

Revitalizing Islamic Wasatiyyah in Digital Disruption Era

Khomad Subekhi Sujatmoko

UIN Salatiga, Indonesia

Khomadsubekhi@gmail.com

Mukh Nursikin

UIN Salatiga, Indonesia

ayahnursikin@gmail.com

Mukti Wiguna

UIN Salatiga, Indonesia

wigunasujatmoko@gmail.com

Abstract

In the age of digital disruption, wherever algorithmic personalisation, quick information flows, along with the commercialisation of spiritual content reshape authority and practice, this study examines the opportunities and difficulties for reviving Islamic wasatiyyah (moderation). The goal of the study is to pinpoint systemic factors that undermine moderation, such as young people's low digital religious literacy, misinformation presented as a religious competence, algorithmic echo chambers which magnify exclusivist viewpoints, and institutional delays in adjusting to digital realities. The study highlights the critical need for integrated strategies by synthesising policy documents, recent literature, and a representation from SMA 72 Jakarta using a qualitative analytical/descriptive approach. Results demonstrate that platform reasoning not only helps to spread religious content but also actively mediates the potential for moderation, undermining the principles of justice, tolerance, and balance. Curriculum reform to incorporate technology into religious literacy, partnerships with moderate influencers to create pedagogically sound content, institutional preparedness through digital oversight and crisis response procedures, and collaboration among multiple stakeholders involving schools, peasants, government agencies, and platform developers are some of the suggested interventions. This study presents a conceptual model that defines digital knowledge about religion as a crucial skill for youth resilience and operationalises wasatiyyah in digital contexts. The study advances the conversation about how Islamic education can protect moderation and ethical depth in a quickly changing digital environment by tying theory to real-world interventions.

Keywords: *wasātiyyah; digital disruption; mediatization; digital literacy; algorithmic echo chambers*

Introduction

One of the most distinctive aspects of modern Muslim life is the use of digital technologies to mediate religion (Cohen and Soukup 2023); (Fakhruroji 2021). Digital platforms transform authority, practice, and community involvement in addition to disseminating religious content. While *wasātiyyah*, the traditional Islamic ethos of *tawāzun* (balance), *‘adl* (justice), and *tasāmuh* (tolerance), is still the norm, classical scholars like al-Ghazālī stressed that moderation is based on an ethical balance between worldly engagement and spiritual devotion (al Ghazālī). However, the reasoning required of digital mediums, driven by the attention economy and algorithmic personalisation, increasingly challenges these values (Campbell and Tsuria 2021). This conflict highlights the necessity of investigating ways to revive moderation in the era of digital disruption.

The analysis in this study is positioned at the nexus of three theoretical streams. First, the fragmentation of theological authority is explained by the mediatisation of religion, which describes how media logics alter religious institutions and procedures (Cohen and Soukup 2023). Second, research on digital religion emphasises how believers navigate religious life on the internet, frequently with the help of influencers who redefine authority by adjusting to platform affordances (Zaid, Fauzi, and Nur 2022). Third, research on algorithmic personalisation shows how filter bubbles and recommendation systems influence exposure, undermining diversity and promoting exclusivist viewpoints (Cinelli et al. 2021); (Figà Talamanca and Arfini 2022). By incorporating these viewpoints, we are able to simulate how system mechanisms actually mediate the potential for moderation as opposed to merely transmitting content.

The decentralisation of authority in religion, the commercialisation of *da‘wah*, and deficiencies in digital religious literacy are three critical clusters identified in recent literature that highlight the weaknesses of Muslim youth in digital environments (Ahmmad, Yusuf, and Karim 2025); (Hakim 2025); (Ashari, Rahman, and Abdullah 2023). These clusters show that platform logics encourage polarisation and spectacle, and young people frequently lack the critical thinking abilities to separate reliable sources from false information. As a result, moderation values are systematically eroded, with algorithmic echo chambers diminishing *tawāzun* and *tasāmuh* and commercial imperatives compromising *‘adl*.

For these theoretical issues, the SMA 72 Jakarta case offers an interesting empirical examination. The incident, which included detonations during Friday prayers as well as the quick

spread of traumatic content on social media, serves as an example of how digital vulnerabilities can result in risks in the real world (Associated Press 2025); (The Guardian 2025). It draws attention to the confluence of institutional inadequacy, algorithmic radicalisation, and low digital religious literacy. This case shows that schools are important places where moderation needs to be protected from digital disruption in addition to being places of instruction.

Given these difficulties, this paper poses the following questions: What systemic approaches can revitalise moderation in youth as well as educational contexts, and how does digital disruption impact the conventional and actual implementation of *wasātiyyah*? This study aims to advance conceptual understanding as well practical interventions for protecting moderation in the digital era by integrating mediatisation theory, digital religious scholarship, and algorithmic personalisation studies (Campbell and Tsuria 2021); (Cinelli et al. 2021), It also grounds the analysis in the SMA 72 Jakarta incident (Associated Press 2025); (The Guardian 2025).

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative descriptive-analytic design, chosen for its capacity to synthesize diverse theoretical and empirical sources into a coherent framework for understanding *wasātiyyah* in digital contexts. Three data streams were analyzed. First, a targeted literature review of scholarly publications from 2020 to 2025 addressed mediatization, digital religion, and algorithmic effects (Cohen and Soukup 2023); (Campbell and Tsuria 2021); (Cinelli et al. 2021); (Figà Talamanca and Arfini 2022). Second, document analysis was conducted on education and religious institution policies, as well as publicly available social media artifacts. Third, a single illustrative case study was constructed from authoritative news reports and official statements regarding the SMA 72 Jakarta incident (Associated Press 2025); (The Guardian 2025).

The analytical procedure involved several steps. Literature and documents were coded thematically using categories such as “digital literacy,” “algorithmic exposure,” “commercial *da‘wah*,” and “institutional response.” These codes were then synthesized across cases and aligned with the operational dimensions of *wasātiyyah* *tawāzun* (balance), *‘adl* (justice), and *tasāmuh* (tolerance). Finally, theory-driven mapping was applied to connect the coded data to the conceptual model derived from recent scholarship (Ahmmad et al. 2025); (Hakim 2025); (Ashari et al. 2023).

This methodological approach is appropriate because it allows for the integration of theoretical insights with empirical illustration, thereby bridging abstract concepts and practical interventions. However, the study is limited by the absence of primary interviews or surveys, which restricts the depth of empirical validation. Future research should incorporate direct engagement with students, educators, and religious leaders to strengthen the applicability of the proposed framework.

Discussion

The results of this study show that digital platforms actively mediate the circumstances that results in moderation (*wasātiyyah*) can flourish or deteriorate, rather than merely transmitting religious content. Algorithmic amplification, which produces echo chambers that strengthen homophilic clusters and limit exposure to different theological viewpoints, is the most urgent systemic problem (Cinelli et al. 2021); (Figà Talamanca and Arfini 2022). *Tawāzun* (balance) is undermined by this process as young people are socialised into environments that are more and more ideologically homogeneous. This finding is significant because it shows that intentional institutional and curricular interventions that combat algorithmic bias are necessary to maintain moderation.

The redesigning of spiritual authority in digital environments is another crucial aspect. By tailoring their communications to platform logics, social media influencers, many of whom lack a traditional scholarly foundation, redefine religious authority (Zaid et al. 2022). Although this democratisation boosts engagement, it also runs the risk of commercialising religious discourse, where virality and visibility take precedence over morality (Campbell and Tsuria 2021); (Hakim 2025). Because the moral requirement of balanced instruction may be overshadowed by the pursuit of engagement metrics, this dynamic undermines *‘adl* (justice/ethical consistency). This study's contribution is to emphasise that moderation necessitates addressing the inconspicuous ethical compromises brought about by commercialisation in addition to opposing extremist narratives.

These vulnerabilities are made worse by a lack of digital religious literacy. Young people are vulnerable to exclusive narratives because they frequently lack the critical thinking abilities necessary to discern reliable sources from false information (Ashari et al. 2023; Nugroho et al., 2025). Given that polarised content is normalised by algorithmically curated feeds, this lack of

variance weakens *tasāmuh* (tolerance). Comparative studies demonstrating notable literacy gaps among Muslim youth demographics in Southeast Asia highlight the urgency about this issue (Ashari et al. 2023). It follows that moderation needs to be operationalised as a set of technical, critical, and ethical skills that can be taught and evaluated in academic programs.

The practical manifestation of these systemic pressures is demonstrated by the factual case of SMA 72 Jakarta. The incident, which included explosions over Friday prayers along with the viral dissemination of traumatic content, exposed institutional inaction in crisis response as well as youth being introduced to destructive ideas (Associated Press 2025); (The Guardian 2025). This case supports the theoretical assertion that moderation is a safety and policy requirement rather than just a theological goal. It also shows that schools need to be given priority as intervention sites, outfitted with trauma responsive communication techniques and digital oversight procedures.

The main issues, their consequences for *wasātiyyah*, and suggested solutions are summarised in Table 1 below. This table offers operational strategies for revitalisation and illustrates how each systemic stress directly compromises moderation values. Table 1. Digital Challenges, Implications for *Wasātiyyah*, and Strategic Interventions

No.	Challenge / Key Point	Evidence	Implications for <i>Wasātiyyah</i>	Recommended Intervention
1	Algorithmic echo chambers reinforce homophilic clusters	Platform studies show polarized spread (Cinelli et al. 2021); (Figà Talamanca and Arfini 2022)	Reduces <i>tawāḥḥun</i> (balance) and <i>tasāmuh</i> (tolerance) by limiting exposure diversity	Integrate algorithmic awareness modules into school curricula; collaborate with platforms to diversify exposure
2	Reconfiguration of religious authority via influencers	Digital Islam research shows influencers redefine authority (Zaid et al. 2022)	Weakens institutional gatekeeping; risks commodification of values	Develop moderate content in youth-friendly formats (podcasts, videos) with credible ‘ <i>ulamā</i> ’ and ethical influencers

3	Commodification of <i>da'wah</i> in the attention economy	Studies show viral content prioritizes visibility over ethics (Campbell and Tsuria 2021); (Hakim 2025)	Undermines ' <i>adl</i> (justice/ethical consistency) by incentivizing spectacle	Establish ethical codes for digital <i>da'wah</i> ; train content creators; pesantren–platform partnerships
4	Low digital religious literacy among youth	Comparative studies reveal literacy gaps (Ashari et al. 2023)	Increases vulnerability to disinformation and exclusivist narratives	Mandate digital religious literacy modules in secondary schools; emphasize source verification and critical evaluation
5	Institutional lag in digital adaptation	Mediatization studies show slow institutional response (Cohen and Soukup 2023); (Fakhruroji 2021)	Moderate voices drowned out by viral content; weak crisis response	Create institutional SOPs for digital oversight; train teachers/ <i>ustādh</i> ; establish crisis communication protocols
6	Empirical case: SMA 72 Jakarta incident	News reports highlight explosions and viral panic (Associated Press 2025); (The Guardian 2025)	Demonstrates real-world risks of digital vulnerability in schools	Implement school-level monitoring, trauma support, and rapid digital crisis response mechanisms

When combined, these results offer a fresh framework for reviving *wasātiyyah* in the digital age. This study incorporates mediatisation, digital religion, throughout algorithmic personalisation into a comprehensive model, in contrast to earlier research that concentrated only on contribution (Campbell and Tsuria 2021) as well as literacy gaps (Ashari, et al. 2023; Nugroho, et al. 2025), The interpretive significance is in demonstrating how platform logics consistently undermine moderation, which can be revived through institutional preparedness, ethical strategies for content, and curriculum reform. This presents *wasātiyyah* as an operational skill necessary for resilience on Muslim youth education, in addition to being a normative value.

Conclusion

The study concludes that the operationalisation of wasātiyyah within Muslim education in addition to youth communities faces systemic challenges due to digital disruption. The principles of tawāzun (balance), ‘adl (justice), and tasāmuh (tolerance) are undermined by algorithmic echo chambers, the commercialisation of da‘wah, the reorganisation of religious power, and low levels of digital religious literacy. The factual case of SMA 72 Jakarta shows how these factors pressures can develop into practical crises, establishing the urgency about proactive interventions.

The synthesis shown in Table 1 emphasises that complex structure logics which encourage spectacle, simplicity, and speed undermine moderation rather than isolated incidents. This research's interpretive significance stems from its contribution for a thorough framework that combines algorithmic personalisation studies, digital religion academic achievement, and mediatisation theory into practical tactics. These tactics include curriculum reform to incorporate digital religious literacy, partnerships with reputable ‘ulamāūge and influencers to create ethical content, and institutional preparedness through crisis response procedures and digital oversight.

This study moves the conversation from normative ideals to useful educational interventions by operationalising wasātiyyah just like a set of quantifiable technical, critical, and ethical competencies. The results highlight the need for multi stakeholder cooperation to protect moderation in the digital age, bringing together ministries, schools, pesantrens, and platform developers. In order to ensure that the suggested framework can be modified in a variety of educational settings, future research should increase verification by empirical evidence through surveys and interviews. In the end, reviving wasātiyyah in the era of digital disruption is not only a theological requirement but also a security and policy requirement for creating Muslim youth communities that are resilient.

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