair to oneself and others in terms of virtue (Purnama Rozak, 2017). A humble person will avoid arrogance and feeling superior to others. This shows spiritual maturity and faith that is internalized in a person's soul (Almaidah, 2018).

In the midst of modern life, which often emphasizes individualism and excessive competition, humility has become rare but is greatly needed (Mulyadi et al., 2023). Many people are trapped in self-image and self-actualization that are egoistic in nature, without paying attention to noble moral

values (Nurlaeli, 2022). This can lead to social conflicts, disparities, and even dehumanization. In this context, it is crucial to revive the values of humility as an integral part of Islamic self-actualization.

Self-actualization is one of the basic human needs, as explained in various psychological theories (Ahdiani & Maulana, 2023; Mustofa, 2022). However, in Islam, self-actualization is not solely for personal gain (Afrasibi & Fattahi, 2017; Sihombing et al., 2024). True self-actualization is achieved when an individual is able to bring benefit to others and their environment. In this context, humility serves as a moral filter guiding an individual to ensure their self-actualization does not lead to arrogance (Bağ et al., 2021). In other words, humble character acts as a balancing force in the process of self-actualization that holds divine value (Arroisi et al., 2022).

Islam teaches that human dignity is not measured by social status, wealth, or position, but by piety (Ramadhan & Supriatna, 2025; Septiana, 2023). Allah affirms that the most noble in His sight are those who are most pious. Piety is manifested, among other things, in humble behavior toward fellow human beings. Thus, humility is a reflection of faith that leads to true and beneficial actualization.

In the life of the Prophet Muhammad SAW, humility was a key characteristic that was reflected in all aspects of his social interactions. Although he was the messenger of Allah and the leader of the ummah, he never once showed arrogance or felt superior to others. The Prophet always honored others and humbled himself in order to protect the hearts and feelings of his fellow human beings. This example became the main source for the development of noble character among Muslims.

The importance of humility as a form of self-actualization is also related to the principles of *ukhuwah* (brotherhood) and social solidarity. Without humility, it is difficult for someone to care, be empathetic, and prioritize the common good (Krause, 2010). On the contrary, arrogance and selfishness will erode the values of togetherness and destroy the social order. Therefore, humility is not merely an individual virtue but also a pillar in building a civilized society.

In the context of faith and character education, learning about humility and actualization towards fellow human beings needs to be mainstreamed (Daheri et al., 2024). This is because the formation of noble character must begin early, through an integrated educational process between values, attitudes, and actual behavior. Teachers, as moral role models, play an important role in instilling the value of humility through direct practice and inspirational narratives (Fiyul, 2025; Jumatullailah et al., 2024). Such education will produce a generation that is not only intelligent, but also courteous and caring.

In today's digital age, self-actualization tends to be achieved through social media and various other online platforms (Hambali, 2023). Many people compete to showcase their achievements and presence without considering the values of simplicity and ethics. As a result, there is a growing tendency toward narcissism and a culture of showing off, which contradicts the principle of humility in Islam. This phenomenon challenges Muslims to redefine their orientation toward self-actualization in alignment with the values of faith and morality.

Humility also plays an important role in building healthy communication between people. In social interactions, humility allows a person to listen, understand, and accept differences openly. This is a key asset in building tolerance, cooperation, and peace (Kusprayogi & Nashori, 2017). Therefore, humility is not just a passive attitude, but an active force in creating a harmonious social order.

Studies on the concepts of humility and actualization towards fellow human beings also have great relevance in shaping a healthy academic culture (Fitriana, 2022). Higher education settings, humility fosters openness to knowledge, criticism, and collaboration (Aulia & Nafisah, 2023; Munajat et al., 2024). Conversely, intellectual arrogance hinders academic growth and undermines academic ethics. Therefore, humility should be established as a foundational value in the development of students' and academic staff's personalities.

Given this urgency and relevance, the discussion of humility and actualization towards fellow human beings becomes very important in the study of faith and morals. Not only as a theory, this value needs to be internalized in daily life in order to form a spiritually and socially mature personality. This article describes the meaning of humility, the urgency of actualization towards others, and the relationship between the two from an Islamic perspective. The aim is for this research to contribute to strengthening the understanding and practice of noble moral values in the midst of the lives of the community.

## Methods

This research is a qualitative study using a library research approach that aims to examine the concept of humility and its actualization in the perspective of Islamic moral beliefs. The main data sources in this study consist of relevant classical and contemporary literature, including books on Islamic morals, as well as scientific works related to spiritual values and self-actualization in Islam. Data collection was conducted through a systematic review of document content, emphasizing a deep understanding of the meaning of the text, historical-normative contextualization, and its practical relevance in modern social life.

Data analysis was conducted using a descriptive-analytical method, namely by describing and analyzing the meaning of humility (*tawadhu*) and its actualization in individual and community life based on the framework of Islamic values. This study also integrates a normative-theological perspective and an Islamic psychological approach in interpreting moral self-actualization. The analysis process is conducted inductively and reflectively, resulting in a comprehensive and applicable synthesis of concepts. Data validity is strengthened through triangulation of sources and comparison with previous studies published in scientific journals and reputable academic works.

## Result

### Definition of Humility (*Tawadhu*)

Humility or *Tawadhu*. A humble person is someone who humbles themselves in social interactions. The opposite of humility is arrogance. A humble person does not consider themselves superior to others, while an arrogant person overvalues themselves. Humility is not the same as low self-esteem, as low self-esteem means losing confidence in oneself. Although in practice, a humble person tends to humble themselves in the presence of others, this attitude does not stem from a lack of self-confidence (Ilyas, 2020).

Humility towards fellow human beings is a noble trait that stems from an awareness of Allah SWT's omnipotence over all His servants. Humans are weak creatures who are insignificant in the eyes of Allah SWT. Humans require the grace, forgiveness, and mercy of Allah. Without the mercy, grace, and blessings of Allah SWT, humans would not be able to survive, let alone exist on the surface of this earth.

A humble person realizes that everything he has, whether it be good looks, knowledge, wealth, rank, position, or anything else, is a gift from Allah SWT. Allah SWT says:

وَمَا بِكُمْ مِّن نِّعْمَةٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ تَطْمِئِنُّ إِذَا مَسَّكُمْ أَلْضُرُّ فَإِنِّيهِ تَجْرُونَ

“And whatever blessings you have, they are from Allah (they come), and if you are hit by disadvantage, then only to Him should you ask for help.” (QS. An-Nahl 16:53)

With such awareness, it is not at all appropriate for him to be arrogant towards fellow human beings, let alone arrogant towards Allah SWT.

### **The Virtue of Humility (*Tawadhu'*)**

An attitude of *tawadhu'* will not lower a person's rank, instead he will be respected and appreciated. People will be happy and will not hesitate to associate with him. Even more than that, his level before Allah SWT is getting higher. Rasulullah saw said:

التَّوَّاضُعُ، لَا يَزِيدُ الْعَبْدَ إِلَّا رِفْعَةً، فَتَوَّاضَعُوا يَرْفَعَكُمُ اللَّهُ... (رواه الديلمي)

“*Tawadhu'*, nothing increases for a servant except height (degree). Therefore, be humble, Allah will surely elevate you (level)...” (HR. Dailami)

In addition to elevating their rank, Allah includes people who are humble 'into the group of servants who receive love from Allah, the Most Merciful. His Word:

وَعِبَادُ الرَّحْمَنِ الَّذِينَ يَمْشُونَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ هَوْنًا وَإِذَا خَاطَبَهُمُ الْجَاهِلُونَ قَالُوا سَلَامًا

“And the servants of the Most Merciful God (are) those who walk on the earth humbly and when ignorant people greet them, they utter words (containing) salvation” (QS. Al-Furqan 25:63)

### **Forms of Humility (*Tawadhu'*)**

The attitude of humility in social interactions can be seen in the following forms, among others (Ilyas, 2020):

1. Do not stand out from people of the same level or status, unless this attitude causes harm to religion or Muslims.
2. Stand up from his seat at a meeting to welcome the arrival of someone who is nobler and more knowledgeable than himself, and escort him to the exit door if the person concerned leaves the meeting.
3. Mingle with ordinary people in a friendly manner, and do not view yourself as superior to them.
4. Willing to visit other people even if they are of lower social status.
5. Want to sit together with the poor, disabled people and other disadvantaged people, and be willing to accept their invitations.
6. Don't eat and drink excessively and don't wear clothes that show pomp and arrogance.

## **Discussion**

### **Implementation of Humility (*Tawadhu'*) and Its Actualization**

Humility (*tawadhu'*) is one of the main characteristics that is highly valued in Islamic teachings. In everyday life, this attitude is evident in a person's ability to refrain from boasting, acknowledge

their shortcomings, and respect others. The implementation of humility is not merely a verbal expression, but must be evident in one's attitude and actions (Fitriana, 2022). This is important in shaping a morally and socially mature personality.

In family interactions, humility is the key to harmony and peace in the household. A humble husband or wife will be open-minded, not feel that they are always right, and be able to accept input from their spouse. Humble parents will also find it easier to raise their children with love and good example. Thus, the household becomes the first place where the values of humility are put into practice.

In society, humility facilitates the establishment of healthy and equitable social relationships. A humble person tends to be inclusive, not exclusive, and able to embrace various social strata without discrimination. They do not feel superior because of their economic status, position, or education. This contributes to the creation of strong social solidarity and cohesion.

Humility is also an important foundation in education, both for teachers and students. A humble teacher will continue to learn, accept criticism, and teach wholeheartedly without belittling their students. Meanwhile, humble students will be open to knowledge and more receptive to guidance (Fauziah & Mahpudz, 2022). The implementation of this attitude is crucial to the success of a humanistic and dialogical educational process.

In the workplace, humility is an important character that supports teamwork and a healthy work ethic. A humble leader will be willing to listen to the aspirations of subordinates, acknowledge the contributions of others, and not be authoritarian. Likewise, humble employees are not easily jealous, are able to appreciate colleagues, and focus on performance without prioritizing ego. This creates a professional and productive work climate.

Self-actualization in the Islamic perspective is not oriented towards individual achievement alone, but rather towards the benefits for others. A Muslim who actualizes himself properly will try to align his potential and talents with social welfare. He does not only pursue personal achievement, but also real contributions to the community. In this case, humility becomes a controller so that the actualization process does not slip towards arrogance.

The Prophet Muhammad SAW is the main example in terms of self-actualization framed by a humble attitude. Although he has the highest position as a messenger of Allah, he still lives his life with simplicity and service to the people. He eats with ordinary people, cares for orphans, and does not differentiate people's status based on wealth. The implementation of this attitude is relevant to be emulated in various contexts of life today.

The implementation of humility is also seen from the way a person responds to criticism and failure. Humble people are not easily offended or discouraged when criticized, but instead use it as a means of introspection and improvement. They realize that humans are not perfect, and mistakes are part of the learning process. In this case, humility becomes an important foundation for healthy personal growth psychologically and spiritually.

In the context of preaching and religious activities, a humble attitude is very much needed so that preaching does not get caught up in a judgmental attitude. A humble preacher will convey the truth with compassion, wisdom, and patience. He avoids feeling the most holy or belittling people who do not fully understand the teachings of Islam. This implementation reflects the Prophet's morals and makes preaching more acceptable.

In the digital and social media era, humility can be implemented through the way a person presents themselves and responds to other people's opinions. Not being overly proud, not belittling other people's achievements, and not feeling the most correct are real forms of digital

humility. This attitude can prevent narcissistic culture and division that often arise due to ego in cyberspace. Therefore, humility becomes a moral filter in this era of open information.

The implementation of self-actualization in Islam also includes social service, such as being involved in community activities, helping the poor, and being part of social solutions. Actualization does not only mean material success, but also spiritual and social benefits. When the value of humility is united in this actualization, then deeds become more sincere and not contaminated with *riya*. This is the meaning of *ihسان* in working and interacting.

A humble attitude also allows a person to be more open to diversity and differences. In a multicultural society, humility prevents the emergence of attitudes of ethnic, cultural, or religious superiority. This is a real form of active tolerance based on spiritual awareness and appreciation for God's diverse creations (Sihombing et al., 2024). This implementation is very important to build a peaceful life together.

In the context of students and the academic world, a humble attitude will lead to a spirit of collaboration, not destructive competition. Students who are humble will respect other people's ideas, will not feel smarter, and will remain enthusiastic about learning without being arrogant about their achievements. They are aware that knowledge is a mandate, not a tool to boast about themselves (Nurfajriyanti et al., 2023). Thus, a humble attitude supports the creation of a healthy and dignified academic atmosphere.

The implementation of humility also plays a very important role in maintaining the sustainability of Islamic brotherhood in the community. In organizations, religious study groups, and religious communities, humility becomes a lubricant for relations between members. Without humility, cooperation will be hampered by egoism and conflicts of interest. Therefore, this attitude needs to be continuously trained and strengthened in every Islamic social space.

## Conclusion

Humility or *tawadhu'* is a noble value in Islam that plays a central role in shaping a mature personality in terms of morality, social interaction, and spirituality. Humility is not merely a passive attitude, but rather an inner strength manifested in openness to criticism, a willingness to learn, and respect for others regardless of their status or background. In various aspects of family life, society, education, the workplace, and even social media, humility serves as an important foundation for creating harmony, collaboration, and an environment conducive to collective growth.

Humility does not hinder the process of self-actualization but rather guides it to remain rooted in sincerity and usefulness. A humble Muslim is able to develop their potential without falling into arrogance, and uses achievements as a means to contribute positively to others. By emulating the Prophet Muhammad SAW as the most perfect example of balancing self-actualization and humility, Muslims are encouraged to become capable yet humble individuals who are beneficial to others without feeling superior to them.

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