

THE QUR'ANIC COUNTER-NARRATIVE TO THE POST-TRUTH ERA: Q.S. AL-BAQARAH [2]:143 AND THE ETHICS OF RELIGIOUS MODERATION

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Abstract (200 words)

The post-truth era has shifted the notion of truth from factual correspondence to emotional resonance and collective identity, blurring the boundaries between knowledge, opinion, and propaganda. In the religious sphere, disinformation and illegitimate truth claims challenge both scholarly authority and the community's critical verification capacity. This study explores Q.S. Al-Baqarah [2]:143 as a Qur'anic counter-narrative to post-truth logic by analyzing the conceptual meaning of ummatan wasathan and its ethical implications for religious moderation. Using a qualitative approach that integrates thematic exegesis and critical discourse analysis of the Qur'an, classical and modern tafsir, and related epistemological studies, the research reveals that ummatan wasathan represents not merely a normative middle path but an epistemic paradigm balancing rationality and morality. The verse carries a mandate of testimony (shuhud), emphasizing cognitive responsibility, verification, and epistemic justice as foundations for moderation. In today's context, wasathiyah values function as public ethics capable of reducing polarization, correcting affective bias, and restoring trust in epistemic authority. A thematic exegetical approach combined with critical discourse analysis demonstrates that the meaning of wasath does not end at a merely descriptive middle position, but functions as a value system that balances textual dogmatism and nihilistic relativism. Linguistic and historical analysis of the verse reveals that the mandate of testimony (shuhūd) embedded within it carries epistemic ethics in the form of intellectual courage, caution in verification, and a commitment to epistemic justice. Discursively, ummatan wasathan operates as a social mechanism for regulating the authority of truth so that it does not fall into either group hegemony or algorithmic logics that reinforce affective polarization in the digital public sphere. This study shows that Q.S. Al-Baqarah [2]:143, through the

History:

Received:

5 February 2026

Revised:

9 February 2026

Accepted:

18 January 2026

Keywords:

Post-Truth:

Ummatan

Wasathan:

Moderasi

Beragama:

Epistemologi

Qur'ani

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concept of ummatan wasathan, not only functions as a moral ideal for Muslims, but also as an epistemological framework that guides the faithful to uphold truth in a balanced manner amid the disorientation of the post-truth era. The study contributes to Qur'anic epistemology by positioning ummatan wasathan as a framework to critique the modern truth crisis and provides a practical foundation for strengthening religious moderation, critical literacy, and ethical communication in the digital age.

INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of information in the contemporary era has shifted the parameters of truth validity from factual correspondence to affective resonance and collective identity. This process creates an epistemic field that is vulnerable to selective and emotive rhetoric (Afif et al., 2024). In the religious sphere, this shift manifests itself through claims of truth that are capitalised for political, economic, or social status interests, often without adequate hermeneutic references to traditional sources (Fathurokhmah, 2023). This condition poses a challenge not only to the intellectual authority of the ulama, but also to the capacity of the religious community to critically filter religious information (Zuhri, 2022). Therefore, the study of normative texts, especially verses that reflect epistemic norms and social ethics in the Qur'an, is important to offer a counter-narrative that can reconstruct collective habits in verifying the truth. The focus on Q.S. Al-Baqarah [2]:143 requires a reading that is sensitive to the linguistic, historical, and functional dimensions of the verse in shaping the collective moral compass. This approach aims to place the Qur'anic text not only as normative legitimation but also as an instrument of epistemic criticism against post-truth logic.

The reading of the concept of *ummatan wasatan* in this context must go beyond descriptive interpretation and enter the constructive realm, how the concept shapes cognitive and normative practices oriented towards balance and justice (Al-Hasani, 2024). Hermeneutically, *wasat* does not only refer to a spatial or numerical middle position, but also refers to a value system that bridges dogmatic extremism and nihilistic relativism (Habibie, 2023). Therefore, productive interpretation requires a synthesis between Arabic lexical studies, the history of revelation, and *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* so that the normative meaning of *ummatan wasatan* can be concretised in contemporary social practice. In the context of the information crisis, this meaning has implications for verification procedures, critical education, and public communication ethics based on Qur'anic principles (Ningrum et al., 2025). This study also assumes that religious texts can provide an alternative epistemic foundation that challenges post-truth culture without alienating Islamic intellectual tradition. Thus, the analysis is directed at revealing the functional relationship between Qur'anic norms and public practices of truth.

The discussion will place Q.S. Al-Baqarah [2]:143 as a normative source that has the potential to formulate an ethic of moderation that emphasises cognitive and moral obligations in accessing and conveying religious information. First, it will analyse how the linguistic structure and historical context of the verse frame the mandate of witnessing (*shuhud*), which demands a balance between intellectual courage and social

responsibility. Second, the epistemic dimensions of ummatan wasatan will be explored as a framework that encourages verification, rational dialogue, and moral accountability, principles that are counterposed to post-truth logic. Third, the study will identify practical implications for religious education, public communication governance, and moderation policies that can reduce the circulation of baseless claims. This analysis is expected to reveal the correlation between Qur'anic norms and contemporary strategies to strengthen the ecosystem of truth in Muslim communities.

The conclusion of this introduction emphasises the contribution of research offering a textual reading that is not only normative but also applicable in addressing the problem of truth in the modern public sphere. By placing Q.S. Al-Baqarah [2]:143 as a meeting point between classical hermeneutics and contemporary epistemic challenges, this study aims to provide a theoretical basis for text-based religious moderation policies. Furthermore, this research is expected to open up the next empirical research agenda that examines how the principles of wasathiyah are implemented in the practice of da'wah and digital communication. The practical implications include recommendations for religious literacy curricula, training for religious instructors, and verification mechanisms on public platforms. Finally, this study invites readers to reconstruct the category of religious truth by prioritising epistemic balance as an antidote to post-truth dynamics.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous studies on religious moderation in the post-truth era show that the value of wasathiyah has strong epistemic and social relevance in facing the contemporary information crisis. Palupi, (2024) found that students of the Qur'an and Tafsir Study Programme at UIN KHAS Jember already have a mature perspective on religious moderation at the evaluative stage, which serves as an intellectual bulwark against the tide of misinformation and digital radicalism. Imron and Syukur reveal that the pesantren culture at Unwas and UIN Walisongo is able to adapt dynamically to technological developments without losing the essence of moderation, through the principle of *muhāfazatu 'alā al-qadīm al-ṣāliḥ wa al-akhdzu bi al-jadīd al-aṣlah* as a strategy for preserving moderate Islamic values in virtual spaces. Meanwhile, Addzaky dkk., (2024) offer a framework of 'Epistemology of Wasathiyah' which integrates revelation (naql) and reason ('aql) as the basis for the formation of critical and literate moderate Islamic knowledge in facing the post-truth era. Post-Truth and the Epistemological Crisis: Reconstructing Truth in the Evolving Landscape of Social Media (2025), Etika dan Tantangan Dakwah di Era Post-Truth dan Disrupsi (2025), Truth in the Age of Disinformation: The Relevance of Islamic Epistemology in Filtering Digital Religious Narratives (2025), Agama di Era Post-Truth: Antara Populisme Agama dan

Banalitas Sosial (2024). These studies indicate that moderation is not merely a normative concept, but also an epistemological paradigm and a form of social praxis capable of bridging Qur'anic texts with the digital realities of contemporary Muslim communities. Nevertheless, studies that specifically position Q.S. Al-Baqarah [2]:143 as an ethical paradigm for correcting post-truth epistemology remain very limited.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative-descriptive approach (Fitra & Wendry, 2024), combining thematic interpretation and critical discourse analysis. This approach was chosen because it is capable of revealing the conceptual and social meanings of Q.S. Al-Baqarah [2]:143 in the context of the epistemic challenges of the post-truth era. Thematic interpretation is used to explore key concepts such as *ummatan wasatan*, justice, and balance through linguistic, historical, and *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* studies (Tohis & Malula, 2023). Meanwhile, critical discourse analysis is used to understand how Qur'anic values function as counter-narratives to manipulative and emotional information culture (Silaswati, 2019). The primary data for this study includes the text of the Qur'an and classical and modern interpretations (al-Ṭabari, Ibn Kathir, Quraish Shihab dll), while the secondary data consists of books and scientific articles related to religious moderation, Qur'anic hermeneutics, and post-truth theory.

The analysis was conducted in three main stages: first, analysis of the tafsir text to identify the linguistic and contextual meanings of *ummatan wasatan*; second, discourse analysis to assess how the interpretation of the verse shapes social and epistemic views in society; and third, contextual hermeneutic reading to relate the findings of meaning to modern social conditions (Fitra & Aboujanah, 2025). Data triangulation and cross-examination between interpretations were carried out to ensure the validity of the interpretation and prevent hermeneutic bias. This research procedure produces a reading that is not only textually accurate, but also relevant to the ethical and epistemological needs of religious communities amid information disruption. Thus, this method is designed to bridge the normative power of sacred texts and the social reality that is facing a crisis of truth.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Q.S. Al-Baqarah [2]:143: An Interpretative Analysis

Linguistically, the phrase *ummatan wasathan* consists of two key elements, namely *ummatan* and *wasathan*, which together form a rich and multidimensional meaning structure (Mughtar, 2013). In *Lisān al-'Arab*, the root word *ummatan* (أُمَّة) comes from the letters *hamzah–mīm–tā'* *marbūṭah*, which means a parent or community that is a

source of values and direction for its members. Terminologically, *ummatan* refers to a dynamic social entity, 'advanced and developing humanity', unlike the words *qabilah*, *qaum*, or *sya'b*, which are more static. Meanwhile, *wasathan* means 'middle' and "fair", which in Ibn 'Āsyūr's view does not only refer to a spatial position, but to 'Islamic values built on the basis of a straight and middle way of thinking (Muhammad Tohir Bin A'syur, 1973). Quraish Shihab adds that *wasath* is 'everything that is good in accordance with its object, where something good lies between two extremes' (M. Quraish Shihab, 2002). Thus, from a linguistic perspective, *ummatan wasathan* indicates a normative identity that contains moral, intellectual, and social balance.

In classical exegesis, Imam al-Ṭabarī in *Jāmi' al-Bayān fī Ta'wīl al-Qur'ān* emphasises that Allah 'refers to them only as "moderate" because of their moderation in religion.' He explains that Muslims are not like 'Christians who act extremely with intimidation,' nor are they 'Jews who are weak in religion.' Al-Ṭabarī concludes, 'the matter most beloved to Allah is that which is done in moderation.' He also interprets that 'the middle is justice, and that is the meaning of choice, because the chosen ones are those who are most just' (Abu Ja'far Muhammad bin Jarir ath-Thabari, 2000). Similarly, Imam Ats-Sa'labī in *Kasyfu wa al-Bayān* explains that *wasath* means 'fair ('adl) and choice (*khiyār*),' and emphasises that Muslims are 'religious scholars who are in the middle path between excess and neglect' (Ats-sa'labi, 2002). These two exegetes thus emphasise that the meaning of 'middle ground' is not merely a position between two extremes, but rather the highest moral quality that guarantees justice and balance.

As-Sam'ānī's interpretation in *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān li As-Sam'ānī* reinforces this view by writing: "The best religion is the middle ground, meaning neither excessive nor deficient. And that is the religion of Islam." He places Islam as a religion that rejects the extremism of the Christians and the laxity of the Jews (As-Sama'ni, 1971). Meanwhile, Ibn Kathīr in *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm* emphasises that the word *wasath* 'means choice (*khiyār*) and the best (*ajwad*), as it is said that the Quraish tribe is the best tribe in terms of lineage.' According to Ibn Kathīr, Allah made Muslims 'the middle way,' then 'perfected their sharia and explained its straight and clear path' (Katsir, 1999). All of these classical interpretations are based on a moral framework that emphasises justice, balance, and the position of choice as the spiritual legitimacy of Muslims (Fitra et al., 2025). From this, moderation is not a compromise, but a normative principle to preserve the purity of the teachings.

In contemporary exegesis, Sheikh Abdurrahman bin Nashir As-Sa'dī wrote in *Tafsīr al-Karīm ar-Raḥmān*: "Thus We have made you a moderate community, just and chosen. Allah has made the Muslim nation moderate in all matters of religion; moderate among the prophets, unlike those who go to extremes in matters of prophecy (Christians), and also unlike those who are lax (Jews)." He exemplifies this dimension of moderation in

the laws of purity and food, 'Islam is not like the Jews who forbid good things as punishment, nor is it like the Christians who permit unclean things' (Abdurrahman Nasir Al-Sa'di, 2016). As for Ibn 'Āsyūr in *Tahrīr wa Tanwīr*, he interprets al-wasath as 'the best (khiyār), as Allah says: "You are the best nation produced for mankind" (Āli 'Imrān: 110).' He associates moderation with 'a position between two despicable traits,' such as between courage and cowardice, or between generosity and stinginess. From this, modern interpretations expand the scope of wasathiyah as a way of thinking and an ethical lifestyle that is relevant to the social and global context.

Meanwhile, Sheikh Ahmad Mustafa al-Marāghī added an anthropological dimension by writing that Islam 'combines the rights of the soul and the rights of the body,' unlike materialistic groups (Jews and polytheists) and pure spiritualists (Christians and Sabians). He states that 'Muslims are chosen (khiyār) and just ('udūl), because they are in the middle position' (Al-Maraghi, 1936). This perspective affirms Islam as a value system that balances spirituality and human reality, making ummatan wasathan an integral paradigm of humanity. Contemporary interpretations expand the meaning of this verse from an individual moral concept to a social construct that demands harmony between revelation, reason, and social praxis. Thus, classical and modern interpretations converge on one axis of meaning: ummatan wasathan is a theological and epistemological mandate for Muslims to be guardians of justice and balance in global life.

An analytical synthesis of the lexical dimension, the mandate of witness, and the spectrum of interpretations results in a reading of ummatan wasatan as an operational paradigm of epistemic moderation: a set of rules governing verification, balance of arguments, and institutional accountability. This paradigm offers evaluative tools, proportionality of evidence, methodological transparency, authentication institutions, and a literacy curriculum that can withstand the emotional and manipulative claims characteristic of the post-truth era. Its implementation requires institutional engineering and the development of public capabilities so that Qur'anic norms are practised in a measurable and auditable manner. Thus, the interpretive analysis of Q.S. 2:143 has the potential to become a normative-practical reference for designing policy indicators, clarification mechanisms, and educational programmes that strengthen the public epistemic order. In conclusion, this verse not only provides an identity label but also provides a framework for building moderation as a collective practice that is resistant to post-truth distortions.

The Concept of Wasathiyah and Religious Moderation

The concept of wasathiyah needs to be understood as a normative framework that integrates ethical, epistemic, and institutional dimensions in religious practice, not merely as a rhetorical category (Asrori, 2025). As a framework, it summarises basic values such as 'adl (justice), tawazun (balance), tasamuh (tolerance), and 'aql (rationality) that reinforce each other in the process of determining norms and actions (Nurdin, 2021). This understanding demands attention to how these values are materialised in legal norms, religious education, and da'wah practices so that they do not remain mere ideal expressions. From a normative theory perspective, wasathiyah functions as a mechanism for harmonising the purpose of the text (telos) and the contextual demands of contemporary society. Thus, this concept requires a systemic elaboration of how values are codified, institutionalised, and evaluated in social life. Such an approach allows wasathiyah to become a source of concrete action, rather than empty terminology (Prakosa, 2022).

The values of 'adl and tawazun have direct implications for legal practice and public policy because they both establish operational evaluative criteria (Mubarok & Sunarto, 2024). 'Adl requires the proportional distribution of rights and obligations as well as procedural fairness in religious decision-making; this implies the need for transparency of religious authorities and appeal mechanisms in interpretative cases. Meanwhile, tawazun emphasises a balance between various religious, rational, spiritual, and material interests so that legal or policy decisions do not sacrifice other fundamental principles for the sake of a narrow goal (Aziz & Ulya, 2024). In legal practice, the combination of these two values requires the use of evidence-based ijihad methods, consideration of social consequences, and avoidance of simplistic solutions that lead to injustice (Qoffal et al., 2025). Therefore, the application of 'adl and tawazun requires pluralistic legal reasoning procedures and institutions capable of assessing the impact of policies. Neglecting this aspect is prone to producing instrumental interpretations that exacerbate polarisation.

The dimensions of tolerance and reason expand the public sphere towards rational dialogue and social coexistence, so that religious moderation must also be seen as a communicative competence (Almu'tasim, 2019). Tolerance emphasises the obligation to respect plurality of beliefs and practices, but does not mean moral relativism; it requires minimum common norms that guarantee dignity and social security. Reason, on the other hand, demands critical thinking methods for evaluating evidence, openness to correction, and the ability to distinguish valid arguments from rhetoric, competencies that must be taught in religious curricula (Sayidah, 2025). In the context of digital media, the combination of tasamuh and 'aql is relevant for formulating a communication ethic that can resist the spread of unverified claims and promote

evidence-based dialogue. This competency is not only cognitive but also affective: it trains empathy, epistemic humility, and a willingness to engage in dialogue with different parties. Therefore, moderation education needs to include critical literacy and dialogue ethics modules as an integral part.

The connection between *wasathiyah* and *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* emphasises that religious moderation is not a normative addition but part of the objectives of sharia to maintain fundamental interests (Tohari, 2024). When *wasathiyah* is linked to *maqāṣid* such as the preservation of religion, reason, life, lineage, and property, religious policies and practices are assessed based on their contribution to the continuity of these objectives. The *maqāṣidi* approach provides an evaluative framework for weighing trade-offs when concrete norms collide, so that there is no dichotomy between individual dignity and collective interests. In practical terms, this correlation requires an assessment of religious policies based on socio-ecological impacts and evidence, rather than merely textual arguments that are cut and pasted (Sabri Sabri & Busyro Busyro, 2024). Thus, the integration of *wasathiyah* and *maqāṣid* facilitates decision-making that is responsive to modern complexities without neglecting normative commitments. This makes moderation an operational evaluative principle in religious public order.

Finally, it is important to emphasise that moderation as defined by *wasathiyah* is a practical commitment that requires institutional infrastructure and normative capacity to be effective. Implementation requires the establishment of scientific-theological authentication mechanisms, cross-actor dialogue forums, and educational policies that instil habits of verification and moral responsibility (Septiana, 2022). Challenges that must be anticipated include instrumental co-optation by political actors, distortion of narratives by sensationalist media, and internal resistance to adaptive *ijtihād*. Therefore, the implementation strategy must include procedural safeguards such as transparency of interpretation methods, auditing of religious policies, and standardisation of religious institution accreditation. Ultimately, *wasathiyah* demands collective awareness: moderation is not a passive attitude but an active practice of maintaining truth and justice that is continuously tested in the social arena.

The Post-Truth Era and the Epistemic Crisis

The post-truth era should be understood not merely as a political rhetorical phenomenon but as an epistemic condition in which sources of truth are selected and evaluated through the lens of affect and collective identity. In such conditions, the process of forming beliefs shifts from verifying evidence to a mechanism of justification rooted in affective needs and social affiliation, so that arguments that evoke emotional

resonance gain legitimacy more quickly than empirically strong arguments (Sismondo, 2017). This phenomenon is closely related to cognitive mechanisms such as motivated reasoning and identity-protective cognition, which make individuals more likely to accept information that reinforces their group image and reject evidence that threatens it. Therefore, the epistemic crisis at the public level is not merely a matter of information deficiency, but rather the failure of institutions and collective epistemic practices to facilitate critical and corrective dialogue (Wu, 2023). Consequently, the governance of both scientific and religious knowledge has been disrupted because verification norms are no longer the norm. This conceptual analysis leads to normative questions about how society can reconstruct knowledge validation procedures that are resistant to emotional and identitarian pressures.

The digital ecosystem exacerbates these epistemic conditions through technical and economic architectures of attention that prioritise speed, emotionality, and engagement over accuracy and depth of argument. Content curation algorithms tend to reinforce confirmation bias by placing users in informational bubbles that reinforce certain narratives, while viralisation features promote easily digestible and shareable narrative fragments (DiRiK et al., 2023). Furthermore, the attention economy creates incentives for actors pursuing sensationalism, including religious hoax spreaders, as engagement becomes the currency of legitimacy in the digital public sphere. The existence of automated actors such as bots and coordinated networks manipulating trending topics further obscures credibility signals, making it difficult to differentiate between legitimate authorities and opportunistic claims (Watkins, 2024). In this context, the speed of information circulation often precedes the capacity of institutions to respond with authoritative and timely clarifications. Thus, the technical and economic dynamics of digital media are the main structural factors intensifying the modern epistemic crisis.

In the religious sphere, the epistemic crisis has led to the proliferation of absolute claims that assert normative legitimacy without transparent interpretation procedures or testable evidence; this pattern gives rise to performative forms of alternative authority (National Research Lobachev-sky State University of Nizhny Novgorod & Dorozhkin, 2024). New actors such as celebrity preachers, religious influencers, or micro-groups utilise emotional rhetoric, isolated text selection, and the aesthetics of authority to generate followers and legitimise their interpretations (Fuller, 2024). These practices often disregard classical hermeneutic principles such as the context of *asbāb al-nuzūl*, inter-verse consistency, and the procedural framework of *ijtihād*, thereby allowing theological claims to escape the methodological framework that typically restrains deviation. The phenomenon of textual bricolage, the assembly of *nash* fragments for argumentative purposes, facilitates the spread of narratives that are

emotionally dense but lacking in justification (Fitra & Oktasandi, 2024). The medium-term impact includes an aesthetic of religiosity that prioritises the impression of personal authenticity over argumentative quality, which in turn erodes the evaluative standards of the community (Johnson, 2023). Thus, the religious arena becomes a laboratory for new forms of authority that challenge traditional interpretive institutions.

One of the most noticeable effects of this epistemic crisis is the delegitimisation of religious scholars and traditional religious institutions, which experience what is referred to in epistemological literature as testimonial injustice. Public trust in official interpretations weakens when these authorities are perceived as slow, uncommunicative, or distant from the experiences of the people, causing congregations to seek alternative sources that fulfil their emotional and identity needs (Naufal et al., 2025). Epistemic fragmentation follows small communities forming their own knowledge ecosystems that often do not exchange corrections with each other, resulting in interpretative and social polarisation. The political implications include increased sectarian conflict, questioned legitimacy of public policy, and difficulties in building collective consensus for policies that require a shared value base (Yusuf, 2023). At the institutional level, this phenomenon demands the revitalisation of legitimacy mechanisms that combine scientific credibility with public communication capacity. Therefore, the epistemic crisis is not only an intellectual problem but also a structural challenge to social cohesion and public order.

Facing the epistemic crisis in the post-truth era requires strategies that respond to both the cognitive-individual and institutional-structural levels to restore the reliability of the knowledge validation process. Educational interventions that instil critical skills and communication ethics need to be combined with institutional reforms that increase the transparency of interpretation methods, the accountability of fatwas, and the capacity for rapid clarification in the public sphere (Ichwan et al., 2024). In addition, regulating digital platforms and partnerships between religious institutions and independent fact-checkers can reduce the impact of the viral spread of manipulative narratives without disproportionately curtailing freedom of expression. Moderate rhetorical strategies that prioritise evidence-based arguments and empathy, as well as incubators for inter-community dialogue, can reduce the appeal of spectacular, absolute claims (Fail, 2022). Finally, restoring the epistemic ecosystem requires the development of new collective norms that prioritise verification and correction procedures, a project that requires long-term collaboration between social actors. These strategies are prerequisites for religious discourse to once again become a space for rational legitimacy that is resistant to post-truth distortions.

Q.S. Al-Baqarah [2]:143 as a Qur'anic Counter-Narrative

Q.S. Al-Baqarah [2]:143 functions as a Qur'anic counter-narrative not only through its semantic content but also through its rhetorical function, which affirms certain epistemic procedures in managing claims of truth (Saniti, 2024). This verse instructs a model of legitimacy that prioritises a tiered argumentation: first, textual clarification; second, historical verification; and third, assessment of *maslahat* (public interest). Thus, every religious claim must pass through a series of examinations before being accepted as authoritative. As an argumentative tool (Syachrofi & Alby Saigy El Alam, 2023), this verse provides a basis for rejecting quick claims that rely on mass affection by offering verification norms that can be used as collective benchmarks. From a public discourse perspective, the repeated references to the "middle" position can be used to reconstruct a rhetorical ethos that rejects sensationalism and demands evidence and complete arguments. Thus, this verse not only states an ideal, it formalises a public communication procedure that can be operationalised in modern religious institutions. The implementation of this kind of rhetoric strengthens the community's capacity to distinguish between claims that are worth defending and those that are merely manipulative.

As a counter-narrative to the dynamics of information that rely on affectivity, Q.S. 2:143 provides a normative basis for the development of a religious literacy curriculum that emphasises source methodology and evaluative skills. A curriculum inspired by this verse will include modules on text verification practices, principles of evidence weighting, and argumentation exercises that combine classical hermeneutics with contemporary scientific methods (Sirait et al., 2023). Such education aims to build intellectual habits, not just factual knowledge, namely the habits of clarification, cross-checking, and critical reflection on the social implications of interpretation. Beyond madrasahs and universities, this educational model is relevant for training preachers, platform moderators, and religious policymakers (Radiani & Rusli, 1970). Thus, this verse serves as a reference for designing human capacity that can uphold epistemic standards in daily religious communication practices. This curricular approach produces public agents who are more resistant to manipulative rhetoric.

At the institutional level, Q.S. 2:143 can be used as a basis for legitimising the establishment of formal corrective mechanisms, such as an independent *nash* verification council, an interpretative appeal mechanism, and a fatwa transparency protocol aimed at curbing the proliferation of baseless claims (Ramadhan, 2022). These mechanisms must be designed in such a way as to combine scientific authority (linguistic, historical, and *maqāsid* experts) with social legitimacy (community representation and public accountability). The establishment of such an institution requires clear procedural standards: documentation of the interpretation

methodology, publication of legal reasoning, and access for affected parties to present counter-evidence (Islam & Rahmi, 2024). Such an institutional design minimises the possibility of abuse of religious authority by opportunistic actors and strengthens public trust in interpretative outcomes. In other words, the verse serves as a normative pillar that justifies institutional reform to ensure the credibility of the religious knowledge ecosystem. This reform must be accompanied by an independent evaluation mechanism to ensure long-term effectiveness.

In practical terms, Q.S. 2:143 also leads to preventive and corrective communication strategies: prevention through the provision of evidence-based alternative narratives, and correction through rapid intervention that prioritises transparency and dialogue (M. Syarif Adi Pramana, 2024). The preventive strategy includes the production of educational content that explains interpretation procedures and hermeneutic explanations that are easily accessible to the public, while the corrective strategy relies on a team of clarifiers who are able to respond quickly to false narratives without neglecting the ethics of dialogue. This two-pronged approach strengthens the information infrastructure that supports traditional epistemic authority while remaining relevant to young digital audiences. Furthermore, communication practices guided by this verse emphasise the use of normative language that reduces polarisation, for example, with frames that highlight common good and rational evidence. Thus, Q.S. 2:143 becomes a source for the design of communication tactics that restore the norms of rational debate in the public sphere.

In order for this Qur'anic counter-narrative function to be more than just rhetoric, evaluative indicators are needed to measure the extent to which religious practices and public policies are consistent with the demands of the verse (Rahman & Aspandi, 2023). These indicators may include: the level of methodological transparency of interpretation institutions, the frequency of use of verification procedures in fatwas, the existence of corrective forums, and indicators of epistemic literacy among congregations. Empirical assessment of these indicators enables the mapping of progress and identification of weaknesses in the implementation of epistemic moderation. In addition, the evaluation must be sensitive to the local context so as not to impose a single model that ignores the diversity of socio-religious practices. With systematic measurement, Q.S. 2:143 has the potential to become a normative instrument that can be tested and developed continuously, rather than just an untested ideal narrative (Awadin et al., 2024). This kind of evaluative implementation closes the gap between normative discourse and actual practice in efforts to counteract the impact of the post-truth era.

The Ethics of Moderation in Social Practice

The ethics of moderation in social practice must be understood as a normative framework that connects Qur'anic principles with concrete rules of conduct in various public arenas so that it does not end up as a mere moral slogan (M. Islahuddin, 2024). This framework requires the translation of values such as justice and balance into operational rules that can be practised, for example, verification procedures, transparency standards, accountability mechanisms, and evaluative criteria for assessing the feasibility of discourse. The ethics of moderation must facilitate institutional competence and individual capacity simultaneously: institutions provide procedures and sanctions, while individuals are trained to act according to these norms. This principle also emphasises preventive and corrective dimensions; not only punishing mistakes, but building practices that minimise the emergence of manipulative claims (Theguh & Bisri, 2023). Thus, the ethics of moderation serves as a bridge between the normative demands of the text and the pragmatic needs of contemporary social order. Its implementation requires cross-sectoral synergy between religious institutions, educational institutions, media regulators, and civil society in order to work on various points of discourse production.

In the realm of digital communication, moderation ethics requires procedural designs to filter and verify information without reducing freedom of expression; this includes standardising source verification, public correction protocols, and algorithmic transparency policies. Technically, platforms and religious authorities need to develop a list of credibility indicators that can be partially automated, such as reference metadata, methodological compliance traces, and expert endorsements, while still allowing room for manual clarification in complex cases (Mubarok & Sunarto, 2024). Digital ethics must also require protection for vulnerable groups by implementing norms to prevent hate speech based on evidence of social impact, not merely keyword censorship. In addition, media literacy education is conceptualised as a long-term intervention that shapes users' critical disposition towards online religious content (Nadhifah et al., 2024). Public-private regulations need to be designed to encourage algorithm data transparency and appeal mechanisms for users who are victims of misinformation. All of these steps require the principle of proportionality: regulatory responses must be balanced with the social risks posed by manipulative narratives.

In the practice of preaching, the ethics of moderation shifts the focus from rhetorical victory to fostering understanding that prioritises testable argumentation structures, comprehensive historical references, and rhetoric that maintains the dignity of the interlocutor. Ethical da'wah methods require rational persuasion accompanied by the principle of compassion. Persuasion must combine textual evidence, historical context, and attention to the psychosocial conditions of the audience (Yanti, 2024). This

approach requires preachers to adopt an open epistemic posture: acknowledging reasonable ignorance, referring to relevant authorities, and providing space for structured debate. In a pluralistic context, the ethics of preaching must strengthen cross-faith empathy by using inclusive language, avoiding generalisations, and prioritising social cohesion. Responsible da'wah practices also include accountability: public reporting on the sources, methods, and objectives of delivering da'wah material (Ariansyah Pulungan & Mg, 2024). In other words, moderate da'wah is a pedagogical practice that upholds both scientific and moral standards.

Ethics of moderation in public policy requires a paradigm shift: from reactive policies that suppress conflict to proactive policies that build a structurally healthy and cohesive information ecosystem (Aulia Safitri et al., 2024). At the legal level, this means designing norms that protect religious freedom while preventing incitement and disinformation that undermine public order a balance that requires clear legal criteria and high standards of proof. Education policy is a key instrument: the national curriculum needs to include epistemic literacy and dialogue ethics competencies as part of religious citizenship education. In the administrative sphere, the state can facilitate the establishment of independent institutions for verification and interpretive mediation involving religious representatives, academics, and civil society. In addition, public budgets for moderation programmes must be directed towards evidence-based initiatives with measurable impacts, not just symbolic programmes (Jailani, 2025). Overall, moderation policies require institutional designs that are resilient to the politicisation of religion and adaptive to digital dynamics.

Operationalising the ethics of moderation requires comprehensive implementation strategies: human capacity building, institutional reform, and indicator-based monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Training programmes for imams, preachers, and educators should include interpretive methodologies, digital literacy, and ethical persuasive communication techniques; certification and accreditation can be instruments of legitimacy for practitioners. At the institutional level, there needs to be standard operating procedures for the issuance of fatwas, the publication of sermons, and corrective interventions that can be independently audited. Monitoring should utilise quantitative and qualitative indicators, such as the level of dissemination of misconceptions, the speed of corrective responses, and public perceptions of institutional credibility as a basis for evaluation. Implementation challenges include resistance from actors who benefit from the status quo, resource constraints, and the diversity of local contexts that require policy adaptation. Therefore, the ethics of moderation must be developed participatively and gradually, with a combination of action research and policy regulation that is responsive to empirical feedback.

CONCLUSIONS

This study shows that Q.S. Al-Baqarah [2]:143, through the concept of ummatan wasathan, not only functions as a moral ideal for Muslims, but also as an epistemological framework that guides the faithful to uphold truth in a balanced manner amid the disorientation of the post-truth era. In a context where the validity of information is often replaced by emotional resonance and identity bias, the principle of wasathiyah offers a normative foundation for restoring the epistemic orientation of the ummah to a balance between rationality, spirituality, and social responsibility. Thus, this Qur'anic text presents a counter-narrative to post-truth epistemology by emphasising the importance of integrating yaqīn (rational-religious certainty) and 'adl (cognitive and social justice) in every process of knowledge production and dissemination. A thematic interpretive approach combined with critical discourse analysis has shown that the meaning of wasath does not stop at a descriptive middle position, but functions as a value system that balances textual dogmatism and nihilistic relativism. Linguistic and historical analysis of the verse shows that the mandate of witnessing (shuhud) in the verse contains epistemic ethics in the form of intellectual courage, caution in verification, and commitment to knowledge justice. Discursively, ummatan wasathan acts as a social mechanism to regulate the authority of truth so that it does not fall into the hegemony of groups or algorithmic logic that reinforces affective polarisation in the digital public sphere.

These findings confirm that the ethics of religious moderation derived from the Qur'an have an epistemological dimension capable of responding to contemporary problems of truth. Moderation in the Qur'anic perspective is not only a moral attitude but also an intellectual discipline that rejects both absolute claims and extreme scepticism. Thus, religious moderation can be understood as a collective process of building an 'epistemic society' that prioritises verification, rational dialogue, and moral responsibility in the use of religious information. These values serve as the foundation for critical religious literacy needed to deal with the crisis of information and digital radicalisation. Theoretically, this study contributes to expanding the horizon of tafsir studies by positioning ummatan wasathan as a Qur'anic public epistemological paradigm that can be applied in the modern social context. Practically, these findings provide direction for the development of religious literacy curricula, counsellor training, and moderation policies based on Qur'anic cognitive ethics. By making Q.S. Al-Baqarah [2]:143 a meeting point between classical hermeneutics and contemporary social needs, this study affirms that the Qur'an remains relevant as a normative source and epistemic critique of disinformation and polarisation in the post-truth era. Further research could be directed towards empirical studies on the implementation of the principle of wasathiyah in digital da'wah practices and Islamic public communication policies to strengthen the ecosystem of truth in the social sphere of the ummah..

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