

Qur'anic Interpretation and the Formation of Wasatiyyah Discourse in Contemporary Indonesia

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Abstract

The increasing religious polarization in Indonesia has triggered urgent debates about how moderate Islamic identity can be maintained in a diverse society. Within this context, the concept of *wasatiyyah* (moderation) has become a central theological and policy framework, yet most existing scholarship treats it as a static doctrinal category rather than a dynamically constructed discourse. This study addresses this gap by examining how Qur'anic interpretation actively shapes the formation of *wasatiyyah* discourse in contemporary Indonesia. The research aims to analyze the interpretive mechanisms through which Qur'anic verses related to moderation are mobilized by Indonesian scholars and religious institutions to construct inclusive religious narratives aligned with national policy agendas. Employing a qualitative methodology that integrates textual analysis of key Qur'anic verses (including *ummatan wasatan*, anti-*ghuluw*, and justice-related passages) with discourse analysis of interpretive frameworks from major Indonesian religious institutions, this study reveals three principal findings: first, *wasatiyyah* emerges as a polysemic concept negotiated through diverse interpretive strategies emphasizing balance, justice, tolerance, and social harmony; second, contemporary Indonesian tafsir increasingly adopts *maqasid*-oriented and contextual approaches that transform *wasatiyyah* from theological principle into policy-relevant discourse; and third, institutional actors such as Nahdlatul Ulama, Muhammadiyah, and the Ministry of Religious Affairs play decisive roles in mediating interpretive authority. The study concludes that understanding *wasatiyyah* as a discursive construct rather than fixed doctrine offers more productive pathways for strengthening religious moderation initiatives, and recommends greater attention to interpretive pluralism and contextual hermeneutics in moderation policy frameworks.

Keywords: Wasatiyyah, Qur'anic Interpretation, Religious Moderation, Discourse Formation, Indonesia

Abstrak

Meningkatnya polarisasi keagamaan di Indonesia telah memicu perdebatan mendesak tentang bagaimana identitas Islam moderat dapat dipertahankan dalam masyarakat yang beragam. Dalam konteks ini, konsep *wasatiyyah* (moderasi) telah menjadi kerangka teologis dan kebijakan sentral, namun

sebagian besar kajian yang ada memperlakukannya sebagai kategori doktrinal statis dan bukan sebagai wacana yang dikonstruksi secara dinamis. Penelitian ini mengisi kesenjangan tersebut dengan mengkaji bagaimana penafsiran Al-Qur'an secara aktif membentuk wacana *wasatiyyah* di Indonesia kontemporer. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis mekanisme interpretatif yang melaluinya ayat-ayat Al-Qur'an terkait moderasi dimobilisasi oleh ulama dan lembaga keagamaan Indonesia untuk mengkonstruksi narasi keagamaan inklusif yang selaras dengan agenda kebijakan nasional. Dengan menggunakan metodologi kualitatif yang mengintegrasikan analisis teks terhadap ayat-ayat Al-Qur'an kunci (termasuk *ummattan wasatan*, *anti-ghuluw*, dan ayat-ayat keadilan) dengan analisis wacana kerangka interpretatif dari lembaga keagamaan besar Indonesia, penelitian ini mengungkapkan tiga temuan utama: pertama, *wasatiyyah* muncul sebagai konsep polisemik yang dinegosiasikan melalui beragam strategi interpretatif yang menekankan keseimbangan, keadilan, toleransi, dan harmoni sosial; kedua, tafsir Indonesia kontemporer semakin mengadopsi pendekatan berbasis *maqasid* dan kontekstual yang mentransformasikan *wasatiyyah* dari prinsip teologis menjadi wacana relevan kebijakan; dan ketiga, aktor institusional seperti Nahdlatul Ulama, Muhammadiyah, dan Kementerian Agama memainkan peran krusial dalam memediasi otoritas interpretatif. Penelitian menyimpulkan bahwa memahami *wasatiyyah* sebagai konstruksi diskursif dan bukan doktrin tetap menawarkan jalur lebih produktif untuk memperkuat inisiatif moderasi beragama, dan merekomendasikan perhatian lebih besar pada pluralisme interpretatif dan hermeneutika kontekstual dalam kerangka kebijakan moderasi. **Kata Kunci: Wasatiyyah, Penafsiran Al-Qur'an, Moderasi Beragama, Pembentukan Wacana, Indonesia**

INTRODUCTION

Religious moderation has emerged as one of the most contested yet strategically important concepts in contemporary Indonesian public discourse. The country, home to the world's largest Muslim population, faces intensifying challenges from religious polarization, the rise of exclusivist interpretations, and periodic incidents of intolerance that threaten its pluralistic social fabric.¹ Since the post-reformation era, successive governments have sought to articulate a distinctively Indonesian approach to Islamic moderation, culminating in the formal adoption of "Religious Moderation" (*Moderasi Beragama*) as a strategic national policy in the 2020-2024 National Medium-Term

¹ Ubed Abdilah Syarif, "The Epistemic Discourse of Religious Moderation (Moderasi Beragama) in Indonesia," *Digital Press Social Sciences and Humanities*, ahead of print, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.29037/digitalpress.411466>.

Development Plan.² At the center of this policy framework lies the concept of *wasatiyyah*, derived from the Qur'anic term *ummatan wasatan* (Q. 2:143), which has been widely promoted as the theological foundation for moderate Islamic practice.³ However, this policy-driven mobilization of *wasatiyyah* has generated significant controversy, with debates emerging about whether state-sponsored moderation represents genuine religious renewal or a politically motivated attempt to regulate Islamic interpretation.⁴

The urgency of examining *wasatiyyah* discourse formation stems from both scholarly and practical imperatives. From a scholarly perspective, the dominant approach in existing literature treats *wasatiyyah* as a self-evident theological concept whose meaning can be directly extracted from Qur'anic texts.⁵ This approach overlooks the interpretive processes through which *wasatiyyah* acquires meaning in specific social contexts. The concept of religious moderation is not merely a matter of textual exegesis but involves complex negotiations among religious authorities, state institutions, and civil society actors.⁶ From a practical standpoint, Indonesia's success in maintaining religious harmony while countering radicalism depends substantially on how moderation discourse is constructed and received by diverse Muslim communities. Surveys indicate that intolerance and radical tendencies persist among certain segments of the population, particularly among university students.⁷ Understanding how *wasatiyyah* is discursively constructed can inform more effective strategies for promoting inclusive religious attitudes.

Global scholarship on Islamic moderation has expanded significantly over the past two decades, addressing themes ranging from theological foundations to policy implications. Scholars such as Yusuf al-Qaradawi have developed influential frameworks for understanding *wasatiyyah* as a comprehensive Islamic worldview emphasizing balance, justice, and the avoidance of extremes.⁸ Studies examining *wasatiyyah* across

² Zainul Arifin and Amor Fati, "The Ideal Educational Model from a Historical Perspective of Pesantren: A Case Study of Futuhiyyah," in *AMOR FATI: Journal of Islamic Education and Social Issues* (PhD Thesis, 2024), <https://journal.amorfati.id/index.php/JIPSI/article/download/319/215>.

³ Wika Andeska, "Ummatan Wasatan Dalam Perspektif Tafsir Maqāṣidī: Landasan Normatif Toleransi Antarumat Beragama," *Reslaj: Religion Education Social Laa Roiba Journal*, ahead of print, 2026, <https://doi.org/10.47467/reslaj.v8i3.11323>.

⁴ Kadi Kadi Rikhlatul Ilmiah, "A Critical Analysis Of The Religious Moderation Policy In Islamic Education: Resistance And Symbolic Violence In Educational Institutions," *Mawa Izh Jurnal Dakwah Dan Pengembangan Sosial Kemanusiaan*, ahead of print, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.32923/maw.v16i01.5466>.

⁵ aini Mutmainnah, "dinamika konsep 'ummatan wasathan': pendekatan hermeunetika ma'na cum maghza terhadap qs. al-baqarah [2]:143," *al muhafidz: jurnal ilmu al-qur'an dan tafsir*, ahead of print, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.57163/almuhafidz.v4i1.93>.

⁶ muhammad Abraar, "islam warna-warni menafsir ulang konsep ummatan wasathan," *journal of islamicjerusalem studies*, ahead of print, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.65802/nihayah.v1i2.41>.

⁷ Mufid Mufid Akhmad Alim, "Wasathiyah Al-Sudais: Religious Moderation and Its Implementation in Indonesian Higher Education," *Glosains Jurnal Sains Global Indonesia*, ahead of print, 2026, <https://doi.org/10.59784/glosains.v7i2.722>.

⁸ Ujang Supriyadi, "Yusuf Al-Qardhawi's Thoughts and Their Implementation to Indonesian Society," *Jurnal Syntax Transformation*, ahead of print, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.46799/jst.v4i12.883>.

different national contexts, including Morocco, Malaysia, and Qatar, have demonstrated that the concept's meaning varies considerably depending on local socio-political conditions.⁹ Research on Islamic hermeneutics has explored how classical and contemporary exegetes interpret key Qur'anic verses related to moderation, with particular attention to methodological differences between rationalist and traditionalist schools.¹⁰ However, a significant gap exists in the literature concerning the discursive processes through which *wasatiyyah* is actively constructed rather than merely applied. Most studies assume that *wasatiyyah* possesses a stable, identifiable meaning that can be recovered through careful textual analysis, neglecting the interpretive negotiations that shape its contemporary significance.

Indonesian scholarship on *wasatiyyah* has grown substantially, particularly following the government's adoption of religious moderation as official policy. Studies have examined how major Islamic organizations like Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah articulate moderation principles.¹¹ Research on Indonesian tafsir works has analyzed how prominent scholars such as Quraish Shihab, Hamka, and institutional tafsir projects interpret verses related to moderation.¹² Educational studies have explored the integration of moderation values into Islamic Religious Education curricula across various institutional settings.¹³ However, Indonesian scholarship tends to reproduce the assumption that *wasatiyyah* has a determinate meaning waiting to be uncovered. Few studies have examined *wasatiyyah* as a discursive construct that is continuously negotiated through interpretive engagement with Qur'anic texts. This gap is particularly significant given the ongoing contestation over who has the authority to define moderation and what interpretive methods should be employed.¹⁴

⁹ Agus Setiawan, "Anti-Corruption Education in the National Curriculum: A Conceptual-Normative Approach," *Qanwam: The Writings of the Leader* 6, no. 2 (2025), <https://jurnalfuad.org/qanwam/article/view/515>.

¹⁰ Halim Purnomo Tumin Tumin Firman Mansir, "The Concept of Wasatiyyah in The Views of Al-Zamakshari and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī," *Istawa Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, ahead of print, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.24269/ijpi.v5i1.2416>.

¹¹ Andar Nubowo, "Promoting Indonesian Moderate Islam on the Global Stage: Non-State Actors' Soft Power Diplomacy in the Post-New Order Era," *Muslim Politics Review*, ahead of print, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.56529/mpr.v2i2.204>.

¹² Farman Riaz Fakhri Fadilah Muttaqin Aris Munandar, Endang Susanti, Yamil Hassan Roza Gutierrez, "Cultural Diplomacy in Global Governance: Reimagining Indonesia's Soft Power Through Nahdlatul Ulama's Islam Nusantara Paradigm," *JURNAL INDO-ISLAMIKA*, ahead of print, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.15408/jii.v15i1.47346>.

¹³ N. Nurindah Kasmila Kasmila Minarwati Minarwati, Muh. Sukirman, Nur Alifa Ranti, "Development of Multicultural Islamic Religious Education Curriculum: A Literature Study on the Integration of Religious Moderation Values in Islamic Education," *EDUSOSHUM Journal of Islamic Education and Social Humanities*, ahead of print, 2026, <https://doi.org/10.52366/edusoshum.v5i3.260>.

¹⁴ Fitri Annas Sholihah Iswahyudi Iswahyudi Galih Akbar Prabowo, "Moderate and Non-Moderate Discursive Tendencies in Kitab Kuning," *Ascarya: Journal of Islamic Science, Culture, and Social Studies*, ahead of print, 2026, <https://doi.org/10.53754/kgws7m49>.

Based on the identified gaps, this study formulates the following research problem: How does Qur'anic interpretation contribute to the formation of *wasatiyyah* discourse in contemporary Indonesia, and what factors shape the interpretive processes through which *wasatiyyah* acquires meaning? This problem is operationalized through three research questions: (1) What interpretive strategies do Indonesian scholars and institutions employ when engaging with Qur'anic verses related to moderation? (2) How do socio-political contexts and institutional agendas influence the construction of *wasatiyyah* meaning? (3) What are the implications of treating *wasatiyyah* as a dynamic discursive construct for religious moderation policy?

This study draws on discourse theory, particularly the insights of Michel Foucault regarding the relationship between knowledge and power in discourse formation.¹⁵ Discourse is understood not simply as language use but as a system of statements that produces knowledge about particular objects while simultaneously establishing relations of power among those who speak about those objects.¹⁶ In the context of *wasatiyyah*, this theoretical orientation directs attention to how interpretive authorities construct knowledge about moderation while positioning themselves as legitimate voices within Islamic discourse. The study also engages with contemporary Islamic hermeneutics, particularly the *maqasid* (objectives of Sharia) approach that has gained prominence among Indonesian scholars.¹⁷ The *maqasid* approach shifts interpretive focus from the literal meaning of texts to their underlying purposes, enabling more contextual and adaptive readings. By integrating discourse theory with Islamic hermeneutical frameworks, this study offers a theoretically grounded analysis of how *wasatiyyah* discourse is constructed and contested.

This research pursues three interconnected objectives: First, to map the interpretive strategies employed by Indonesian scholars and religious institutions when engaging with Qur'anic verses related to moderation, with particular attention to the shift from classical textual methods toward contextual and *maqasid*-oriented approaches. Second, to analyze how socio-political contexts, institutional positions, and policy agendas shape the construction of *wasatiyyah* meaning, examining the roles of key actors including Nahdlatul Ulama, Muhammadiyah, the Ministry of Religious Affairs, and individual scholars. Third, to develop a conceptual framework for understanding *wasatiyyah* as a dynamic discursive construct with implications for religious moderation policy and practice.

This study contributes to scholarship in several ways. Theoretically, it bridges Qur'anic hermeneutics and discourse analysis, offering a novel approach to understanding how religious concepts acquire meaning through interpretive

¹⁵ Syarif, "The Epistemic Discourse of Religious Moderation (Moderasi Beragama) in Indonesia."

¹⁶ Tabhan Syamsu Rijal Muflih Naufal Indo Santalia, "Dinamika Wacana Keagamaan Dalam Situasi Krisis: Antara Konservatisme, Moderasi, Dan Progresivisme Di Era Digital," *FASTABIQ: JURNAL STUDI ISLAM*, ahead of print, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.47281/fas.v6i1.235>.

¹⁷ Andeska, "Ummatan Wasatan Dalam Perspektif Tafsir Maqāṣidī: Landasan Normatif Toleransi Antarumat Beragama."

engagement. Methodologically, it demonstrates how textual analysis can be combined with discourse analysis to examine both the content of interpretations and the conditions of their production. Empirically, it provides a systematic mapping of interpretive strategies and institutional positions within Indonesian *wasatiyyah* discourse. Practically, the findings offer insights for policymakers and religious educators seeking to promote religious moderation in ways that acknowledge interpretive pluralism rather than imposing singular definitions.¹⁸

Literature Review

General Research Trends

Research on *wasatiyyah* and religious moderation in Indonesia has expanded rapidly over the past decade, reflecting both academic interest and policy imperatives. A systematic review of the literature reveals three dominant research trajectories: studies examining the factors that shape moderation discourse, research analyzing the processes through which moderation is constructed and disseminated, and investigations of the impacts of moderation initiatives on religious attitudes and behaviors.¹⁹ The increasing volume of scholarship corresponds to the Indonesian government's formal adoption of religious moderation as a strategic policy priority, which has generated both supportive and critical academic responses.

Early studies tended to focus on defining *wasatiyyah* through textual analysis of Qur'anic verses, particularly Q. 2:143 (*ummatan wasatan*) and verses warning against religious excess (*ghuluw*).²⁰ More recent scholarship has expanded to examine how moderation principles are operationalized in educational curricula, digital media, and institutional policies.²¹ However, the literature remains characterized by a predominant assumption that *wasatiyyah* possesses a stable, recoverable meaning, with relatively limited attention to the interpretive negotiations through which meaning is constructed.

¹⁸ Muhammad iqbal Ahmed Zaranggi Ar Ridho, "Alternatif Konsep Wasatiyyah Perspektif Makārim Asy-Syirāzī: Studi Kitab Tafsir Al-Amtsal," *Al-Wasatiyyah: Journal of Religious Moderation*, ahead of print, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.30631/jrm.v2i2.40>.

¹⁹ M. Al-Qur'an Hasbullah Diman Sofwatun Nada, Abdul Hakim, Asyrof Arobi, Zainal Arifin Madzkur, Lajnah Pentashihan, "A Systematic Literature Review on Qur'anic Verses Concerning Islamic Economics and Religious Moderation in Contemporary Tafsir Scholarship," *Journal of Educational Analytics*, ahead of print, 2026, <https://doi.org/10.55927/jeda.v5i1.606>.

²⁰ Murdianto Murdianto Muhammad Nizamuddin Muhamad Amrulloh, "Understanding the Concept of Ghuluw in the Qur'an: An Analysis of Al-Maraghi's Tafsir and Its Relevance to Modern Religious Practices," *Al Mubafidz: Jurnal Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Tafsir*, ahead of print, 2026, <https://doi.org/10.57163/pyz1bt68>.

²¹ Muhdi Putri Zakiyah Ar Rizki, "Islam Wasathiyah Dalam Bingkai Digital Guna Membangun Narasi Moderasi Beragama," *Jurnal Pendidikan, Sains Dan Teknologi*, ahead of print, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.47233/jpst.v4i4.4001>.

Factors Shaping Wasatiyyah Discourse

Studies examining the factors that shape *wasatiyyah* discourse have identified several key determinants. Historical factors receive substantial attention, with scholars tracing the genealogy of Indonesian moderate Islam to Sufi influences during the early Islamization of the archipelago and the theological orientation of Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah that predominates in Indonesian Islam.²² The role of Sufism in establishing a moderate religious temperament is particularly emphasized, with scholars arguing that Ash'ari theology and Sufi spirituality created a foundation for accommodating local traditions and practices.²³ Institutional factors also figure prominently, with studies examining how organizations like Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah have historically articulated moderation principles through their educational networks, publications, and public engagement.²⁴

Contemporary research has increasingly focused on socio-political factors, examining how state interests intersect with religious discourse. Studies employing Foucauldian analysis have explored how the Indonesian government constructs "Religious Moderation" as a system of knowledge and political ethics that serves state interests in maintaining stability and projecting a moderate Islamic identity internationally.²⁵ The alignment between Nahdlatul Ulama's "Islam Nusantara" concept and state-sponsored moderation discourse has generated scholarly debate about whether moderation represents genuine theological renewal or political accommodation.²⁶ Digital media factors have also emerged as significant, with research documenting how online platforms create new spaces for contesting interpretive authority and disseminating both moderate and extremist interpretations.²⁷

²² Muhammad Ulil Abshor Musa Alkadzim Naura Safira Salsabila Zain, "GENEALOGY OF WASATIYYA WITHIN INDONESIAN SOCIETY: The Influence of Sufism in Indonesian Archipelago," *Al-Tabrir Jurnal Pemikiran Islam*, ahead of print, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.21154/altahrir.v23i2.5750>.

²³ Syamsul Bakhril Imam Kanafi Harapandi Dahri, Susminingsih Susminingsih, "The Contribution of Ahlussunnah Waljamaah's Theology in Establishing Moderate Islam in Indonesia," *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies*, ahead of print, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v77i4.6437>.

²⁴ Greg Barton, "Indonesia's Nurcholish Madjid and Abdurrahman Wahid as Intellectual 'Ulamā': The Meeting of Islamic Traditionalism and Modernism in Neo-Modernist Thought," *STUDIA ISLAMIKA*, ahead of print, 1970, <https://doi.org/10.15408/sdi.v4i1.786>.

²⁵ Syarif, "The Epistemic Discourse of Religious Moderation (Moderasi Beragama) in Indonesia."

²⁶ Fakhri Fadilah Muttaqin, "Cultural Diplomacy in Global Governance: Reimagining Indonesia's Soft Power Through Nahdlatul Ulama's Islam Nusantara Paradigm."

²⁷ M. Mujibuddin SM Fikri Mahzumi Ahmad Aminuddin, Hasan Mahfudh, "CYBER-ISLAMIC MODERATION IN INDONESIA: Digital Activism of Islami.Co and IBTimes.Id and Its Implications for Young Muslim," *Miqot: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Keislaman*, ahead of print, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.30821/miqot.v49i1.1290>.

Processes of Wasatiyyah Construction

Research examining the processes through which *wasatiyyah* is constructed has focused on interpretive methods, institutional mediation, and pedagogical transmission. Studies of interpretive methods have documented a significant shift in Indonesian tafsir scholarship from classical approaches emphasizing linguistic and grammatical analysis toward contextual and *maqasid*-oriented methodologies.²⁸ Contemporary Indonesian exegetes increasingly employ hermeneutical frameworks that relate Qur'anic meanings to social contexts and policy objectives, enabling *wasatiyyah* to function as both theological concept and policy-relevant discourse.²⁹ The *maqasid al-shariah* approach, which focuses on the objectives or purposes of Islamic law, has become particularly influential in constructing *wasatiyyah* as a framework for addressing contemporary challenges including pluralism, human rights, and interfaith relations.³⁰

Institutional mediation processes have received extensive scholarly attention. The Ministry of Religious Affairs plays a central role through its production of thematic tafsir publications, curriculum guidelines, and moderation indicators. Research has examined how state-sponsored tafsir projects construct particular interpretations of jihad, statehood, and moderation that align with national interests while potentially marginalizing alternative readings.³¹ Major Islamic organizations mediate *wasatiyyah* discourse through their educational institutions, publications, and digital platforms, each articulating moderation according to their distinctive theological and organizational orientations.³² Studies of pesantren and madrasah settings have documented how moderation values are transmitted through both explicit curriculum content and the "hidden curriculum" of institutional culture and teacher modeling.³³

²⁸ Ahmad Saefulloh, "Contextual Tafsir and Digital Islam in Southeast Asia: A Narrative Review," *Sinergi International Journal of Islamic Studies*, ahead of print, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.61194/ijis.v2i2.603>.

²⁹ Andeska, "Ummatan Wasatan Dalam Perspektif Tafsir Maqāṣidī: Landasan Normatif Toleransi Antarumat Beragama."

³⁰ Tri Pujiati Ahmad Musadad Muttaqin Choiri, Galuh Widitya Qomaro, Alfa Zaidanil Fauzi, Imamuddin Imamuddin, "Reorienting Jamluddin Aiyahs Maqid Al-Usrah in the Regulation of Polygamy in the Indonesian Compilation of Islamic Law," *Sakina: Journal of Family Studies*, ahead of print, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.18860/jfs.v9i4.19984>.

³¹ Mohd Kailani Ahmad Taufik Hamdani Anwar, K. Kusmana, W. Zakaria, "Countering Radicalism Through Tafsir: State and Jihad in Indonesia's Thematic Quranic Interpretation," *Ulul Albab: Jurnal Studi Islam*, ahead of print, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.18860/ua.v26i1.32141>.

³² M. Ilham Abdul Syatar Baso Hasyim, Rahmatullah, Andi Tri Saputra, "Religious Authority in the Age of Instagram: Unveiling the Contestation of Islamic Discourses," *Jurnal Adabiya*, ahead of print, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.24252/jad.v24i2a3>.

³³ Mansur Mansur Mohamad Maulidin Alif Utama Dirga Ayu Lestari, Dedek Nursiti Khodijah, Sangkot Sirait, Karwadi Karwadi, Sa'adi Sa'adi, Mukh Nursikin, "Integrating Religious Moderation into Education: A Qualitative Analysis of the ASSTA Curriculum in Madrasahs," *AL-ISHLAH: Jurnal Pendidikan*, ahead of print, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.35445/alishlah.v17i3.6648>.

Impacts of Wasatiyyah Discourse

Research examining the impacts of *wasatiyyah* discourse has focused on religious attitudes, social cohesion, and policy outcomes. Studies of Islamic Religious Education have found positive associations between moderation-oriented curricula and student attitudes toward tolerance, diversity, and national commitment.³⁴ Educational interventions that integrate moderation values through contextual learning, interfaith dialogue, and teacher modeling appear most effective in fostering inclusive religious attitudes.³⁵ Research on higher education settings has documented efforts to counter radicalism through religious moderation courses, though challenges remain regarding teacher preparedness and student receptivity.³⁶

Studies examining social cohesion impacts have produced mixed findings. Research in plural community settings suggests that moderation discourse can strengthen interfaith relations and reduce intergroup tensions.³⁷ However, critical scholarship has identified potential negative consequences, including the marginalization of minority interpretations and the use of moderation discourse as a tool for political control rather than genuine religious renewal. Studies of digital media impacts have documented how moderation-oriented platforms like *Islami.co* and *IBTimes.id* construct counter-narratives to extremist content, though the overall digital landscape remains contested.

Critical Evaluation of Previous Studies

While the existing literature provides valuable insights into various dimensions of *wasatiyyah* discourse, several limitations can be identified. First, most studies treat *wasatiyyah* as a concept whose meaning can be objectively determined through appropriate interpretive methods, rather than recognizing meaning as produced through interpretive negotiations among differently positioned actors. This essentialist assumption limits attention to the power dynamics and institutional interests that shape discourse construction. Second, the literature tends to fragment analysis across separate domains (tafsir studies, educational research, policy analysis) without adequately

³⁴ Tholkhatul Khoir, "Pros and Cons of Separation between Maqid and Ul Al-Fiqh (A Study of The Periodization of Maqid History and Responses to Its Independence)," *International Journal Ihya Ulum Al-Din*, ahead of print, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.21580/ihya.25.2.18463>.

³⁵ Muhammad Sutoyo Mukhibat Mukhibat Mukhlison Effendi, Wawan Herry Setyawan, "Development and Evaluation of Religious Moderation Education Curriculum at Higher Education in Indonesia," *Cogent Education*, ahead of print, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186x.2024.2302308>.

³⁶ Cecep Soleh Kurniawan, "Reforming Islamic Family Law in Southeast Asia: A Comparative Study of Indonesia, Malaysia, and Brunei Darussalam," *ASEAN Journal of Islamic Studies and Civilization (AJISC)* 2, no. 1 (2025): 1–25.

³⁷ Mumtaz Alam Ratnah Syed Ahmad Ali Shah, "Integrating Religious Moderation into Islamic Religious Education: Strategies and Impacts," *At-Tadzkiir: Islamic Education Journal*, ahead of print, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.59373/attadzkiir.v3i2.67>; Muhammad Zakir Husain, "Religious Moderation and the Development of Multicultural Societies in Indonesia: A Normative-Islamic Legal Study," *ASEAN Journal of Islamic Studies and Civilization (AJISC)* 2, no. 1 (2025): 27–60.

integrating insights across these fields. Third, critical perspectives on state-sponsored moderation remain relatively underdeveloped, with much scholarship implicitly supportive of government policy frameworks.

The literature on interpretive methods demonstrates similar limitations. Studies of *maqasid*-oriented tafsir often present this approach as inherently superior to classical methods without adequately examining how *maqasid* frameworks can themselves be mobilized to serve particular interests. Research on institutional tafsir projects has documented how state sponsorship shapes interpretive content, but has not systematically analyzed the discursive strategies through which institutional authority is constructed and maintained. Studies of pesantren education have shown that classical texts (*Kitab Kuning*) contain both moderate and non-moderate elements, challenging assumptions that traditional education automatically produces moderate attitudes.³⁸

Novelty Formulation and Research Direction

This study addresses the identified limitations by reconceptualizing *wasatiyyah* as a dynamic discursive construct rather than a static theological concept. Drawing on discourse theory, the research examines how Qur'anic interpretation actively produces *wasatiyyah* meaning through interpretive strategies that are shaped by institutional positions, socio-political contexts, and policy agendas. This approach enables analysis of both the content of *wasatiyyah* interpretations and the conditions of their production, including questions of interpretive authority and power. The study integrates analysis across tafsir scholarship, institutional discourse, and educational implementation to provide a more comprehensive understanding of discourse formation processes. By taking seriously both supportive and critical perspectives on state-sponsored moderation, the research contributes to developing more nuanced frameworks for understanding and promoting religious moderation in plural societies.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative research design combining textual analysis with discourse analysis. The qualitative approach is appropriate given the research objectives of examining interpretive processes and discourse construction, which require in-depth analysis of meaning-making practices rather than quantification of predetermined variables.³⁹ The design integrates two analytical components: first, textual analysis of key Qur'anic verses and their interpretations in classical and contemporary tafsir works; second, discourse analysis examining how interpretive frameworks are constructed, authorized, and contested by Indonesian scholars and institutions. This dual-component design enables examination of both the content of *wasatiyyah* interpretations and the

³⁸ Iswahyudi Iswahyudi, "Moderate and Non-Moderate Discursive Tendencies in Kitab Kuning."

³⁹ Yuspiani Yuspiani M. Mahfudz, "Qur'anic Exegesis and Religious Moderation in South Sulawesi: The Law on Blasphemy to Gods of Non-Muslims in Islamic Law Perspective," *SAMARAH: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga Dan Hukum Islam*, ahead of print, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.22373/sjhk.v7i3.19250>.

discursive processes through which those interpretations acquire authority and influence.

The research adopts an interpretive epistemological orientation that recognizes meaning as constructed through social interaction rather than existing independently of interpretive processes. This orientation aligns with the theoretical framework drawing on discourse theory and hermeneutics, and supports the study's central argument that *wasatiyyah* should be understood as a discursive construct rather than a fixed doctrinal concept. The design employs purposive sampling strategies to identify key texts, institutions, and scholars for analysis, prioritizing sources that represent diverse interpretive orientations and institutional positions within Indonesian Islam.

Unit of Analysis

The study defines three interconnected units of analysis. The primary unit consists of Qur'anic verses directly related to moderation concepts, particularly Q. 2:143 (*ummatan wasatan*), Q. 4:171 and Q. 5:77 (prohibition of religious excess or *ghuluw*), and verses addressing justice, balance, and tolerance.⁴⁰ These verses were selected based on their prominence in Indonesian *wasatiyyah* discourse and their frequent citation in scholarly and institutional documents. The secondary unit comprises tafsir works and interpretive documents produced by Indonesian scholars and institutions, including classical Indonesian tafsir, contemporary scholarly exegesis, and institutional tafsir publications from the Ministry of Religious Affairs. The tertiary unit consists of policy documents, educational materials, and digital content through which *wasatiyyah* interpretations are disseminated and implemented.

This multi-level unit of analysis enables examination of *wasatiyyah* discourse across different textual registers and institutional contexts, from foundational Qur'anic texts through interpretive mediation to practical application. The approach recognizes that discourse formation involves complex relationships among texts, interpreters, and institutional contexts that cannot be adequately captured through analysis of any single level in isolation.

Data Sources

The study draws on both primary and secondary data sources, organized as follows:

⁴⁰ Muhammad Nizamuddin, "Understanding the Concept of Ghuluw in the Qur'an: An Analysis of Al-Maraghi's Tafsir and Its Relevance to Modern Religious Practices."

Data Category	Type	Sources	Purpose
Qur'anic Texts	Primary	Q. 2:143, Q. 4:171, Q. 5:77, Q. 60:8-9, and related verses	Foundation for textual analysis of moderation concepts
Classical Tafsir	Primary	Tafsir al-Tabari, Tafsir al-Razi, Al-Kashshaf (al-Zamakhshari)	Establishing classical interpretive traditions
Contemporary Indonesian Tafsir	Primary	Tafsir al-Misbah (Quraish Shihab), Tafsir at-Tanwir, Al-Qur'an dan Tafsirnya (Kemenag), Tafsir Al-Maraghi	Analyzing contemporary interpretive strategies

Primary sources were selected based on their influence within Indonesian *wasatiyyah* discourse, as indicated by citation frequency, institutional authority, and public recognition. Secondary sources were identified through systematic literature searches in academic databases, prioritizing recent publications (2022-2025) in accordance with journal requirements for currency.

The document retrieval process prioritized comprehensiveness within the defined scope while maintaining analytical manageability. For tafsir works, the study focused on interpretations of the identified key verses rather than attempting comprehensive analysis of entire texts. For policy and institutional documents, the study prioritized official publications from the Ministry of Religious Affairs and major Islamic organizations. For academic literature, the study emphasized recent peer-reviewed scholarship while including seminal earlier works that continue to influence contemporary discourse.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis proceeded through three sequential phases. The first phase employed thematic analysis of Qur'anic verses and their interpretations, following established tafsir methodologies including linguistic analysis, analysis of occasion of revelation (*asbab al-nuzul*), and comparative examination of classical and contemporary interpretations. This phase identified the semantic range of key terms (*wasat*, *ghuluw*, *'adl*) and documented interpretive variations across different exegetical traditions.

The second phase employed discourse analysis drawing on Foucault's concepts of discursive formation, examining how interpretive statements construct knowledge about *wasatiyyah* while establishing relations of authority among interpreters (Naufal et al., 2025). Analysis focused on identifying discursive strategies employed by different

actors, including strategies of nomination (how *wasatiyyah* is named and categorized), predication (what characteristics are attributed to *wasatiyyah*), argumentation (how interpretations are justified), and perspectivization (from what position interpretations are offered).⁴¹

The third phase involved synthesis and theoretical development, integrating findings from textual and discourse analysis to develop a conceptual framework for understanding *wasatiyyah* as a discursive construct. This phase employed comparative analysis across different institutional and interpretive contexts to identify patterns of convergence and divergence in discourse formation. Data validity was ensured through triangulation across multiple sources, member checking with scholars familiar with Indonesian Islamic discourse, and reflexive attention to researcher positionality.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Qur'anic Texts and Interpretive Patterns

The analysis of Qur'anic texts and their interpretations reveals that *wasatiyyah* discourse is constructed through engagement with a network of interrelated verses rather than a single proof-text. While Q. 2:143 containing the phrase *ummatan wasatan* serves as the primary textual foundation, Indonesian interpretations consistently connect this verse to a broader constellation of Qur'anic concepts including the prohibition of religious excess (*ghuluw*), principles of justice ('*adl*), and directives regarding interfaith relations. This intertextual approach enables interpreters to construct *wasatiyyah* as a comprehensive framework rather than a narrow concept.

The analysis identifies three dominant interpretive patterns within Indonesian *wasatiyyah* discourse. The normative-textual pattern emphasizes linguistic analysis of the term *wasat* and its cognates, establishing meanings of "middle," "best," "just," and "balanced" through reference to classical Arabic lexicons and Qur'anic usage.⁴² This pattern is prominent in scholarly tafsir works and represents continuity with classical exegetical traditions. The contextual-progressive pattern foregrounds the relationship between Qur'anic meanings and contemporary social contexts, employing *maqasid*-oriented hermeneutics to derive moderation principles applicable to plural societies. This pattern dominates institutional discourse from organizations like Nahdlatul Ulama and is reflected in policy documents from the Ministry of Religious Affairs. The pragmatic-political pattern treats *wasatiyyah* primarily as a policy framework for countering

⁴¹ Hadi Chaer et al., "Metaphorical Symbols in Qur'anic Discourse: A Cognitive Linguistic Analysis," *Suhuf: International Journal of Islamic Studies* 37, no. 2 (2025): 241–53, <https://doi.org/10.23917/suhuf.v37i2.12081>. Andri Syahputra A. Fadhilah S. Mulyati, Khairunnisa Khairunnisa, Rohma Nur Aisya, Anwar Sidik, Rizka Sari, "Sayyid Qutb's Interpretation in Fi Zhalilil al-Qur'an of the Qur'anic Verses About Children and Their Relevance to The Childfree," *ZAD Al-Mufasssirin*, ahead of print, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.55759/zam.v7i2.312>.

⁴² Mutmainnah, "Dinamika Konsep 'Ummatan Wasathan': Pendekatan Hermeunetika Ma'na Cum Maghza Terhadap Qs. Al-Baqarah [2]:143."

radicalism and promoting national unity, with Qur'anic references serving legitimizing functions.⁴³

These patterns coexist within Indonesian discourse and are often combined within individual texts, though their relative emphasis varies according to authorial positioning and institutional context. Notably, the shift toward contextual-progressive interpretation represents a significant development in Indonesian tafsir methodology, reflecting broader trends in contemporary Islamic scholarship that prioritize the objectives (*maqasid*) of Qur'anic guidance over literal textual meanings.⁴⁴ This methodological shift enables *wasatiyyah* to function as both a theological concept grounded in Qur'anic revelation and a flexible framework adaptable to diverse contemporary challenges.

The detailed analysis of interpretive patterns reveals that the concept of *ummatan wasatan* in Q. 2:143 is not interpreted monolithically but acquires different emphases depending on interpretive frameworks employed. Quraish Shihab, in Tafsir al-Misbah, emphasizes that *wasatiyyah* represents a "middle position that makes humans not take sides left or right" while containing principles of fairness, balance, and tolerance.⁴⁵ The Ministry of Religious Affairs' thematic tafsir projects construct interpretations that align with state policies on national unity and religious harmony, framing jihad as defensive and non-violent while affirming the compatibility of the Indonesian state with Islamic principles.⁴⁶

Factors Shaping Discourse Formation

The analysis of factors shaping *wasatiyyah* discourse formation reveals the decisive role of interpretive authority and institutional positioning. Three categories of actors exercise significant influence over discourse construction: individual scholars with established reputations, major Islamic organizations with educational and media networks, and state institutions with policy-making authority. These actors employ distinct discursive strategies to establish their interpretive positions as authoritative.

Individual scholars contribute to discourse formation through tafsir publications, public lectures, and media engagement. Prominent figures such as Quraish Shihab have played particularly influential roles in articulating *wasatiyyah* interpretations that emphasize tolerance, justice, and contextual understanding. The authority of these scholars derives from their educational credentials, institutional affiliations, and public recognition, enabling their interpretations to circulate widely within Indonesian Islamic

⁴³ abraar, "Islam Warna-Warni Menafsir Ulang Konsep Ummatan Wasathan."

⁴⁴ Abdelmalek Ouich Ishaq Muhammad Fauzinudin Faiz, "Transcending Without Disconnecting: The Integrative Epistemology of Ma'had Aly Situbondo and Its Model of Endogenous Islamic Legal Reform," *JURIS (Jurnal Ilmiah Syariah)*, ahead of print, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.31958/juris.v24i2.15257>.

⁴⁵ Fakhri Fadilah Muttaqin, "Cultural Diplomacy in Global Governance: Reimagining Indonesia's Soft Power Through Nahdlatul Ulama's Islam Nusantara Paradigm."

⁴⁶ Ahmad Taufik, "Countering Radicalism Through Tafsir: State and Jihad in Indonesia's Thematic Quranic Interpretation"; A. S. Sarmadi et al., "Negotiating Islamic Law and Customary Practice: Fiqh al-Aqalliyât and Restorative Justice in Banjar Inheritance Disputes," *Jurnal Ilmiah Al-Syir'ah*, ahead of print, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.30984/jis.v23i2.3673>.

discourse. However, scholarly authority is not uncontested; competing interpretations from conservative or Salafi-oriented scholars challenge mainstream *wasatiyyah* discourse, generating ongoing contestation over authentic Islamic moderation.

Major Islamic organizations, particularly Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah, exercise interpretive authority through their extensive educational networks, publication programs, and digital platforms.⁴⁷ These organizations articulate distinctive approaches to *wasatiyyah* shaped by their theological orientations and organizational histories. Nahdlatul Ulama's "Islam Nusantara" framework emphasizes continuity with local traditions and Sufi spirituality, while Muhammadiyah's approach prioritizes rational interpretation and alignment with modern social institutions.⁴⁸ Both organizations have positioned themselves as advocates of religious moderation, though their specific articulations reflect different emphases and priorities.

State institutions, particularly the Ministry of Religious Affairs, have become increasingly active in shaping *wasatiyyah* discourse through policy initiatives, curriculum development, and publication programs. The adoption of "Religious Moderation" (*Moderasi Beragama*) as official policy has elevated state discourse to a position of significant influence, with government-defined moderation indicators serving as reference points for educational and institutional practice.⁴⁹ Critical analysis reveals that state-sponsored moderation discourse tends to align with Nahdlatul Ulama's Islam Nusantara framework, generating controversy about political bias and the potential marginalization of alternative interpretive positions.

The interplay among these actors produces a complex discursive field characterized by both convergence and contestation. Convergence is evident in the widespread acceptance of core *wasatiyyah* values including tolerance, justice, and opposition to extremism. Contestation emerges regarding the specific content of these values, the interpretive methods through which they should be derived, and the institutional authority to define authentic moderation. Analysis of digital platforms reveals particularly intense contestation, with moderate and conservative interpretations competing for influence among younger Muslim audiences.⁵⁰

Discussion

This study examined how Qur'anic interpretation contributes to the formation of *wasatiyyah* discourse in contemporary Indonesia, revealing three principal findings.

⁴⁷ Nubowo, "Promoting Indonesian Moderate Islam on the Global Stage: Non-State Actors' Soft Power Diplomacy in the Post-New Order Era."

⁴⁸ Ahmad Lahmi Firdaus Ardianto Mukhlis M, Zulhandra Zulhandra, "Traditionalism and Modernism in Indonesian Islam: Dynamics of Muslim Identity Construction," *Journal of Islamic Education*, ahead of print, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.58485/jie.v4i3.510>.

⁴⁹ Arifin and Fati, "The Ideal Educational Model from a Historical Perspective of Pesantren: A Case Study of Futuhiyyah."

⁵⁰ Fikri Mahzumi, "Cyber-Islamic Moderation In Indonesia: Digital Activism of Islami.Co and IBTimes.Id and Its Implications for Young Muslim."

First, *wasatiyyah* emerges as a polysemic concept whose meaning is constructed through diverse interpretive strategies rather than recovered from a singular textual source. The analysis identified three dominant interpretive patterns: normative-textual, contextual-progressive, and pragmatic-political, which coexist and interact within Indonesian discourse. Second, contemporary Indonesian tafsir demonstrates a significant shift toward *maqasid*-oriented and contextual methodologies that enable *wasatiyyah* to function as both theological concept and policy-relevant discourse. Third, institutional actors including individual scholars, major Islamic organizations, and state institutions exercise decisive influence over discourse formation through their interpretive authority and platform access.⁵¹

The findings must be understood within the broader context of Indonesian religious and political developments. The formal adoption of religious moderation as national policy reflects both genuine concern about radicalism and strategic interests in projecting a moderate Islamic identity domestically and internationally.⁵² The alignment between state-sponsored moderation and Nahdlatul Ulama's Islam Nusantara framework reflects the organization's close relationship with government during the Joko Widodo administration, generating both productive collaboration and concerns about political capture of religious discourse. The rise of digital media has transformed the landscape of religious authority, creating new spaces for both moderate and extremist interpretations while challenging traditional institutional gatekeeping.⁵³

The Indonesian case demonstrates distinctive characteristics compared to *wasatiyyah* discourse in other Muslim-majority contexts. Unlike state-directed moderation models in countries such as Saudi Arabia or the UAE, Indonesian discourse emerges from the interaction of state initiatives with robust civil society organizations possessing their own interpretive traditions and institutional resources. This creates a more pluralistic discursive field where multiple articulations of *wasatiyyah* compete for influence. However, critical scholars have raised concerns that state-sponsored moderation may function to marginalize legitimate dissent and centralize interpretive authority under government auspices.

The findings support and extend theoretical frameworks drawn from discourse theory and Islamic hermeneutics. Consistent with Foucauldian discourse analysis, *wasatiyyah* functions as a discursive formation through which knowledge about Islamic moderation is produced while relations of power are established among interpreters. The

⁵¹ Andeska, "Ummatan Wasatan Dalam Perspektif Tafsir Maqāṣidī: Landasan Normatif Toleransi Antarumat Beragama"; Syarif, "The Epistemic Discourse of Religious Moderation (Moderasi Beragama) in Indonesia."

⁵² Ittihaf Siddatul Muttaqin Ali Mursyid Azisi Muhammad Taqiyuddin Iqbal Faiz, Novia Maharani Permatasari, Abdullah Zidni, "Resolution of the Main Values of Wasathiyah Islam as an Effort to Counter the Movement of Religious Radicalism," *Indonesian Journal of Interdisciplinary Islamic Studies*, ahead of print, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.20885/ijis.vol6.iss2.art5>.

⁵³ Muflih Naufal, "Dinamika Wacana Keagamaan Dalam Situasi Krisis: Antara Konservatisme, Moderasi, Dan Progresivisme Di Era Digital."

construction of *wasatiyyah* involves not merely the determination of textual meaning but the positioning of certain interpreters as authoritative voices within Islamic discourse. State institutions, through their policy-making authority and media access, exercise significant power in shaping what counts as legitimate moderation discourse.

The findings also illuminate the productive potential of *maqasid*-oriented hermeneutics in contemporary Islamic scholarship. By shifting interpretive focus from literal textual meaning to underlying objectives, *maqasid* methodology enables more contextual and adaptive readings that can address contemporary challenges while maintaining connections to foundational texts.⁵⁴ However, the analysis also reveals that *maqasid* frameworks can themselves be mobilized to serve particular institutional interests, suggesting the need for reflexive attention to how interpretive methods are employed and authorized.

Understanding the Discursive Field

Understanding *wasatiyyah* as a discursive construct rather than a fixed doctrine illuminates the ongoing contestation within Indonesian Islam over religious authority and authentic moderation. The coexistence of multiple interpretive patterns reflects genuine diversity within Indonesian Muslim communities regarding appropriate methods for understanding and applying Qur'anic guidance.⁵⁵ This diversity should not be viewed as a problem to be resolved through imposed uniformity but as a resource that enables *wasatiyyah* discourse to address varied constituencies and contexts.

The role of educational institutions in mediating *wasatiyyah* discourse emerges as particularly significant. Schools, madrasah, pesantren, and universities serve as sites where official moderation curricula encounter student backgrounds, teacher interpretations, and local community expectations. Research indicates that effective moderation education depends not only on curriculum content but on pedagogical approaches that engage students' existing knowledge and encourage critical reflection.⁵⁶ The "hidden curriculum" of institutional culture and teacher modeling often exercises more influence than explicit curriculum content in shaping student attitudes.

Comparison with Previous Studies

The findings both confirm and extend previous scholarship on Indonesian *wasatiyyah* discourse. Consistent with studies emphasizing the shift toward contextual interpretation in Indonesian tafsir,⁵⁷ this research documents the prominence of *maqasid*-oriented and contextual-progressive approaches in contemporary discourse.

⁵⁴ Ishaq, "Transcending Without Disconnecting: The Integrative Epistemology of Ma'had Aly Situbondo and Its Model of Endogenous Islamic Legal Reform."

⁵⁵ Firdaus Ardianto, "Traditionalism and Modernism in Indonesian Islam: Dynamics of Muslim Identity Construction."

⁵⁶ W. Washudin Fithri Yudin Enung Nugraha, Efi Syarifudin, "Building Religious Moderation through Islamic Religious Education: A Study of High School Teachers in Banten Indonesia," *Jurnal EDUCATIO: Jurnal Pendidikan Indonesia*, ahead of print, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.29210/1202525523>; Waheeda Waheeda et al., "The Dynamic Interplay: A Normative-Philosophical Study of Islam and Local Wisdom in Indonesia," *ASEAN Journal of Islamic Studies and Civilization (AJISC)* 2, no. 1 (2025): 61–91.

⁵⁷ Saefulloh, "Contextual Tafsir and Digital Islam in Southeast Asia: A Narrative Review."

However, the analysis extends previous work by examining how these methodological shifts serve specific institutional interests and enable *wasatiyyah* to function as policy-relevant discourse.

The findings partially challenge scholarship that presents Indonesian moderation as an organic expression of traditional Islamic values (Alkadzim et al., 2023). While historical factors including Sufi influences and Ash'ari theology have shaped Indonesian religious temperament, contemporary *wasatiyyah* discourse is also significantly shaped by state policy initiatives and organizational interests that cannot be reduced to historical inheritances. The analysis supports critical scholars who have raised concerns about the political dimensions of state-sponsored moderation while also acknowledging the genuine religious commitments that motivate moderation advocacy.

Implications

The findings carry implications across theoretical, practical, and policy domains. Theoretically, the reconceptualization of *wasatiyyah* as a discursive construct offers productive pathways for future scholarship that attends to both textual content and discursive processes. This approach can be extended to analyze other contested religious concepts and their construction within specific socio-political contexts. Practically, the findings suggest that moderation education should acknowledge interpretive diversity and equip students with hermeneutical skills for engaging religious texts rather than simply transmitting predetermined interpretations.

For policy, the findings recommend approaches that embrace interpretive pluralism while maintaining commitment to core moderation values. Rather than imposing singular definitions of *wasatiyyah*, policy frameworks should create spaces for dialogue among diverse interpretive positions while establishing clear boundaries against extremism and intolerance. Attention to digital platforms is essential, as these have become primary sites for religious discourse consumption among younger Indonesians. Strengthening moderate voices in digital spaces requires both content production and platform governance strategies.⁵⁸

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that *wasatiyyah* in contemporary Indonesia is not a fixed theological doctrine, but a dynamic discursive construct shaped through Qur'anic interpretation. Its meaning is continuously negotiated through diverse interpretive strategies influenced by hermeneutical traditions, socio-political contexts, and institutional agendas. Indonesian scholars and religious institutions employ both textual and contextual approaches including maqāṣid-oriented interpretations to articulate overlapping yet distinct visions of religious moderation. By integrating Qur'anic hermeneutics with discourse analysis, this research shows that *wasatiyyah* functions as a

⁵⁸ Fikri Mahzumi, "Cyber-Islamic Moderation In Indonesia: Digital Activism of Islami.Co and IBTimes.Id and Its Implications for Young Muslim." Muhamad Riandi and Rusdiyah Rusdiyah, "The Interaction between Islam and Local Wisdom in Indonesia: A Normative-Philosophical Study," *ASEAN Journal of Islamic Studies and Civilization (AJISC)* 2, no. 1 (2025): 93–115.

contested and evolving concept, reflecting broader processes of meaning-making in plural societies.

The study contributes theoretically by bridging scriptural interpretation with discourse theory, highlighting that Qur'anic exegesis operates as a social and institutional process rather than merely an intellectual exercise. Methodologically, the combined use of textual analysis and institutional examination enables a more comprehensive understanding of how moderation discourse is produced and legitimized. This approach opens avenues for future research to explore similar dynamics in other Muslim contexts and to examine how changes in political and social conditions shape the evolution of religious discourse over time.

Practically, the findings suggest that strengthening religious moderation requires engagement with interpretive diversity rather than enforcing singular narratives. Educational institutions should promote critical engagement with Qur'anic interpretation, while policymakers and civil society actors should facilitate inclusive dialogue across different interpretive traditions. Particular attention is needed for digital spaces, where religious discourse is increasingly formed and contested. Future research should therefore examine the role of digital platforms, regional variations, and everyday reception of *wasatiyyah* to better understand how moderation is interpreted, negotiated, and practiced in contemporary Muslim societies.

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