

GENEALOGY OF THE CONCEPT OF WASATHIYYAH IN ISLAMIC EDUCATION: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF CLASSICAL AND DIGITAL TEXTS

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Abstract

This research aims to examine the conceptual dynamics of wasathiyyah (Islamic moderation) in the context of Islamic education by conducting a genealogical exploration of classical texts and a critical analysis of current digital representations. The method used is qualitative, with a literature study and critical discourse analysis of two main corpora. First, classical Islamic literature, including tafsir, hadith, and works of authoritative scholars. And secondly, digital content such as online articles, social media, and da'wah videos. The findings show that in classical texts, wasathiyyah is understood as an epistemological principle that harmonizes reason and revelation and rejects extremism. In the digital space, that meaning is often simplified or even distorted due to the influence of ideological interests and populist communication patterns. The challenge for Islamic education in maintaining its scientific authority and transformative value arises from this phenomenon. Thus, the integration of classical scientific heritage and critical religious digital literacy is a key strategy in building a contextual, reflective, and value-rooted Islamic education paradigm based on the principle of rahmatan lil-'alamin.

Keywords: Wasathiyyah, Education in Islam, Moderated Religion, Digital Classical Texts

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji dinamika konseptual wasathiyyah (moderasi Islam) dalam konteks pendidikan Islam dengan melakukan penelusuran genealogis terhadap teks-teks klasik dan analisis kritis terhadap representasi digital saat ini. Metode yang digunakan bersifat kualitatif, dengan studi kepustakaan dan analisis wacana kritis terhadap dua korpus utama. Pertama, literatur Islam klasik, termasuk tafsir, hadis, dan karya ulama otoritatif. Dan yang kedua, konten digital seperti artikel online, media sosial, dan video dakwah. Hasil penemuan menunjukkan bahwa dalam teks klasik, wasathiyyah dipahami sebagai prinsip epistemologis yang mengharmonikan akal dan wahyu serta menolak ekstremisme. Di ruang digital, makna tersebut sering kali disederhanakan atau bahkan mengalami distorsi, akibat pengaruh kepentingan ideologis dan pola komunikasi populis. Tantangan bagi pendidikan Islam dalam mempertahankan otoritas ilmiah dan nilai transformatifnya muncul akibat fenomena ini. Dengan demikian, integrasi antara khazanah keilmuan klasik dan literasi digital keagamaan yang kritis merupakan strategi kunci dalam membangun paradigma pendidikan Islam yang kontekstual, reflektif, dan berakar pada nilai rahmatan lil-'alamin.

Kata Kunci: Wasathiyyah, Pendidikan dalam Islam, Agama yang Dimoderasi, Teks Klasik Digital



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INTRODUCTION

In the context of Indonesia, which is diverse in ethnicity, religion, and culture, religious moderation.¹ With the increasing signs of intolerance, radicalism, and social polarization based on religion, in-depth studies and the application of discourse on moderate Islam have become increasingly important in various aspects of life, including education. In the global context, the values of wasathiyyah serve as an important bridge between Islamic identity and the demands of a pluralistic modern life.² Indonesia, as the country with the largest Muslim population in the world, has a moral and historical responsibility to maintain inclusive and peaceful pluralism.³ Therefore, the understanding of wasathiyyah needs to be strengthened both conceptually and institutionally, especially through Islamic education. Therefore, the understanding of wasathiyyah needs to be strengthened both conceptually and institutionally, especially through Islamic education.⁴

Islamic education plays a very important role in fostering the values of religious moderation from an early age.⁵ Education plays a crucial role in nurturing universal Islamic principles, such as justice, balance, tolerance, as well as an open and inclusive attitude.⁶ However, how well Islamic education builds moderate character depends on how well the concept of wasathiyyah is understood in a comprehensive and contextual manner.⁷ The process of internalizing moderation values may only become a curricular formality without significant impact on student behavior if it lacks a solid conceptual foundation. Moreover, students are exposed to various religious discourses in the current internet era, not all of which adhere to the

¹ Rahmadi Rahmadi, Akhmad Syahbudin, and Mahyuddin Barni, "Interpretation of the Middle Path Verses in the Qur'an and Its Implications in the Context of Religious Moderation in Indonesia," *Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Ushuluddin* 22, no. 1 (2023): 1–16, <https://doi.org/10.18592/jiiu.v22i1.8572>; Muhammad Ulinuha and Mamluatun Nafisah, "Religious Moderation from the Perspective of Hasbi Ash-Shiddieqy, Hamka, and Quraish Shihab," *Suhuf* 13, no. 1 (2020): 55–76, <https://doi.org/10.22548/shf.v13i1.519>.

² Babun Suharto, *Religious Moderation; From Indonesia to the World* (Lkis Pelangi Aksara, 2021).

³ Kikue Hamayotsu, "Islam and the Making of the Nation: Kartosuwiryo and Political Islam in 20th Century Indonesia by Chiara Formichi," *Indonesia* 100, no. 1 (2015): 125–28.

⁴ Farid Haluti et al., "Progressive Islamic Education as a Means to Drive Religious Moderation," *Edukasi Islami: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 12, no. 001 (2023); Rahmadi, Syahbudin, and Barni, "Interpretation of Wasathiyyah Verses in the Qur'an and Its Implications in the Context of Religious Moderation in Indonesia."

⁵ N Hidayah, "Management of Private Islamic Educational Institutions Based on Religious Moderation," *Edukasi Islami: Jurnal Pendidikan* ..., 2021, <https://jurnal.staialhidayahbogor.ac.id/index.php/ei/article/view/2361>.

⁶ Ahmad Patih et al., "Efforts to Build Religious Moderation Attitudes Through Islamic Religious Education and Citizenship Education Among Students of General Universities," *Edukasi Islami: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 12, no. 001 (2023).

⁷ Sauqi Futaqi, *Multicultural Islamic Education: Towards Learning Independence* (Nawa Litera Publishing, 2023).

values of moderation.⁸ Therefore, to improve Islamic education, the understanding of wasathiyyah must be critically reconstructed.⁹

In this context, it is very important to examine the history and conceptual basis of the term wasathiyyah.¹⁰ This term is not only popular in modern religious discussions but also has a strong foundation in classical Islamic literature. This term refers to a fair and balanced middle position, mentioned in the Qur'an (QS. Al-Baqarah: 143), and reinforced by many classical commentaries and works of renowned scholars throughout Islamic history.¹¹ This concept emerged as a result of the long-standing conflict between text and the social context of Muslims throughout history. Wasathiyyah is described as an epistemological principle in various Islamic scholarly traditions that maintains a balance between reason and revelation, sharia and maqasid, and the firmness of principles and the flexibility of attitudes.¹² Therefore, the study of wasathiyyah must be conducted within a consistent historical framework and not influenced by changes occurring in Islamic thought itself.¹³

The concept of wasathiyyah has been discussed by several figures such as Al-Ghazali, Ibn Taimiyyah, and Yusuf al-Qaradawi in different scholarly contexts. Al-Ghazali linked the concept of balance with ethics and spirituality, while Yusuf al-Qaradawi made wasathiyyah the foundation of modern Islamic thought, bridging the gap between text and reality. Specifically, Ibn Taimiyyah emphasized the importance of balancing the demands of Sharia with the social realities of the community, which he considered the foundation of public interest. Wasathiyyah is not a static idea; it changes according to the times and the needs of society, as demonstrated by these various approaches. So that moderation does not get trapped in a model that limits the flexibility of Islamic teachings, it is important to understand this diversity of perspectives.¹⁴

⁸ Suhaimi Suhaimi and Raudhonah Raudhonah, "Moderate Islam in Indonesia: Activities of Islamic Da'wah Ahmad Syafii Maarif," *Ilmu Dakwah: Academic Journal for Homiletic Studies* 14, no. 1 (2020): 95–112.

⁹ Muhamad Ishaac and Najminnur Hasanatun Nida, "Integration of Prophetic Education from the Perspective of QS Ali Imran Verse 110 in the Curriculum of Islamic Boarding Schools as the Heart of Interfaith Harmony," *Al Qalam: Journal of Religious and Social Sciences* 18, no. 5 (2024): 3439–58.

¹⁰ Rahmadi, Syahbudin, and Barni, "Interpretation of the Middle Path Verses in the Qur'an and Its Implications in the Context of Religious Moderation in Indonesia."

¹¹ Azyumardi Azra, *Islamic Education: Tradition and Modernization Amidst the Challenges of the Third Millennium* (Prenada Media, 2019).

¹² Ali Muhtarom, Sahlul Fuad, and Tsabit Latif, *Religious Moderation: Concepts, Values, and Development Strategies in Islamic Boarding Schools* (Yayasan Talibuana Nusantara, 2020).

¹³ Ijah Bahijah et al., "Islamic Moderation in the Era of Digital Disruption (Education of Islamic Moderation Values in Social Media Among Millennials and Generation Z)," *Edukasi Islami: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 11, no. 001 (2022): 1–20.

¹⁴ Noorhaidi Hasan et al., *Islamic Literature of the Millennial Generation: Transmission, Appropriation, and Contestation* (Postgraduate Program UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, 2018).

The term wasathiyyah has undergone a change in meaning along with the development of digital media in the past twenty years.¹⁵ Through social media, online preaching sites, and digital Islamic platforms, this term is used to support the narrative of moderate Islam and, ironically, to obscure its meaning by certain groups that claim to be moderate but act exclusively.¹⁶ This phenomenon shows that the digital space is not only a place for preaching but also a place for ideological debates about religion. Many stories that are called wasathiyyah actually contain political or sectarian interests. Therefore, it is very important to conduct a thorough examination of how this term is created and used in the modern digital environment.¹⁷

This development marks an epistemological transformation in the understanding of Islam.¹⁸ Classical texts remain authoritative sources, but digital texts can significantly shape public opinion about religion.¹⁹ This indicates that there are differences in meaning in the digital world, which need to be thoroughly examined, especially in relation to Islamic education.²⁰ Nowadays, education no longer fully relies on the authority of teachers and books, but rather on digital narratives, which are often not scientifically tested.²¹ When scientific authority becomes unstable, students risk developing unclear understandings, even though they appear visually and rhetorically convincing.²² Therefore, it is crucial for Islamic education to address this issue using an intelligent, adaptive, and religious digital literacy-based approach. Therefore, it is very important for Islamic education to address this issue using an intelligent, adaptive approach based on religious digital literacy.²³

The concept of wasathiyyah has been discussed from various perspectives in several previous studies.²⁴ For example, showing the importance of balance in Islam and linking it to the

¹⁵ Rena Latifa and Muhamad Fahri, *Religious Moderation: A Portrait of Community Perspectives, Attitudes, and Intentions* (Rajawali Press, 2022).

¹⁶ Achmad Muhibin Zuhri, *Moderate Islam: Concepts and Their Actualization in the Dynamics of the Islamic Movement in Indonesia*, vol. 1 (Academia Publication, 2022).

¹⁷ Paelani Setia and Heri M Imron, *Religious Moderation Campaign: From Traditional to Digital*, vol. 3 (S2 Program in Religious Studies UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, 2021).

¹⁸ Aba Agil Aziz et al., "Epistemic Rationality in Islamic Education from a Historical Perspective to Build Religious Moderation in Indonesia," *Muslim Heritage* 8, no. 1 (2023): 7–15, <https://doi.org/10.21154/muslimheritage.v8i1.5846>.

¹⁹ Arnis Rachmadhani, "Religious Authority in the New Media Era: Gusmus's Da'wah on Social Media," *Panangkaran: Journal of Religious and Social Research* 5, no. 2 (2021): 150–69.

²⁰ Muaddyl Akhyar et al., "Strategies for Adaptation and Innovation of Islamic Education Curriculum in the Digital 4.0 Era," *Instructional Development Journal* 7, no. 1 (2024): 18–30.

²¹ Ponteh Galis Pamekasan, "Muftadi: Journal of Ibtidaiyah Education" 5, no. 2 (2024): 126–35.

²² Lydia Freyani Hawadi and MM Psychologist, *Anthology of Islamic Studies and Educational Psychology* (Universitas Indonesia Publishing, 2022).

²³ Dur Brutu, Saipul Annur, and Ibrahim Ibrahim, "Integration of Educational Philosophy Values in the Merdeka Curriculum at Islamic Educational Institutions," *Jambura Journal of Educational Management*, 2023, 442–53.

²⁴ Muria Khusnun Nisa et al., "Religious Moderation: The Foundation of Moderation in Various Religious Traditions and Its Implementation in the Era of Digital Disruption," *Jurnal Riset Agama* 1, no. 3 (2021): 731–48.

strengthening of national ideology.²⁵ Other studies place more emphasis on the application of moderation values in the Islamic school curriculum.²⁶ However, the methods used are mostly normative and do not pay enough attention to the important aspects of the evolution of these ideas.²⁷ Moreover, there hasn't been much research that combines classical text analysis with the dynamics of digital discourse.²⁸ This provides a significant opportunity to study how the concept of wasathiyyah is formed, transmitted, and transformed over time, including their influence on modern Islamic education approaches.²⁹

On the other hand, these studies are usually descriptive and pay less attention to the genealogical and hermeneutic aspects of the concept of wasathiyyah.³⁰ There has not been much research comparing and critically analyzing the meaning of classical texts with their representations in the digital space. However, methods like this are crucial for uncovering epistemological dynamics and the processes of meaning transformation in various sociocultural and historical contexts. The understanding of wasathiyyah might be trapped in simplification or ideological bias without such analysis.³¹ Therefore, studies that critically combine classical and digital text analysis are greatly needed to enrich the treasure trove of Islamic education scholarship.³²

This is where the research gap or academic gap lies. Genealogical studies can help us better understand the concept of wasathiyyah if we view it not just as a normative slogan, but also as a dynamic concept that emerges and reappears in various media, social, and historical contexts.³³ With this method, historical meaning tracing can be conducted, and we can see how that meaning is contextualized in the digital era. Therefore, this study is not only conceptual but

²⁵ Miftahul Jannah Akmal et al., "Building Potential Through Children's Education: Ibn Sina's Perspective in Islam," *Al-Hikmah: Journal of Religion and Science* 21, no. 2 (2024): 250–63; H Rusli, *History Learning Methods to Enhance Student Nationalism* (CV. Dotplus Publisher, 2023).

²⁶ Irvan Destian, Ahmad Hadis Zenal Mutaqin, and Mohamad Erihadiana, "Implementation of National Education Policy on Religious Moderation in Islamic Schools," *Didaktika: Journal of Education* 13, no. 3 (2024): 3811–20.

²⁷ R Yuminah and M A Si, *Religious Moderation Within the Framework of Pluralism* (Republika Penerbit, 2024).

²⁸ Zuhri, *Moderate Islam: Concepts and Their Actualization in the Dynamics of the Islamic Movement in Indonesia*.

²⁹ Yeni Huriani, Eni Zulaiha, and Rika Dilawati, *Pocket Book of Religious Moderation for Muslim Women* (S2 Program in Religious Studies, UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, 2022).

³⁰ Mara Ongku Hsb, "The Concept of Wasatiyah in Islamic Law from the Perspective of Hasbi Ash-Shiddeqy," *An-Nida'* 46, no. 2 (2022): 150–73.

³¹ Sagnofa Nabila Ainiya Putri and Muhammad Endy Fadlullah, "Wasathiyyah (Religious Moderation) from the Perspective of Quraish Shihab," *Incare, International Journal of Educational Resources* 3, no. 1 (2022): 66–80.

³² Ais Isti'ana, "Integration of Technology in Islamic Education Learning," *Indonesian Research Journal on Education* 4, no. 1 (2024): 302–10.

³³ M Nurwathani Janhari and Suke Indah Khumaero, "The Concept of Wasathiyyah According to Sayyid Quthb in the Book *Tafsir Fi Zhilal Al-Qur'an* (A Sociology of Knowledge Analysis by Peter Ludwig Berger)," *Jurnal Semiotika-Q: Kajian Ilmu Al-Quran Dan Tafsir* 3, no. 1 (2023): 33–55.

also relevant to addressing current issues in Islamic education.³⁴ Thus, this enhances academic discussions on religious moderation in the ever-changing Islamic environment.³⁵

This study aims to investigate the formation and development of the concept of wasathiyyah from classical literature to the digital era, as well as the impact of this shift on Islamic education practices.³⁶ This article seeks to uncover the dynamics of discourse and narratives that shape public understanding of moderate Islam through a critical analysis approach. This research specifically explores the interaction between classical texts and digital representations in shaping the horizon of wasathiyyah meaning among educators, students, and the general public. Therefore, it is hoped that this research can provide theoretical contributions to Islamic studies and practical implications for the development of relevant and transformative Islamic education. This article also serves as a reflective effort to redefine the position of Islamic education in building an inclusive and ethical civilization.

In addition, this study also aims to examine the extent of the contribution of the representation of the concept of wasathiyyah on digital platforms to the formation of the paradigm of Islamic education in the modern era. Do digital media strengthen a comprehensive understanding of moderation, or do they simplify and distort the concept? Considering that the younger generation makes the digital space their primary source for learning about religious matters, this question becomes important. Public perception of moderate Islam is greatly influenced by visual representations, preaching rhetoric, and digital platform algorithms. Thus, the analysis of digital content is strategic in designing the direction of contextual and sustainable Islamic education, not just academic.

This research offers a critical analysis of the evolving narratives and their implications for Islamic education, both theoretically and practically, by comparing classical content such as tafsir, hadith, and traditional scholars' works with digital content such as online articles, da'wah videos, and Islamic infographics. With this approach, shifts in meaning, rhetorical styles, and the delivery of wasathiyyah values in two different epistemic spaces can be identified. Therefore, the results of this research can serve as a foundation for developing critical digital religious literacy strategies based on the Islamic intellectual tradition. On the other hand, this study opens up opportunities for dialogue between the heritage of classical Islamic scholarship and the challenges of communication in the era of information technology.

³⁴ Joko Sayono, "Heuristic Steps in Historical Method in the Digital Era," *Sejarah Dan Budaya: Jurnal Sejarah, Budaya, Dan Pengajarannya* 15, no. 2 (2021): 369–76.

³⁵ Abdul Malik and Busrah Busrah, "The Relationship Between the Government and Academics on the Issue of Religious Moderation in Indonesia," *Substantia: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Ushuluddin* 23 (2019).

³⁶ Khairan M Arif, "Islamic Moderation (Wasathiyah Islam) from the Perspective of the Qur'an, Sunnah, and the Views of Scholars and Jurists," *Al-Risalah: Journal of Religious Studies and Islamic Thought* 11, no. 1 (2020): 22–43.

Considering that background, the problem formulation in this article is first, how the genealogy of the understanding of the wasathiyyah concept in classical Islamic texts. Second, in what ways are the narratives and representations of the concept of wasathiyyah constructed in the digital space? And third, what is the impact of this concept's transformation on contemporary Islamic education? This research aims to provide theoretical and practical contributions to strengthening religious moderation in Islamic education through critical and historical textual analysis. In addition, this research aims to build a comprehensive framework of understanding between the Islamic intellectual heritage and the current reality of digital communication. It is hoped that with this approach, a responsive, adaptive Islamic education strategy can be formulated, while still being grounded in the values of Islam rahmatan lil-'alamin. This study is also an effort to establish a new epistemological basis for religious moderation that is contextual and transformative, not merely normative.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study applies a qualitative approach with a type of library research combined with critical discourse analysis. This study focuses on tracing the genealogy of the concept of wasathiyyah in classical Islamic literature and analyzing its transformation and representation in current digital media. Data was obtained from two main categories of sources: first, classical Islamic texts, such as tafsir, hadith collections, and works by scholars like Al-Ghazali, Ibn Taimiyyah, and Yusuf al-Qaradawi; and second, digital texts, including online articles, social media content, digital lectures, and infographics that highlight the theme of Islamic moderation. Data collection techniques include document studies and observation of relevant digital content, especially on platforms popular among Indonesian Muslims.

Data is analyzed using a critical hermeneutic approach, aiming to uncover historical meanings, social contexts, and ideological narratives within the texts being studied. The process of data reduction, theme categorization, and in-depth interpretation of meaning regarding the development of wasathiyyah discourse from the classical era to the digital age is part of the analysis technique. To ensure that the obtained data can be considered valid, source triangulation techniques are used by comparing various types of literature and digital content from credible sources, as well as peer debriefing to obtain evaluations from fellow researchers in the field of Islamic studies and media. With this approach, the research can produce a comprehensive and contextual understanding of the evolution of the concept of wasathiyyah and its implications for the development of contemporary Islamic education.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Wasathiyyah in Classical Texts: Epistemological and Theological Foundations

*Research findings reveal that the concept of wasathiyyah in classical literature is not merely a moral principle, but rather an integral epistemological framework within the Islamic scholarly tradition. The Qur'an explicitly refers to Muslims as ummatan wasathan.*³⁷ In the Qur'an, ummatan wasathan (QS. Al-Baqarah: 143):

وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا لِتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ

"And thus We have made you a just and chosen nation so that you may be witnesses over mankind's deeds."

This verse, according to the interpretations of Al-Tabari and Al-Qurtubi, emphasizes that wasathiyyah encompasses justice ('adl), balance (tawazun), and rejection of extremism (ghuluw).³⁸ Ibn Kathir in Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Azhim adds that this "middle" position makes Muslims mediators in conflicts and examples for other communities.³⁹

Classic figures like Al-Ghazali in Ihya' Ulum al-Din connect wasathiyyah with a triadic balance: intellect ('aql), ego (nafs), and spirit (ruh).⁴⁰ Meanwhile, Ibn Taimiyyah in Majmu' al-Fatawa emphasizes moderation in worship and transactions to avoid innovation and extremism.⁴¹ Hadith of the Prophet also support this:

خَيْرُ الْأُمُورِ أَوْسَطُهَا

"The best of matters is the middle one." (HR. Baihaqi The best of matters is the middle one." (HR. Baihaqi).

Contemporary figures such as Yusuf al-Qaradawi then formulated wasathiyyah as the main principle in Islam that should serve as the foundation for ijtiḥad, fatwas, education, and national

³⁷ Andy Hadiyanto, Kinkin Yuliaty Subarsa Putri, and Luthfi Fazli, "Religious Moderation in Instagram: An Islamic Interpretation Perspective," Heliyon 11, no. 4 (2025): e42816, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2025.e42816>.

³⁸ Nasaiy Aziz, "Islam and the Ideal Society (Ummatan Wasathan) from the Perspective of the Mufasssir and Its Relevance to Contemporary and Future Indonesian Context," Al-Mu'ashirah Scientific Journal: Media for Multi-Perspective Studies on the Qur'an and Hadith 17, no. 1 (2020): 1–10.

³⁹ Fauziah Nurdin, "Religious Moderation According to the Qur'an and Hadith," Jurnal Ilmiah Al-Mu'ashirah: Media Kajian Al-Qur'an Dan Al-Hadits Multi Perspektif 18, no. 1 (2021): 59–70; Muhammad Aji Nugroho, "Islamic Education with a Multicultural Perspective; An Effort to Build an Inclusive Religious Understanding Among Muslims," Mudarrisa: Jurnal Kajian Pendidikan Islam 8, no. 1 (2016): 31–60.

⁴⁰ Amir Maliki Abitolkha and Muhamad Basyrul Muvid, Sufistic Islam: Grounding the Teachings of Sufism That Are Humanistic, Spiritual, and Ethical (Central Java: CV. Pena Persada Publisher, 2020). Page, 101

⁴¹ Subhan Hi Ali Dodego and Doli Witro, "The Islamic Moderation and the Prevention of Radicalism and Religious Extremism in Indonesia: Moderasi Islam Sebagai Solusi Menangkal Gerakan Radikalisme Dan Ekstrimisme Agama Di Indonesia," Dialog 43, no. 2 (2020): 199–208.

life.⁴² This shows the historical continuity of wasathiyyah as a living intellectual heritage that continues to undergo transformation. This transformation affirms the relevance and flexibility of the wasathiyyah concept in addressing the challenges of the times without losing its theological roots.⁴³

Transformation of Wasathiyyah in the Digital Space: Between Simplification and Distortion

Findings from digital content show a more diverse trend. On one hand, many digital preaching platforms such as YouTube, podcasts, and online articles promote moderate values such as tolerance, interfaith harmony, and peace.⁴⁴ However, there is also a tendency to simplify the meaning of wasathiyyah, which is merely reduced to the slogan "Islam in the middle" without a deeper understanding of its substance.⁴⁵ This phenomenon shows that the digital space has become an arena where meaning is contested, and this is not always based on strong scientific authority.⁴⁶ This emphasizes the importance of critical digital religious literacy so that society does not get trapped in a shallow and biased understanding of the concept of wasathiyyah.⁴⁷

One interesting example is the use of the term wasathiyyah in social media infographics by da'wah institutions or Islamic organizations. This content often tends to be populist and rhetorical, highlighting symbols of unity without providing explanations about the theological or historical roots of the concept. On the other hand, some institutions like the Maarif Institute and the Wahid Foundation strive to present a moderate Islamic narrative through a more in-depth approach based on research and contextualization. This shows that there is a spectrum of quality in digital representation that needs to be critiqued from an academic perspective. These differences reflect the role of digital actors in shaping the landscape of public religious understanding, which can vary greatly in quality and depth.⁴⁸

⁴² Made Saihu, "Education of Religious Moderation: A Study of Wasathiyah Islam According to Nurcholish Madjid," *Andragogi: Journal of Islamic Education and Islamic Education Management* 3, no. 1 (2021): 16–34.

⁴³ C Adhi Nugroho and Ali Kartawinata, "Islam Wasathiyah and Modernism in the Challenge of Ideology (A Hermeneutic Review)," *Insani: Journal of Religious Studies and Education* 1, no. 2 (2023): 120–34.

⁴⁴ Rahmi Yuningsih Puteri, "The Foundation of Religious Moderation in the Dynamics of the Digital Era in Indonesia," *Technologia: Jurnal Ilmiah* 16, no. 1 (2025): 192–97.

⁴⁵ Hsb, "The Concept of Moderation in Islamic Law from the Perspective of Hasbi Ash-Shiddeqy."

⁴⁶ Sunaryanto Sunaryanto and Ahmad Rofi Syamsuri, "The Semiotics of Digital Da'wah in Friday Prayer Invitation Memes," *Komunida*, 2022, 103–24.

⁴⁷ Eka Yanuarti and Fadila Fadila, "Internalization of Wasathiyah Islamic Value Education," *Al-Ishlah: Jurnal Pendidikan* 14, no. 4 (2022): 6703–14, <https://doi.org/10.35445/alishlah.v14i4.2213>.

⁴⁸ Dinda Arina Husnayaeni and Ade Putranto Prasetyo Wijiharto Tunggal, "Analysis of Visual Content in Instagram Post @Lensamu in Middle Islam Preaching (Wasathiyah)," *Jurnal Audiens* 3, no. 4 (2022): 301–17.

Implications for Islamic Education: Integration of Classical Texts and Digital Literacy

The comparison between classical texts and digital content shows a transformation in the way wasathiyyah is constructed and conveyed. Classical texts have argumentative, philosophical, and reflective characteristics, while digital content is more communicative, persuasive, and instant. This has implications in the realm of epistemology, where the digitalization of Islamic narratives has the potential to create a gap between the substance of concepts and public perspectives. In the realm of Islamic education, this presents a unique challenge, as students and teachers more frequently interact with digital narratives than with classical literature. Therefore, there is a need for curriculum integration that can bridge the depth of classical texts and the accessibility of digital content so that the values of wasathiyyah can be transmitted in a complete and critical manner.⁴⁹

The transformation of the meaning of wasathiyyah is very important from an educational perspective. Islamic education should not only rely on the formal curriculum to impart values but must also be able to create critical digital literacy about religion. Without it, students may not be able to understand moderate information from inaccurate, untrustworthy, or even misleading sources. Therefore, it is very important to integrate classical text-based learning with critical reading of digital narratives. This requires the active role of PAI teachers as facilitators of digital literacy who not only inform people but also contribute to the formation of a moderate perspective based on science.⁵⁰

Strategic Recommendations

From the perspective of social theory, this phenomenon can be understood through Michel Foucault's approach to "discourse" and "power-knowledge."⁵¹ In the digital realm, wasathiyyah has no intrinsic value—it is produced by actors with ideological and political interests. Therefore, Islamic education needs to develop critical awareness towards the production of religious discourse and cultivate students' ability to distinguish between authentic and constructive narratives. Therefore, education not only transmits content but also shapes individuals who are capable of interrogating discourse and positioning themselves reflectively within the complex flow of information.⁵²

⁴⁹ Maslani Maslani et al., "Digital Revolution in the Development of Islamic Religious Education Curriculum: Strategies and Implications for the Future," *Journal of Law, Education and Business* 2, no. 2 (2024): 1456–64.

⁵⁰ A Amelia Hidayati, *Internalization of Religious Moderation Values Through Islamic Religious Education for the Z Generation* (Guepedia, 2020).

⁵¹ Kamaruddin Salim, *Sociology of Power: Theory and Development* (Bumi Aksara, 2023).

⁵² Mansur Mansur, Mohammad Hermanto, and Maftuhah Maftuhah, "Moderate Education: A Wasathiyah Islamic Approach to Countering Intolerance and Radicalism," *Hikmah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 19, no. 2 (2023): 158–71.

The argument that religious moderation is not a static entity, but rather a discourse that is always negotiated in the public sphere, is also reinforced by this finding. This is in line with Hans-Georg Gadamer's hermeneutic theory, which states that understanding is always historical and dialogical. Thus, the task of Islamic education is to create a space for dialogue between the intellectual heritage of the past and contemporary challenges that emerge in digital form. With this approach, students are not only invited to understand Islam textually, but also to engage in dialogue with their social realities. Thus, the intended Islamic education will be more capable of shaping a generation that is moderate, critical, and adaptive to the complexities of the times.

This research, with a genealogical approach, shows that wasathiyyah is not just a normative term, but rather a historical construct that contains theological, sociological, and political dimensions. This concept needs to be understood critically, with an awareness of the shifts in context and representation. In this case, the combination of classical textual approaches and media analysis approaches produces a productive method to enrich the treasury of Islamic education. With this, a more comprehensive and transformative understanding of the concept of wasathiyyah in the context of education can be formed. Therefore, Islamic education functions not only as a means of conveying values but also as an arena that dynamically and contextually produces meaning.

Overall, this research finds that the interpretation of wasathiyyah in classical literature tends to be more holistic and has strong roots in Islamic scientific methodology, while its interpretation in digital media is dynamic but often lacks depth. Thus, contemporary Islamic education needs to serve as a bridge between the two: maintaining scholarly authority while providing creative and critical responses to the digital reality. This is a challenge and an opportunity to develop a contextual, inclusive, and civilization-focused paradigm of Islamic education. By combining the depth of tradition with the speed of modern information flow, Islamic education can shape a relevant religious narrative while maintaining the integrity of its scholarship. So that the concept of wasathiyyah can truly become the foundation for coexistence in a plural and dynamic society, this effort is very important.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study show that wasathiyyah in Islam is not only a normative principle but also a complex historical construct with strong theological, philosophical, and social foundations. The main findings indicate that in classical literature, wasathiyyah is deeply understood as an epistemological framework that connects reason and revelation, while rejecting extremism. On the other hand, in the digital space, the representation of this concept becomes more dynamic but often experiences simplification and ideological bias.

This article makes a significant contribution by linking the genealogy of classical texts with digital discourse. This approach offers a new perspective on the evolution of the meaning of wasathiyyah and emphasizes the importance of integrating the Islamic intellectual heritage with the challenges of modern religious communication.

From a theoretical perspective, this study expands the scope of Islamic education studies by emphasizing the significance of critical hermeneutics in understanding religious concepts in the information age. From a practical standpoint, the implication is the need for updated Islamic education strategies that can connect classical scholarly authority with advancements in digital narratives. It is hoped that Islamic education will not only serve as a channel for moderate values but also function as a critical space that produces inclusive, reflective, and contextual religious understanding.

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