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Religious Moderation as a Paradigm of Moderate Islamic Thought in the Era of Digital Disruption

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ABSTRACT

The rapid development of digital technology has fundamentally transformed the religious Muslim societies, particularly in terms of religious authority, the production of Islamic discourse, and modes of da'wah in digital public spaces. Digital disruption presents both opportunities and serious challenges for the sustainability of moderate Islam, marked by the rise of identity polarization, fragmentation of religious authority, religious hoaxes, and the commodification of religion. This article aims to examine religious moderation as a paradigm of moderate Islamic thought that is relevant in responding to the challenges of the digital disruption era. This study employs a qualitative approach using a library research method by critically analyzing primary and secondary literature related to the concept of wasathiyah, moderate Islamic thought, and the relationship between religion and digital media. The findings indicate that religious moderation is deeply rooted in Islamic teachings and functions as a theological, epistemological, and social principle that balances text and context, revelation and social reality. In the digital context, religious moderation serves as an ethical and epistemological to safeguard the integrity of religious discourse, counter extremism, and strengthen social cohesion. The article also emphasizes the importance of strengthening religious moderation through digital literacy-based da'wah, inclusive and argumentative religious narratives, and synergy among academics, religious scholars, and educational institutions. Thus, religious moderation emerges as a strategic paradigm for advancing a civil, balanced, and contextually relevant moderate Islam in the era of digital disruption.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology over the past two decades has brought fundamental changes to various aspects of human life, including religious practices and religious authority. The phenomenon known as digital disruption is not merely a technological transformation, but rather an epistemological and cultural shift in the ways humans acquire, produce, and distribute knowledge. In the Islamic context, digital disruption has shifted patterns of religious authority that were previously centered on traditional ulama toward new figures known as “social media preachers (Akmaliah, 2020).” Religious authority was attained through formal scholarly legitimacy within pesantren, madrasah, or Islamic universities. Today, however, such authority is increasingly determined by the number of followers, likes, and levels of engagement on social media platforms. These digital preachers are able to influence millions of followers through short, visually appealing, and easily consumable content, although such content often lacks theological and methodological depth. This phenomenon signifies a shift from knowledge-based authority to popularity-based authority (Hamzah et al., 2025).

Digital media subsequently functions as a space for the production and contestation of religious discourse. On the one hand, it opens opportunities for the democratization of religious knowledge, as individuals can now freely access interpretations of the Qur’an, hadith, and religious sermons from diverse sources. On the other hand, digital media also constitutes a space vulnerable to the simplification of religious teachings, the polarization of viewpoints, and the dissemination of extreme and radical ideas. According to a study conducted by Wahid Foundation (2022) in Kuswana (2024), there has been a significant increase in intolerant content and religion-based hate speech on Indonesian social media platforms from 2018 to 2025.

This phenomenon demonstrates how the digitalization of religion can erode the traditions of *tatsabbut* (verification) and *ta’āmul bil-’ilm* (a scholarly approach) in understanding Islamic teachings. The speed and algorithm-driven nature of social media often encourage the circulation of provocative and reductionist religious messages. As a result, the digital sphere has become an arena of ideological contestation between moderate Islamic groups and those oriented toward puritanism or even extremism (Hamzah et al., 2025).

In the Indonesian context, this condition is particularly relevant given the country’s ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity. The digitalization of da’wah that is not accompanied by adequate religious and digital literacy has the potential to generate social fragmentation and a crisis of trust in traditional religious authority. Therefore, a paradigm is needed that can maintain a balance between Islamic values and contemporary digital realities (Widoyo et al., 2023).

One of the paradigms considered most relevant in this context is religious moderation. This concept has become a national agenda promoted by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia since 2019. In Islam, religious moderation is rooted in the concept of *wasatiyyah*, which emphasizes balance and justice in religious life, as affirmed in the Qur’an, Surah Al-Baqarah verse 143:

“Thus We have made you a *wasat* (moderate) community so that you may be witnesses over humanity and that the Messenger may be a witness over you (Kementerian Agama RI, 2012).”

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Therefore, religious moderation becomes highly relevant as a religious paradigm in the era of digital disruption. This approach is not solely aimed at countering extremism, but also at restoring the meaning of Islamic da’wah as a medium for moral and social education. Within a digital space characterized by intense ideological competition, religious moderation can function as an epistemic filter against the overwhelming flow of unverified religious information. Furthermore, religious moderation serves as a means to strengthen social cohesion and to expand the role of Islam as a civilizational force in the digital age (Campbell, 2017).

This study is grounded in an awareness of the transformation of religious authority in the digital era and the urgent need to strengthen narratives of moderate Islam through the paradigm of religious moderation. Based on this discussion, the main research problems can be formulated as follows. First, how is the concept of religious moderation understood within the perspective of moderate Islamic thought? Second, why is religious moderation relevant as a religious paradigm in the era of digital disruption? Third, what are the implications of religious moderation for the development of moderate Islamic discourse in the digital sphere? These questions are not only theoretical in nature but also empirical, as they are directly related to the socio-religious challenges faced by Indonesian Muslim society in confronting the dynamics of information disruption and digital authority.

The objective of this study is to explain, both conceptually and contextually, religious moderation as a paradigm of moderate Islamic thought that is relevant in addressing the challenges of the digital era. Conceptually, this study is expected to contribute to the development of contemporary Islamic studies, particularly in the fields of social theology and digital da’wah communication. This research enriches academic discourse on moderate Islam (*wasatiyyah Islamiyyah*) by situating it within the context of dynamic digital transformation. In addition, the study seeks to build a bridge between the theory of religious moderation and the practice of ethical and educational digital communication.

From a practical perspective, this study holds strategic significance for religious institutions, academics, and government bodies in efforts to strengthen religious moderation in the digital sphere. The findings of this research may serve as a conceptual reference for the formulation of religious digital literacy policies, the training of digital preachers, and the development of moderate da’wah content grounded in the values of *rahmatan lil ‘alamin*. As emphasized by Yusuf al-Qaradawi, moderation in Islam does not imply a compromise of principles, but rather the ability

to position truth proportionally and justly amid changing times. It is this value that must be actualized in the digital space so that Islamic da'wah does not become trapped in extremism, polarization, and the politicization of religion.

2. METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach using a library research method. The qualitative approach is chosen because the focus of this research lies in conceptual, interpretative, and critical analysis of religious moderation as a paradigm of moderate Islamic thought in responding to digital disruption. The library research method is applied as this study relies on a systematic analysis of written sources relevant to the object of inquiry. Library research is understood as a scientific research procedure that involves the processes of collecting, evaluating, and synthesizing literature in order to construct a solid conceptual framework and robust theoretical argumentation (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The data sources in this study are classified into two main categories, namely primary data sources and secondary data sources. Primary data sources include the Qur'an, authenticated (*ṣaḥīḥ*) hadiths, as well as works by contemporary moderate Islamic scholars and intellectuals that directly address the concept of religious moderation and the principle of *wasatiyyah*. Secondary data sources consist of various relevant academic literatures, including scholarly journal articles, academic books, and research reports that discuss religious moderation, moderate Islam, and the relationship between religion and digital media. Secondary literature is employed to enrich the conceptual analysis and to broaden the theoretical perspective of the study (Aisyah et al., 2025). These sources are selected from reputable national and international journals published within the last ten years (2015–2025), taking into consideration their relevance, academic credibility, and contribution to the development of studies on religious moderation in the digital.

This study adopts a descriptive-analytical approach (Terry & Hayfield, 2021), aiming to systematically describe concepts, ideas, and scholarly findings related to religious moderation, and subsequently to analyze them critically within the framework of moderate Islamic thought. The analysis is conducted to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the position of religious moderation as a religious paradigm that is relevant in addressing the challenges of disinformation, identity polarization, and online extremism that proliferate through digital media.

The data analysis techniques employed in this study consist of three main stages: descriptive-analytical analysis, conceptual analysis, and comparative analysis. Descriptive-analytical analysis is conducted by organizing and explaining data obtained from both primary and secondary sources in a systematic and logical manner, thereby producing a comprehensive overview of religious moderation in Islam, particularly within the context of digital disruption that influences patterns of communication and religious practices among Muslims. Conceptual analysis is used to explore and formulate the meaning of religious moderation as a paradigm of moderate Islamic thought. This stage involves identifying key elements of religious moderation, such as balance (*tawāzun*), tolerance (*tasāmuḥ*), justice (*i'tidāl*), and the

rejection of extremism, as well as examining their interconnections with contemporary social theories and Islamic theology. Furthermore, comparative analysis is applied to compare the perspectives and findings of previous scholars regarding religious moderation in the digital era. Through this technique, the study evaluates the consistency of arguments, identifies differences in conceptual emphasis, and uncovers research gaps in the field of religious moderation. The results of the comparative analysis are then synthesized to construct a coherent and systematic argumentative framework on religious moderation as a paradigm of moderate Islamic thought that is both relevant and applicable in the contemporary digital context (Saefullah, 2024).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Concept of Moderation in Islam (*Wasatiyyah*)

The concept of moderation in Islam, or *wasatiyyah*, constitutes one of the most fundamental foundations within the structure of Islamic teachings, possessing strong theological, epistemological, and sociological legitimacy. Moderation is not a peripheral concept or merely a response to the challenges of modernity; rather, it is an intrinsic principle embedded in Islamic identity since the period of revelation. The primary normative foundation of this concept is explicitly articulated in the Qur'an through the term *ummatan wasatan*, as stated in Qur'an, Surah Al-Baqarah [2]: 143. This verse affirms the position of the Muslim community as a middle nation entrusted with a moral responsibility to serve as witnesses of justice for all humanity (Widoyo et al., 2023).

In the corpus of classical Arabic scholarship, the term *wasat* conveys meanings such as justice (*al-'adl*), balance (*al-tawāzun*), proportionality, and the best or most excellent choice (*al-khiyār*). *Wasatiyyah* represents a normative position that necessitates an attitude of justice avoiding both excess and negligence in all dimensions of religious life. Therefore, moderation in Islam is not synonymous with value-neutrality; rather, it is a value-laden stance that consciously situates religious teachings in a position of dignity and civility (Yunus et al., 2023). Moderation represents an expression of balance between the normative dimensions of religious teachings and the continually evolving social reality. Theologically, religious moderation functions as an ethical principle that guides Muslims to express their beliefs and religious practices in a proportional manner. Moderation safeguards the Muslim community from two equally problematic extremes: excess (*ifrāt*), which gives rise to rigidity and exclusivism, and negligence (*tafrīt*), which risks stripping religion of its normative meaning. Thus, moderation constitutes a meeting point between steadfast faith and social openness, between loyalty to revelation and humanitarian responsibility within an ever-changing social reality.

In contemporary Islamic discourse, the concept of *ummatan wasatan* is increasingly understood as a paradigm of religiosity that firmly rejects all forms of extremism. Religious extremism does not manifest in a single form but rather appears across a broad spectrum. On the one hand, there is extremism characterized by rigidity, literalism, and exclusivism, which absolutizes particular interpretations of religious texts and closes off spaces for dialogue. On the other hand, there is a form of relativistic extremism that loosens the normative boundaries of Islamic teachings to the extent that it risks obscuring their theological foundations. Islamic moderation rejects both

poles by asserting that healthy religiosity is one that is firmly rooted in the core principles of the religion while remaining sensitive to social realities (Aisyah et al., 2025).

Yunus et al. (2023) emphasizes that moderation in Islam is not a compromise of the core principles of the religion; rather, it represents a mature theological commitment to maintaining a balance between firmness in faith (*'aqidah*) and flexibility in attitude. Within this framework, religious moderation does not erase the boundaries between right and wrong, but instead prevents tendencies to monopolize truth and to excessively judge others. Moderation positions religion as a source of values that guides human life, rather than as a tool for legitimizing symbolic or physical violence. Beyond its theological dimension, religious moderation also possesses a highly significant social dimension, particularly within societies that are plural in terms of religion, culture, and worldviews.

In this context, religious moderation functions as an ethical foundation for building peaceful and just social relations and plays a strategic role in preventing conflicts based on religious identity while strengthening social cohesion amid diversity. Religious moderation enables Muslims to coexist constructively without sacrificing their Islamic identity; therefore, it should not be understood as a passive adjustment to pluralism, but rather as an active strategy for nurturing a dignified and harmonious shared life (Saefullah, 2024).

The relevance of religious moderation has become increasingly evident in the era of digital disruption, a period in which religious life is undergoing rapid and fundamental change. The development of digital technology has transformed the ways in which Muslims access, understand, and disseminate religious knowledge. Social media enables the instant and massive distribution of religious discourse, creating significant opportunities for the expansion of da'wah, while simultaneously fostering a fertile space for the spread of shallow and provocative religious interpretations. According to Afifi and Abbas (2023), the fast-paced and fragmented nature of digital media encourages the simplification of religious texts, causing Qur'anic verses or hadiths to be frequently detached from their *asbāb al-nuzūl* and from established scholarly frameworks.

Furthermore, *ijtihād*, the development of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, and considerations of *maṣlahah* constitute epistemological instruments that enable Islamic law to function adaptively without losing its normative legitimacy. Moderation in this context does not entail altering the text, but rather understanding it comprehensively by taking into account the universal objectives of the Sharī'ah, such as justice, public welfare, and the protection of human dignity. Religious moderation is also comprehensive in nature, as it encompasses all dimensions of Islamic teachings, namely *'aqidah* (creed), *'ibādah* (ritual practices), and *mu'āmalah* (social relations) (Nisa et al., 2021). Within the dimension of *'aqidah*, moderation is reflected in the affirmation of *tawhīd* without giving rise to exclusivism or practices of *takfīr*. A moderate stance in matters of creed enables Muslims to engage constructively with other communities without losing their religious identity. In the realm of *'ibādah*, moderation is manifested through a balance between ritual firmness and legal flexibility, rejecting both excessive rigidity

(*ghuluw*) and the neglect of the Shari'ah. Meanwhile, in the dimension of *mu'amalah*, Islamic moderation promotes social relations that are just, inclusive, and oriented toward public welfare. In this sense, moderation enables Muslims to contribute positively to modern society and the digital ecosystem without losing their moral orientation (Suheri & Nurrahmawati, 2022).

Thus, religious moderation can be understood as an integral, contextual, and sustainable paradigm of Islamic thought. Moderation functions not only as a normative concept but also as an epistemological framework and a form of social praxis that enables Islam to remain relevant and meaningful amid the complexities of the digital disruption era. Religious moderation affirms Islam as a religion capable of responding to the changing times in a critical and constructive manner, maintaining a balance between fidelity to revelation and humanitarian responsibility, and presenting Islam as a *rahmatan lil 'alamin* in a global, plural, and digitalized world.

Moderate Islamic Thought

Moderate Islamic thought represents a conceptual elaboration of the principle of *wasatiyyah*, which has long served as a normative foundation in Islamic teachings. While *wasatiyyah* affirms the position of the Muslim community as *ummatan wasatan*, oriented toward justice, balance, and the pursuit of the best course, moderate Islam constitutes the actualization of this principle within the domains of religious thought and praxis. In academic discourse, moderate Islam is understood as a paradigm of religiosity that situates theological orthodoxy and social openness in a mutually reinforcing relationship rather than in opposition to one another. Moderate Islam is not a new school of thought; rather, it is an epistemological character deeply rooted in the classical Islamic scholarly tradition, particularly within the framework of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah* (Mandala et al., 2024).

As a continuation of the concept of *wasatiyyah*, moderate Islamic thought rejects the reduction of religion to a single dimension, whether through rigid emphasis on normative-theological aspects or through the reduction of religion to a merely social-pragmatic instrument. Moderation positions religion as an integrated value system that combines fidelity to the sources of revelation with sensitivity to social realities. Within this framework, moderate Islam is not defensive toward change, but rather responsive and reflective in managing the dynamics of the times while remaining grounded in the fundamental principles of Islamic teachings.

A number of studies affirm that moderate Islamic thought functions as an antithesis to religious extremism, which stands in contradiction to the spirit of *wasatiyyah*. Extremism tends to emerge from perspectives that negate balance, either through excessive absolutization of particular interpretations or through the trivialization of the normative values of religion. Hefni (2020) This shows that religious extremism is often characterized by exclusivism, rejection of plurality, and a tendency to claim singular and absolute truth. In this context, moderate Islam emerges as a paradigm that affirms differences in interpretation as an epistemological inevitability within the Islamic tradition, which must be managed in an ethical and civilized manner. Nevertheless, moderate Islam should not be understood as a form of unbounded religious liberalization. In line with the principle of *wasatiyyah*, moderation also rejects

extreme religious liberalism that tends to relativize Islamic teachings to the point of eroding their normative foundations.

In the global context, moderate Islamic thought is viewed as a concrete manifestation of the principle of *wasatiyyah* that enables Islam to engage constructively with modern values. Moderate Islam demonstrates a high degree of compatibility with democracy, human rights, and multicultural social life without relinquishing its theological identity. Moderation in this sense does not imply a pragmatic adjustment of religion, but rather an affirmation of the ethical dimension of Islam that is universal and relevant across time and space. As a paradigm of thought, moderate Islam also functions to bridge the tension between the normative dimension of religion and its empirical realities. *Wasatiyyah*, as a principle of balance, necessitates that religion does not remain confined to the level of doctrine, but is embodied in tangible social praxis. Consequently, moderate Islam emphasizes the close interconnection between individual piety and social piety. Religiosity is not measured solely by ritual compliance, but also by concrete contributions to the realization of justice, peace, and humanity (Utami et al., 2023).

At the normative–operational level, moderate Islamic thought is manifested through four main principles, namely *tawassuṭ*, *tasāmuḥ*, *tawāzun*, and *i'tidāl*. These four principles constitute the practical articulation of the value of *wasatiyyah* in religious life. The principle of *tawassuṭ* emphasizes adopting a middle path in understanding and practicing Islamic teachings, thereby preventing believers from falling into extreme tendencies that contradict the spirit of justice and balance. This principle serves as an epistemological foundation for the development of inclusive and proportional Islamic thought (Aulia & Arifin, 2023).

The principle of *tasāmuḥ* emphasizes the importance of tolerance as an ethical expression of religious moderation. Within the framework of *wasatiyyah*, tolerance is not understood as relativism of truth, but rather as an attitude of respecting differences with moral maturity. Moderate Islam views diversity both intra-religious and interreligious as a social reality that must be managed through dialogue and mutual respect, rather than through rejection and conflict. The principle of *tawāzun* represents balance among the various dimensions of life, which constitutes a defining characteristic of Islamic moderation. Balance between spiritual and social aspects, between individual and collective interests, and between rights and obligations reflects the concrete manifestation of *wasatiyyah* in Muslim life. In this context, moderate Islam rejects the reduction of religion to a single aspect and affirms the integration of religious values across all spheres of life. The principle of *i'tidāl* completes the framework of moderate Islamic thought by emphasizing justice as a core value. Justice, from the perspective of moderate Islam, is not understood solely in legal-formal terms, but also substantively, namely as a commitment to humanity and public welfare. This principle demands consistency between professed values and actual conduct, ensuring that religious moderation does not remain merely discursive but is realized in tangible social practice (Aulia & Arifin, 2023).

Paradigmatically, moderate Islam occupies a strategic position as a middle path between two opposing extremes that are equally inconsistent with the principle of

wasatiyyah. The right-wing extreme, characterized by fundamentalism and radicalism, tends to interpret religion in a literalistic and ahistorical manner, thereby closing off spaces for dialogue and *ijtihad*. Conversely, the left-wing extreme, marked by liberal-secular tendencies, inclines toward relativizing religion to the extent that it loses its normative authority. In this context, moderate Islam emerges as a critical alternative that affirms a balance between text and reality, between revelation and reason. From this perspective, moderation is not a passive or compromise-driven stance, but rather an active paradigm that demands intellectual and moral engagement from Muslims in responding to the changing dynamics of the times (Subiantoro, 2023).

Thus, moderate Islamic thought can be understood as the logical and practical continuation of the concept of *wasatiyyah* in Islam. Moderate Islam affirms balance as a fundamental principle of religiosity while offering an intellectual framework that enables Islam to contribute positively in addressing the challenges of extremism, pluralism, and digital disruption. In this context, moderation is not merely a methodological choice, but a theological and social necessity for sustaining Islam's role as a religion of *rahmatan lil 'alamin*.

Digital Disruption and the Transformation of Religious Discourse

Digital disruption constitutes a phenomenon of structural transformation that fundamentally alters the ways in which humans produce knowledge, construct authority, and engage in social interaction. The development of digital technology does not merely introduce new devices, but also creates new social ecosystems characterized by the acceleration of information, the openness of the public sphere, and shifts in patterns of power relations. In the religious context, digital disruption carries far-reaching implications, as religion is no longer confined to formal institutional spaces, but increasingly operates intensively within fluid, open, and highly dynamic digital environments (Subiantoro, 2023).

Digital transformation has significantly altered patterns of da'wah, religious learning, and the formation of religious identity among believers. Da'wah activities that were previously conducted through mosque pulpits, *majelis ta'lim*, and formal educational institutions have now shifted to various digital platforms such as social media, online video channels, and instant messaging applications. This shift presents substantial opportunities for the wider and faster dissemination of religious messages. However, at the same time, it also generates serious challenges related to authority, validity, and the quality of religious discourse circulating in the digital public sphere (Campbell, 2017). One of the defining characteristics of digital disruption in the religious context is the emergence of an open and fluid digital public sphere. This space allows virtually anyone to participate in the production and distribution of religious discourse without geographical or institutional boundaries. Religious authority, which was previously monopolized by formal institutions and scholars with established scholarly legitimacy, has consequently undergone a significant transformation.

The impact of digital disruption becomes increasingly complex when it is linked to the issue of religious moderation. Religious moderation, which is rooted in the principle of *wasatiyyah* and moderate Islamic thought, faces serious challenges in maintaining the quality and integrity of religious discourse within the fast-paced and

emotionally charged digital environment. Digital spaces often intensify religious identity polarization, in which differences of opinion are framed antagonistically and symbolic conflicts become part of everyday public consumption. One of the most problematic manifestations of changes in religious discourse in the digital era is the proliferation of religious hoaxes. Religious hoaxes exploit low levels of digital literacy and religious emotions to disseminate false information, hate speech, and the delegitimization of other groups. In many cases, religious hoaxes not only undermine social cohesion but also reinforce prejudice, intolerance, and symbolic violence in the name of religion. at dan emosional (Mamudi et al., 2025).

Beyond the spread of hoaxes, digital disruption has also given rise to the phenomenon of religious populism, which exploits religious sentiments for political and power interests. Religious narratives are framed in a simplistic and emotional manner to construct dichotomies of “us” versus “them” and to mobilize identity-based support. Religious populism in digital spaces often intersects with algorithmic logic that reinforces echo chambers, where users are exposed only to viewpoints that align with their own beliefs. This condition narrows the space for dialogue and deepens social polarization. Furthermore, religious radicalism has found a highly effective medium through social media and digital platforms. Digital radicalism exploits anonymity, rapid distribution, and the global reach of digital media for recruitment, indoctrination, and the dissemination of extremist ideologies. Radical groups employ simplified and emotionally charged religious narratives to attract sympathy, particularly among younger generations who are highly active in digital spaces. In this context, digital disruption constitutes not merely a technological challenge, but also an ideological and cultural one (Azisi et al., 2023).

Within the framework of *digital religion* studies, digital disruption is not understood as a process of secularization that eliminates the role of religion, but rather as a transformation of the forms and expressions of religiosity. Religion does not disappear in the digital era; instead, it undergoes rearticulation through new media and languages. Religious practices, religious authority, and faith-based identities adapt to the logic and culture of the digital environment. Therefore, the primary challenge lies not in the presence of religion in digital spaces, but in the quality and direction of this transformation (Mahyudin et al., 2022). Thus, digital disruption and the transformation of religious discourse constitute phenomena that are unavoidable, yet can be managed constructively through the framework of religious moderation. Digital disruption poses serious challenges to religious authority, the quality of religious discourse, and social cohesion, while simultaneously opening significant opportunities for the revitalization of moderate Islamic values in the global public sphere. From this perspective, religious moderation functions as a bridge between the rich Islamic tradition and the continually evolving digital reality, ensuring that religion remains present as a source of values that are calming, enlightening, and unifying amid the complexities of the digital era.

Religious Moderation as a Paradigm of Moderate Islamic Thought

The findings of the literature review indicate that religious moderation in Islam cannot be understood as a compromise that weakens theological principles or

obscures normative commitments to religious teachings. On the contrary, religious moderation emerges as an epistemological principle that guides ways of thinking, understanding, and interpreting Islam through a balanced engagement between religious texts and social contexts. This perspective is rooted in the concept of *wasatiyyah*, which positions Islam as a middle-path religion that firmly rejects extremity, whether in the form of rigid textual radicalism or liberal relativism that negates the authority of revelation (Shobri & Abdillah, 2025).

Within the framework of Islamic epistemology, religious moderation necessitates a dialogical relationship between reason (*'aql*), revealed texts (*naql*), and social reality. These three elements are not positioned hierarchically or placed in opposition to one another; rather, they complement each other in the process of understanding and responding to the dynamics of life. This finding affirms that religious moderation is neither a passive nor a neutral stance, but an active and reflective epistemic approach in addressing the complexities of contemporary religious issues. Furthermore, this study demonstrates that the epistemological principle of religious moderation requires methodological openness in interpreting Islamic teachings, particularly when Muslims are confronted with continually evolving social challenges. Religious moderation is not synonymous with relativism; instead, it represents a commitment to the core values of Islam, such as justice, public welfare (*maṣlaḥah*), and universal humanity (Syahrin & Widodo, 2025).

In the context of contemporary Islamic thought, the moderate approach also functions as a critique of dogmatic and exclusive modes of religiosity. Such patterns of religious expression tend to claim singular truth and deny the diversity of interpretations that is an inherent part of the Islamic scholarly tradition. As a result, exclusive religious practices carry the potential to generate intolerance, social polarization, and even violence in the name of religion. The findings of this study reinforce the argument that religious moderation constitutes both an epistemological and a social necessity in preventing the distortion of religion into an ideology of conflict. As a paradigm, religious moderation does not merely operate at the level of individual attitudes or social ethics, but rather shapes a worldview of moderate Islam. This worldview encompasses perspectives on God, humanity, society, and social change, all of which are bound together by the principles of balance and justice. Moderate Islam maintains that religiosity cannot be separated from social responsibility; therefore, religious practice should ideally contribute to the strengthening of social cohesion, peace, and justice (Hanif et al., 2025).

The findings of this study also indicate that religious moderation, as the worldview of moderate Islam, affirms pluralism as a historical and sociological inevitability. Differences in religion, schools of thought, and culture are not positioned as threats to faith, but rather as realities that must be approached constructively through dialogue and cooperation. This perspective is aligned with the notion of civic pluralism, which views religion as a source of public ethics that strengthens democracy and social justice, rather than as a basis for political exclusivism or narrow identity formation (Kusumaningrum, 2025).

In the Indonesian context, religious moderation as a paradigm of moderate Islamic thought holds highly strategic relevance. Indonesia, as a plural society, requires an

ideological framework capable of maintaining a balance between religious identity and national commitment. The Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia emphasizes that religious moderation constitutes a religious outlook that rejects extremism while promoting tolerance, commitment to the nation-state, and respect for local cultures. The findings of this study demonstrate that religious moderation is not merely a normative religious agenda, but also a socio-political instrument for maintaining national stability and integration. Furthermore, the results reveal that the relationship between religious moderation and *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* is inherent and mutually reinforcing. *Maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* emphasizes that the primary objective of Islamic law is to realize public welfare (*maṣlahah*) and to prevent harm, both at the individual and societal levels. The five fundamental objectives of the Shari'ah protection of religion, life, intellect, lineage, and property constitute a normative framework that aligns closely with the principles of religious moderation (Hefni, 2020).

From this perspective, religious moderation can be understood as the actualization of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* within contemporary social contexts. A moderate stance enables Muslims to interpret Islamic teachings and legal principles contextually without losing their fundamental objectives. This approach becomes particularly crucial when Muslims are confronted with emerging issues that are not explicitly addressed in classical texts, such as developments in digital technology, human rights, and religious pluralism (Utami et al., 2023). Furthermore, in the digital era, the relationship between religious moderation and *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* becomes increasingly relevant. Extreme forms of religiosity in digital spaces often run counter to the objectives of the Shari'ah, as they tend to trigger conflict, hate speech, and symbolic violence that undermine social harmony. The findings of this study indicate that religious moderation, when oriented toward *maqāṣid*, functions as an ethical mechanism to ensure that religious expressions in digital environments remain aligned with the principles of protecting human dignity and promoting social peace.

Thus, this discussion affirms that religious moderation is not merely a theoretical concept, but a paradigm of moderate Islamic thought with concrete practical implications for contemporary social life. Religious moderation enables Islam to continue functioning as a source of values that guide social change in a just and civilized manner, while also serving as an ethical safeguard in confronting the challenges of pluralism and digital disruption. In this context, religious moderation emerges as an epistemological, theological, and social necessity for sustaining Islam's role as a religion of *rahmatan lil 'alamin*.

Challenges of Religious Moderation in the Era of Digital Disruption

The findings of the literature review indicate that the challenges to religious moderation in the era of digital disruption are not only cultural and theological in nature, but also structural and systemic. One of the primary factors influencing contemporary religious dynamics is the dominance of social media platforms that operate through content personalization algorithms. These algorithms are designed to deliver information aligned with users' preferences, thereby creating echo chambers,

in which certain viewpoints are continuously reinforced without exposure to alternative perspectives (Zamzami et al., 2023).

These findings indicate that religious moderation faces challenges that cannot be fully addressed solely through normative or educational approaches. The algorithmic structures of social media inherently tend to reinforce users' ideological and emotional affinities, causing moderate, reflective, and dialogical religious narratives to be structurally disadvantaged when competing with provocative and polarizing content. In this context, religious moderation occupies a less favorable position within digital spaces. Several studies reinforce this finding by demonstrating that social media algorithms contribute significantly to the fragmentation of public discourse and ideological polarization, including in religious issues (Mahzumi et al., 2025). Religious content that displays strong emotions, anger, or identity-based sentiments tends to gain greater virality than content that emphasizes balance, rational argumentation, and dialogical ethics. As a result, messages of religious moderation are often submerged amid the flow of sensational and highly competitive information.

This condition underscores that the challenges of religious moderation in the digital era are not merely a matter of insufficient religious literacy among the public, but are also closely related to the political-economic logic of digital platforms. Social media ecosystems are not necessarily designed to support the dissemination of values such as balance and tolerance; rather, they are oriented toward maximizing user attention and engagement. In this situation, religious moderation must contend with structural mechanisms that indirectly marginalize deep and balanced religious discourse. A further consequence of this algorithmic logic is the intensification of religious identity polarization. Social media facilitates the formation of relatively homogeneous, identity-based communities in which individuals tend to interact primarily with groups that share similar views. In the religious context, this dynamic can sharpen differences among schools of thought, sects, or political orientations, which are subsequently framed in theological terms. Religious identity is no longer understood as a fluid and dialogical expression of faith, but instead becomes a rigid and exclusive ideological boundary (Syahrin & Widodo, 2025).

The findings of this study indicate that religious identity polarization constitutes a serious challenge to religious moderation, as it directly erodes spaces for dialogue and weakens social cohesion. When the digital public sphere is dominated by "us versus them" narratives, differences of opinion are no longer understood as an inevitability within religious traditions, but rather as threats that must be confronted. Under such conditions, religious moderation is often misinterpreted as a weak, ambiguous, or indecisive stance in defending truth. In fact, religious moderation represents an ethical strategy for preserving diversity within the framework of unity and social justice. Moderation does not eliminate differences, but instead manages them constructively so that they do not escalate into open conflict. These findings reveal a gap between the normative values of religious moderation and public perceptions within an increasingly polarized digital space. This gap constitutes a serious challenge that must be addressed through more contextual and communicative approaches.

In addition to identity polarization, another prominent challenge identified in the findings of this study is the phenomenon of the commodification of religion in digital

spaces. Digital media encourages the transformation of religious practices into commodities that are produced, marketed, and consumed on a mass scale. Sermons, religious symbols, and religious identities are frequently packaged in highly visual and emotional formats in order to enhance appeal, popularity, and economic gain (Kusumaningrum, 2025). In this context, religion functions not only as a source of values but also as a form of popular culture. The commodification of religion carries serious implications for religious moderation. The findings of this study indicate that the logic of the digital marketplace tends to simplify religious messages in order to make them easily consumable by a broad audience. Values of moderation, which require reflection, intellectual depth, and patience in dialogue, are often considered less commercially appealing. As a result, messages of religious moderation risk being reduced to normative slogans lacking substantive depth. Furthermore, the commodification of religion has the potential to shift scholarly authority within religious discourse. Popularity, follower counts, and visual appeal frequently become the primary indicators of legitimacy in digital spaces, replacing scholarly competence and methodological integrity. In such circumstances, religious moderation faces a dual challenge: preserving the depth of its message while simultaneously competing within a fast-paced and superficial digital ecosystem.

These findings demonstrate that the challenges to religious moderation in the era of digital disruption are multidimensional and deeply interconnected. Algorithmic polarization, identity fragmentation, and the commodification of religion together form an ecosystem that is not conducive to the development of moderate and civilized religious discourse. Therefore, religious moderation cannot be understood merely as an individual attitude or a normative policy; rather, it must be positioned as a cultural and structural strategy in responding to digital dynamics. Within this framework, the study affirms that strengthening religious moderation in the digital era requires critical awareness of social media logics as well as sustained efforts to preserve the integrity of religious messages. Religious moderation must be able to adapt to digital media without losing its ethical and intellectual substance. Such adaptation does not entail pragmatic conformity to market logic, but rather the development of modes of religious communication that remain firmly grounded in the values of balance, tolerance, and social welfare (*maṣlahah*).

Thus, this discussion affirms that the challenges of religious moderation in the era of digital disruption are not merely ideological in nature, but also structural, requiring a multidisciplinary approach. Religious moderation must be understood as a continuous effort to maintain the quality of religious life within a complex digital ecosystem. In this context, religious moderation remains both relevant and urgent as an ethical framework for nurturing diversity, strengthening social cohesion, and preventing the distortion of religion in the digital public sphere.

Strategies for Strengthening Religious Moderation in the Digital Space

The findings of the literature review indicate that strengthening religious moderation in digital spaces cannot be achieved through normative approaches alone, but instead requires strategies that are adaptive to the characteristics of digital media. Digital spaces operate according to communication logics that differ from those of

conventional religious settings, characterized by the rapid flow of information, visual dominance, and interactions that are brief and emotionally driven. Therefore, strengthening religious moderation in the era of digital disruption necessitates the reactualization of moderate Islamic da'wah grounded in digital literacy. In this context, digital literacy is not merely understood as the technical ability to use devices and media platforms, but also encompasses critical capacities to assess the validity of information, understand the context of messages, and consider the ethical implications of producing and disseminating religious content. According to Rahmiati (2024) moderate da'wah in the digital era must be capable of utilizing technology creatively and responsibly in order to convey Islamic messages that are inclusive, rational, and contextual. These findings indicate that digital literacy constitutes a fundamental prerequisite for the successful implementation of religious moderation in the digital public sphere.

A da'wah approach grounded in digital literacy enables the strengthening of religious moderation through the presentation of educational content that is argumentative and data-based. Such content not only conveys religious teachings in a normative manner, but also encourages audiences to engage in critical and reflective thinking. The findings of this study indicate that digital spaces can be utilized as mediums for religious learning that foster dialogue and the exchange of ideas, rather than merely serving as arenas of passive consumption dominated by simplistic and emotionally driven narratives. Nevertheless, this strategy requires a paradigm shift in da'wah practices. Moderate da'wah in digital spaces cannot rely solely on the repetition of moral messages, but must develop communicative approaches that are relevant to the needs and lived experiences of digital audiences. The use of humanistic language, rational argumentation, and openness to differing perspectives becomes crucial in building trust and moral authority within plural and fluid digital environments.

The findings of this study also indicate that strengthening religious moderation in digital spaces cannot be separated from the strategic roles of academics, *ulama*, and educational institutions. These three actors perform complementary functions in building a digital ecosystem conducive to the dissemination of moderate Islam. Academics contribute through research and scholarly publications that provide conceptual and empirical foundations for policy development and curriculum design related to religious moderation. Research-based knowledge is essential to ensure that religious moderation does not remain at the level of normative slogans, but is grounded in robust scientific analysis. *Ulama* play a crucial role as moral and cultural authorities who bridge the values of religious moderation with broader public understanding. In the digital context, *ulama* are required to translate messages of moderation into communicative and accessible language without sacrificing substantive depth. Credible religious authority thus plays a vital role in shaping civilized religious practices that are oriented toward social responsibility (Aulia & Arifin, 2023).

Meanwhile, educational institutions function as strategic spaces for the early socialization of religious moderation values, both through formal and non-formal education. Religious moderation education that is integrated with digital literacy enables the emergence of a generation that is not only normatively religious, but also

critical, tolerant, and responsible in utilizing digital media. The findings of this study indicate that synergy among academics, *ulama*, and educational institutions constitutes an essential prerequisite for the sustainability of efforts to strengthen religious moderation in digital spaces. Beyond da'wah and education, another prominent strategy identified in this study is the strengthening of inclusive and argumentative religious narratives. Narratives of religious moderation need to be systematically constructed, grounded in strong textual and contextual evidence, and conveyed through dialogical approaches (Aisyah et al., 2025). Extremism, hate speech, and the politicization of religion have become increasingly prevalent in digital spaces. These findings indicate that religious moderation cannot remain merely reactive, but must instead operate proactively in shaping public discourse. Strengthening inclusive narratives requires the courage to present religious discourses that are critical and reflective, without falling into shallow populist rhetoric. Moderate narratives must be capable of addressing the concrete challenges faced by society such as social injustice, identity-based conflicts, and ethical issues in the digital sphere through solution-oriented approaches grounded in public welfare (*maṣlahah*). In this way, religious moderation can be understood as a living and relevant paradigm of thought, rather than merely a normative slogan (Saefullah, 2024).

The findings of this study also indicate that strategies for strengthening religious moderation in digital spaces must take into account the heterogeneous characteristics of audiences. Digital spaces are inhabited by diverse groups with varying educational backgrounds, cultures, and religious orientations. Therefore, narratives of moderation need to be conveyed through multiple formats and media, ranging from popular written content and educational videos to interactive online discussions. Media flexibility becomes a crucial factor in expanding the reach of religious moderation messages without compromising their substantive values. In this context, religious moderation functions not only as a response to extremism, but also as a cultural framework for cultivating digital ethics among religious communities. Religious moderation encourages mutual respect, openness to differences, and moral responsibility in communication within digital spaces. These values have become increasingly important amid the growing tendencies toward polarization and fragmentation of religious discourse on social media.

Thus, this discussion affirms that strategies for strengthening religious moderation in digital spaces must be implemented in a comprehensive and sustainable manner. The reactualization of da'wah grounded in digital literacy, synergy among academics, *ulama*, and educational institutions, as well as the reinforcement of inclusive and argumentative religious narratives constitute the main pillars in building a digital ecosystem that supports moderate Islam. These strategies enable religious moderation to function not merely as a theoretical concept, but as a tangible and impactful social praxis. Overall, the findings of this study demonstrate that strengthening religious moderation in the era of digital disruption represents a strategic agenda that is epistemological, cultural, and social in nature. When consistently implemented in digital spaces, religious moderation allows Islam to be presented as a religion that is civilized, just, and responsive to the changing times. Within this framework, religious moderation emerges as a paradigm of moderate Islamic thought that is not only

theologically relevant, but also socially and culturally significant in sustaining harmony, social cohesion, and the future of religious life in the digital era.

4. CONCLUSION

Religious moderation constitutes a paradigm of moderate Islamic thought that is grounded in strong theological, epistemological, and sociological foundations within Islamic teachings. Rooted in the concept of *wasatiyyah*, religious moderation should not be understood as a compromise that weakens the normative principles of religion; rather, it represents a principle of balance that guides ways of thinking, attitudes, and religious practices in a just, proportional, and civilized manner. Religious moderation thus becomes a meeting point between fidelity to revelation and sensitivity to continually evolving social realities.

The findings of this study indicate that moderate Islamic thought represents the actualization of the principle of *wasatiyyah* in both epistemological and social praxis. Moderate Islam rejects extremism, whether rigid-literalistic or relativistic in nature, and affirms the importance of balancing theological orthodoxy with social openness. In plural societies, religious moderation functions as an ethical foundation for strengthening social cohesion, nurturing pluralism, and preventing conflicts based on religious identity. In the era of digital disruption, religious moderation faces serious challenges, including the fragmentation of religious authority, identity polarization, religious hoaxes, and the commodification of religion. Nevertheless, the digital era also presents strategic opportunities for strengthening moderate Islam through *da'wah* grounded in digital literacy, the reinforcement of inclusive and argumentative religious narratives, and synergy among academics, *ulama*, and educational institutions.

Accordingly, religious moderation should be positioned not merely as a normative concept, but as a cultural and epistemological strategy that is relevant for maintaining the quality of religious life amid the complexities of the digital era. Religious moderation enables Islam to continue to be presented as a religion of *rahmatan lil 'alamin*, capable of responding to the changing times in a critical, constructive, and responsible manner.

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