

Contesting Religious Moderation in Digital Media: A Fiqh Mu'āmalah and Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah Perspective

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the contestation of religious moderation in digital media from the perspectives of Fiqh Mu'āmalah and Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah as normative frameworks for developing the ethics of digital interaction. This study employs a normative legal research method using conceptual, statutory, and comparative approaches. The data sources consist of the Qur'an, ḥadīth, classical and contemporary fiqh literature, fatwas, regulations related to digital media, and relevant scholarly publications. The analysis is conducted using a descriptive-analytical approach by integrating the principles of Fiqh Mu'āmalah, including al-aṣl fī al-mu'āmalāt al-ibāḥah, al-ḍarar yuzāl, jalb al-maṣāliḥ wa dar' al-mafāsid, and al-'ādah muḥakkamah, with the fundamental objectives of Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah. The findings reveal that religious moderation in the digital sphere is not merely a theological concept but also a form of mu'āmalah practice that requires honesty, justice, responsibility, and respect for human dignity in public communication. The perspective of Fiqh Mu'āmalah provides an ethical foundation for evaluating the legitimacy of religious narratives based on the degree of public benefit (maṣlaḥah) they promote and the potential harm they may generate. Meanwhile, Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah reinforces the argument that the protection of religion (ḥifẓ al-dīn), life (ḥifẓ al-nafs), intellect (ḥifẓ al-'aql), and social order constitutes fundamental objectives that must be realized within the digital ecosystem.

Keywords: Religious Moderation, Digital Media, Muamalah Fiqh, Maqāṣid Al-Sharī'ah.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis kontestasi moderasi beragama di media digital melalui perspektif fikih muamalah dan *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* sebagai kerangka normatif dalam membangun etika interaksi digital. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode penelitian hukum normatif dengan pendekatan konseptual (*conceptual approach*), pendekatan perundang-undangan (*statutory approach*), dan pendekatan komparatif (*comparative approach*). Sumber data terdiri atas Al-Qur'an, hadis, literatur fikih klasik dan kontemporer, fatwa, regulasi terkait media digital, serta berbagai publikasi ilmiah yang relevan. Analisis dilakukan secara deskriptif-analitis dengan mengintegrasikan prinsip-prinsip fikih muamalah, seperti *al-aṣl fī al-mu'āmalāt al-ibāḥah*, *al-ḍarar yuzāl*, *jalb al-maṣāliḥ wa dar' al-mafāsid*, dan *al-'ādah muḥakkamah*, dengan tujuan-tujuan utama *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa moderasi beragama dalam ruang digital tidak hanya merupakan konsep teologis, tetapi juga merupakan praktik muamalah yang menuntut kejujuran, keadilan, tanggung jawab, dan penghormatan terhadap martabat manusia dalam komunikasi publik. Perspektif fikih muamalah memberikan dasar etik untuk mengevaluasi legitimasi narasi keagamaan berdasarkan tingkat kemaslahatan dan potensi kemudharatan yang ditimbulkannya. Sementara itu, *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* memperkuat argumentasi bahwa perlindungan agama (*ḥifẓ al-dīn*), jiwa (*ḥifẓ al-nafs*), akal (*ḥifẓ al-'aql*), dan ketertiban sosial merupakan tujuan fundamental yang harus diwujudkan dalam ekosistem digital.

Kata Kunci: Moderasi Beragama, Media Digital, Fikih Muamalah, *Maqāṣid Al-Sharī'ah*.

A. Introduction

The rapid advancement of digital communication technologies has fundamentally transformed the production, dissemination, and consumption of religious discourse worldwide. Digital platforms, including social media, online news portals, video-sharing services, and messaging applications, have evolved into influential public spaces where religious knowledge is created, interpreted, and contested by diverse actors.¹ Unlike conventional religious institutions that traditionally functioned as the primary gatekeepers of religious authority, digital media enables individuals, communities, and organizations to disseminate religious narratives without institutional mediation. This transformation has democratized access to religious knowledge while simultaneously intensifying ideological competition among various interpretations of Islam. Consequently, cyberspace has become an arena where narratives promoting religious moderation coexist and compete with discourses characterized by exclusivism, intolerance, misinformation, and religious extremism.²

In many Muslim-majority societies, particularly Indonesia, religious moderation has become a strategic framework for maintaining social cohesion within culturally and religiously diverse communities. Religious moderation emphasizes balance (*tawāzun*), justice (*‘adl*), tolerance (*tasāmuḥ*), and respect for diversity while preserving Islamic theological principles. However, the digital environment presents unprecedented challenges to the implementation of these values. Social media algorithms frequently amplify emotionally charged and polarizing content, allowing provocative religious narratives to spread more rapidly than balanced and evidence-based discourse. The increasing prevalence of hate speech, digital misinformation, religious disinformation, and online identity politics demonstrates that digital media has become a contested space where competing religious authorities seek to influence public understanding of Islam. These developments raise important questions regarding the ethical foundations that should govern religious communication in digital environments.³

Existing studies have extensively examined religious moderation from the perspectives of sociology of religion, communication studies, political science, Islamic education, and digital media studies.⁴ Previous research has primarily focused on digital literacy, counter-radicalization strategies, online religious authority, the role of Islamic educational institutions,

¹ Chair, B. M., Wawaysadhya, & Oktafiani, T. U. (2024). *Cyber-Religion and the Issue of Religious Authority: How Indonesian Youth Learn Religion through Social Media?* *Al-Adalah*, 27(1), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.35719/aladalah.v27i1.440>

² Hannan, A., & Mursyidi, A. F. (2023). *Social Media and the Fragmentation of Religious Authority among Muslims in Contemporary Indonesia*. *Digital Muslim Review*, 1(2). <https://doi.org/10.32678/dmr.v1i2.10>

³ Kheryadi, & Chorbwhan, R. (2025). *Muslim Digital Identities in Indonesia and Thailand: Social Media, Authority, and Cultural Belonging*. *Digital Muslim Review*, 3(1). <https://doi.org/10.32678/dmr.v3i1.41>

⁴ Hylmun Izhar, “Applying Islamic Legal Maxims in Islamic Finance,” *ISRA International Journal of Islamic Finance* 2, no. 1 (2010): 95–108, <https://doi.org/10.1108/17590811011033407>.

and the dissemination of moderate Islamic narratives through social media. While these studies significantly contribute to understanding the dynamics of religious moderation in the digital age, they largely approach the issue from empirical, sociological, or communication-oriented perspectives. Relatively limited attention has been devoted to examining digital religious interactions through the normative framework of Islamic commercial jurisprudence (*Fiqh Mu'āmalah*), despite the fact that digital communication fundamentally constitutes a form of human interaction governed by ethical rights, obligations, accountability, and public responsibility.⁵

Within Islamic jurisprudence, *Fiqh Mu'āmalah* provides a comprehensive ethical framework for regulating interactions among individuals in both physical and digital environments.⁶ Its legal principles extend beyond commercial transactions to encompass broader social relations based on justice, honesty, trustworthiness, transparency, and mutual responsibility. Fundamental legal maxims such as *al-aṣl fī al-mu'āmalāt al-ibāḥah* (the original ruling of social transactions is permissibility), *al-ḍarar yuzāl* (harm must be eliminated), *jalb al-maṣāliḥ wa dar' al-mafāsīd* (promoting public benefit while preventing harm), and *al-'ādah muḥakkamah* (recognized custom has legal consideration) provide normative criteria for evaluating digital religious communication. These principles suggest that the legitimacy of religious narratives should not merely be assessed according to theological claims but also according to their social consequences and their contribution to public welfare.⁷

The analytical framework becomes more comprehensive when integrated with *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*, which emphasizes the higher objectives of Islamic law in preserving religion (*ḥifẓ al-dīn*), life (*ḥifẓ al-naḥs*), intellect (*ḥifẓ al-'aql*), wealth (*ḥifẓ al-māl*), and human dignity (*ḥifẓ al-'irḍ*).⁸ Rather than functioning solely as a legal doctrine, *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* provides a normative paradigm for evaluating whether digital religious discourse contributes to social harmony, justice, and collective welfare (*maṣlaḥah*) or instead generates division, hostility, misinformation, and social conflict (*mafsadah*). From this perspective, religious moderation is

⁵ Solahudin, D., & Fakhruroji, M. (2020). *Internet and Islamic Learning Practices in Indonesia: Social Media, Religious Populism, and Religious Authority*. Religions, 11(1), 19. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel11010019>

⁶ Syed Musa Alhabshi and Muneza Aishath, "The Role of Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah in Contemporary Islamic Legal Reasoning," *Journal of Islamic Accounting and Business Research* 13, no. 4 (2022): 603–620, <https://doi.org/10.1108/JIABR-09-2020-0302>.

⁷ Mohammad Hashim Kamali, "Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah: The Objectives of Islamic Law and Their Contemporary Relevance," *Islam and Civilisational Renewal* 3, no. 2 (2012): 245–271, <https://doi.org/10.52282/icr.v3i2.585>.

⁸ Mohamed Azam Mohamed Adil and Mohammad Naqib Ishan Jan, "The Application of Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah in Islamic Jurisprudence," *Journal of Islam in Asia* 17, no. 3 (2020): 1–23, <https://doi.org/10.31436/jia.v17i3.984>.

understood not only as a theological or political agenda but also as an ethical manifestation of Islamic social interaction that seeks to realize the objectives of Sharī'ah within the contemporary digital ecosystem.⁹

Despite the growing body of literature on religious moderation and digital Islam, few studies have integrated *Fiqh Mu'āmalah* and *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* into a unified analytical framework for examining the contestation of religious narratives in cyberspace.¹⁰ Most existing studies emphasize communication strategies or socio-political dimensions while overlooking the normative legal principles that should guide ethical digital interaction from an Islamic perspective. This gap indicates the need for a jurisprudential approach capable of explaining not only how religious narratives compete in digital media but also how such contestation should be evaluated according to Islamic legal ethics and the objectives of Sharī'ah.¹¹

Accordingly, this study aims to analyze the contestation of religious moderation in digital media through the integrated perspectives of *Fiqh Mu'āmalah* and *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*. It seeks to answer the following questions: (1) How can the principles of *Fiqh Mu'āmalah* explain the ethical dimensions of religious moderation in digital communication? (2) How does *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* provide normative criteria for evaluating competing religious narratives in cyberspace? and (3) How can the integration of these two Islamic legal frameworks contribute to the development of a more just, inclusive, and ethically responsible model of digital religious governance? The novelty of this study lies in its interdisciplinary integration of Islamic jurisprudence, digital communication ethics, and *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*, thereby offering a comprehensive normative paradigm for strengthening religious moderation and promoting public welfare within the contemporary digital sphere.

B. Research Method

This study employs normative legal research with a qualitative approach to examine the contestation of religious moderation in digital media through the perspectives of *Fiqh Mu'āmalah* and *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*. This approach is adopted to analyze legal norms, Islamic jurisprudential principles, and ethical doctrines governing religious communication in

⁹ Aishath Muneeza and Rusni Hassan, "Sharī'ah Governance, Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah and Islamic Financial Institutions," *ISRA International Journal of Islamic Finance* 13, no. 1 (2021): 65–81, <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJIF-07-2019-0095>.

¹⁰ M. Kabir Hassan and Mehmet Asutay, "An Introduction to the Ethical Foundations of Islamic Economics and Finance," *Thunderbird International Business Review* 63, no. 2 (2021): 131–143, <https://doi.org/10.1002/tie.22189>.

¹¹ Nadirsyah Hosen, "Online Fatwa in Indonesia: From Fatwa Shopping to Googling a Kiai," *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 12, no. 1 (2018): 1–24, <https://doi.org/10.15642/JIIS.2018.12.1.1-24>.

cyberspace, particularly in assessing the legitimacy, ethical dimensions, and social implications of religious narratives disseminated through digital platforms.¹²

The analysis integrates three complementary approaches: conceptual, doctrinal, and comparative. The conceptual approach examines the theoretical foundations of religious moderation, digital religious communication, Fiqh Mu‘āmalah, and Maqāṣid al-Sharī‘ah, including relevant *qawā‘id fiqhiyyah*, such as *al-aṣl fī al-mu‘āmalāt al-ibāḥah* (the presumption of permissibility in social transactions), *al-ḍarar yuzāl* (harm must be eliminated), *jalb al-maṣāliḥ wa dar’ al-mafāsid* (promoting benefits and preventing harms), and *al-‘ādah muḥakkamah* (custom may constitute a legal consideration).¹³ The doctrinal approach examines Islamic legal sources and scholarly positions derived from the Qur’an, Sunnah, classical and contemporary fiqh literature, fatwas, and relevant academic scholarship concerning ethics, justice, public welfare, and social responsibility in digital communication. Meanwhile, the comparative approach juxtaposes classical Islamic jurisprudential perspectives with contemporary scholarly interpretations of digital media, religious authority, and online public discourse to identify continuities, adaptations, and normative transformations in the application of Islamic legal principles to the digital context.¹⁴

Data were collected through library research, drawing on primary legal sources comprising the Qur’an, authentic Hadith, classical and contemporary fiqh literature, fatwas issued by recognized Islamic institutions, and official documents on religious moderation and digital governance. Secondary sources include peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, policy reports, and recent publications indexed in Scopus and Web of Science to ensure contemporary scholarly relevance.¹⁵ Data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis by classifying and interpreting legal and academic materials based on the principles of Fiqh Mu‘āmalah and Maqāṣid al-Sharī‘ah. The analysis evaluates whether digital religious narratives promote justice (*‘adl*), public benefit (*maṣlaḥah*), moderation (*wasatīyyah*), social harmony (*ta‘āyush*), and the protection of religion, intellect, society, and human dignity, while identifying forms of online religious discourse that generate polarization, misinformation, or other harms inconsistent with the objectives of Sharī‘ah.¹⁶

¹² Mohammad Hashim Kamali, “Maqāṣid al-Sharī‘ah and Ijtihad as Instruments of Civilizational Renewal,” *Islam and Civilisational Renewal* 2, no. 2 (2011): 245–271. <https://doi.org/10.52282/icr.v2i2.435>.

¹³ Hylmun Izhar, “Applying Islamic Legal Maxims in Islamic Finance,” *ISRA International Journal of Islamic Finance* 2, no. 1 (2010): 95–108. <https://doi.org/10.1108/17590811011033407>.

¹⁴ Nadirsyah Hosen, “Online Fatwa in Indonesia: From Fatwa Shopping to Googling a Kiai,” *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 12, no. 1 (2018): 1–24. <https://doi.org/10.15642/JIIS.2018.12.1.1-24>.

¹⁵ A. Rubaidi, “Digital Religion and Religious Authority in Indonesia: Contestation in Cyberspace,” *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 15, no. 2 (2021): 419–444. <https://doi.org/10.15642/JIIS.2021.15.2.419-444>.

¹⁶ Aishath Muneeza and Rusni Hassan, “Sharī‘ah Governance, Maqāṣid al-Sharī‘ah and Islamic Financial Institutions,” *ISRA International Journal of Islamic Finance* 13, no. 1 (2021): 65–81.

C. Result And Discussion

1. The Transformation of Religious Authority in Digital Media

The study finds that the rapid expansion of digital media has fundamentally transformed the production, dissemination, and contestation of religious knowledge. Unlike conventional religious institutions, where religious authority is established through formal education, scholarly recognition, and institutional legitimacy, digital platforms democratize access to religious discourse by enabling virtually anyone to produce, interpret, and distribute religious content. Consequently, authority in cyberspace increasingly depends on visibility, algorithmic amplification, audience engagement, and digital influence rather than traditional scholarly credentials.¹⁷

This transformation generates both opportunities and challenges for religious moderation. On one hand, digital platforms provide unprecedented opportunities for moderate Muslim scholars, Islamic higher education institutions (PTKI), religious organizations, and civil society to disseminate inclusive Islamic teachings to wider audiences. Interactive digital communication facilitates public education, interfaith dialogue, and rapid dissemination of credible religious information. On the other hand, the same technological infrastructure also enables the rapid circulation of exclusivist interpretations, religious misinformation, hate speech, and ideological polarization that may undermine social cohesion. The contestation of religious narratives therefore becomes not merely a theological debate but also a struggle over digital authority, public legitimacy, and social influence.¹⁸

From the perspective of Fiqh Mu‘āmalah, digital media constitute a contemporary form of social interaction (*mu‘āmalah*) rather than merely a technological instrument. Consequently, all forms of online religious communication are subject to Islamic ethical principles governing human interaction. The legal maxim *al-aṣl fī al-mu‘āmalāt al-ibāḥah* establishes that digital communication is fundamentally permissible unless it produces prohibited consequences such as deception, incitement, discrimination, manipulation, or social harm. Therefore, the permissibility of digital religious expression depends not solely upon freedom of expression but also upon its ethical content and social implications.

¹⁷ Heidi A. Campbell, “Understanding the Relationship between Religion Online and Offline in a Networked Society,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 80, no. 1 (2012): 64–93. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jaarel/lfr074>.

5. Heidi A. Campbell and Pauline Hope Cheong, “Digital Religion, Social Media, and Culture: Perspectives, Practices and Futures,” *Social Compass* 61, no. 3 (2014): 245–255. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0037768614536748>.

¹⁸ Nadirsyah Hosen, “Online Fatwa in Indonesia: From Fatwa Shopping to Googling a Kiai,” *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 12, no. 1 (2018): 1–24. <https://doi.org/10.15642/JIIS.2018.12.1.1-24>.

2. The Transformation of Religious Authority in Digital Media

The study finds that the rapid expansion of digital media has fundamentally transformed the production, dissemination, and contestation of religious knowledge. Unlike conventional religious institutions, where religious authority is established through formal education, scholarly recognition, institutional legitimacy, and a structured chain of knowledge transmission (*sanad*), digital platforms democratize access to religious discourse by enabling virtually anyone to produce, interpret, and disseminate religious content. Social networking platforms, video-sharing applications, podcasts, online forums, and messaging services have significantly reduced traditional barriers to religious communication, creating an open digital ecosystem in which religious authority is increasingly negotiated rather than institutionally determined.¹⁹

This transformation has shifted the basis of religious authority from scholarly legitimacy toward digital visibility. In the contemporary digital environment, authority is frequently constructed through algorithmic recommendation systems, audience engagement, follower accumulation, viral dissemination, and platform popularity. Individuals possessing strong digital communication skills may acquire substantial religious influence despite having limited formal qualifications in Islamic scholarship. Conversely, established religious scholars and institutions often experience declining visibility because algorithmic systems prioritize engagement-driven content over scholarly credibility. Consequently, religious authority becomes increasingly fragmented, decentralized, and competitive within digital public spaces.²⁰

The democratization of religious communication also alters the epistemological structure of Islamic knowledge production. Whereas conventional religious learning emphasizes gradual study under qualified scholars, verification of textual sources, and methodological consistency, digital religious communication frequently favors short, emotionally appealing, and easily shareable content. This environment encourages selective interpretation of religious texts detached from their historical, legal, and socio-cultural contexts, thereby increasing the potential for oversimplification and ideological polarization. Religious narratives are no longer evaluated solely according to scholarly rigor but also according to their capacity to attract public attention and stimulate algorithmic engagement.

¹⁹ Gary R. Bunt, "Hashtag Islam: How Cyber-Islamic Environments Are Transforming Religious Authority," *Religions* 9, no. 9 (2018): 287. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel9090287>.

²⁰ Heidi A. Campbell and Pauline Hope Cheong, "Digital Religion, Social Media, and Culture: Perspectives, Practices and Futures," *Social Compass* 61, no. 3 (2014): 245–255. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0037768614536748>.

From a broader socio-religious perspective, the digital public sphere simultaneously creates opportunities and risks for religious moderation. Digital platforms facilitate wider dissemination of moderate Islamic teachings by enabling Islamic higher education institutions (PTKI), religious organizations, scholars, and civil society actors to communicate directly with diverse audiences. Through webinars, podcasts, digital fatwas, online learning platforms, and social media campaigns, moderate Islamic narratives emphasizing tolerance (*tasāmuḥ*), justice (*‘adl*), balance (*tawāzun*), consultation (*shūrā*), and peaceful coexistence (*ta‘āyush*) can reach communities that were previously inaccessible through conventional educational institutions.²¹

However, the same technological infrastructure also facilitates the rapid dissemination of exclusivist religious interpretations, conspiracy narratives, sectarian propaganda, misinformation, hate speech, and ideological extremism. Digital algorithms tend to reward emotionally provocative content because such material generates higher levels of user interaction. As a consequence, polarizing religious narratives frequently receive greater algorithmic exposure than balanced scholarly discussions. The contestation of religious moderation therefore extends beyond theological disagreement into competition over digital visibility, public legitimacy, and algorithmic influence.²²

This phenomenon indicates that the challenge facing contemporary Islamic scholarship is no longer limited to producing credible religious knowledge but also involves developing effective strategies for communicating that knowledge within digitally mediated environments. Religious moderation increasingly depends upon the ability of credible institutions to compete within attention-driven communication systems while maintaining scholarly integrity and ethical responsibility.

From the perspective of Fiqh Mu‘āmalah, digital media constitute a contemporary form of social interaction (*mu‘āmalah*) rather than merely a technological instrument. Islamic jurisprudence regulates every form of interaction that affects the rights, welfare, and dignity of individuals regardless of whether such interaction occurs in physical or virtual spaces. Consequently, online religious communication must satisfy the ethical principles governing human relationships, including honesty (*ṣidq*), trustworthiness (*amānah*), justice (*‘adl*), transparency (*bayān*), responsibility (*mas’ūliyyah*), and public benefit (*maṣlaḥah*).

²¹ Aishath Muneeza and Rusni Hassan, “Sharī‘ah Governance, Maqāṣid al-Sharī‘ah and Islamic Financial Institutions,” *ISRA International Journal of Islamic Finance* 13, no. 1 (2021): 65–81. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJIF-07-2019-0095>.

²² Hylmun Izhar, “Applying Islamic Legal Maxims in Islamic Finance,” *ISRA International Journal of Islamic Finance* 2, no. 1 (2010): 95–108. <https://doi.org/10.1108/17590811011033407>

The legal maxim *al-aṣl fī al-mu‘āmalāt al-ibāḥah* establishes that digital communication is fundamentally permissible because technological innovation itself is religiously neutral. Nevertheless, permissibility is conditional upon compliance with Islamic ethical principles. Religious communication becomes legally problematic when it promotes deception, disinformation, manipulation, discrimination, incitement, digital harassment, or social conflict. Therefore, Islamic legal evaluation focuses not merely upon technological usage but upon the intentions, methods, content, and social consequences generated by digital communication.

Accordingly, the legitimacy of religious narratives cannot be determined exclusively by theological claims or doctrinal correctness. Rather, *Fiqh Mu‘āmalah* requires evaluating whether religious communication contributes to justice, public welfare, peaceful coexistence, and social harmony or instead generates hatred, polarization, misinformation, and societal fragmentation. This consequence-oriented perspective demonstrates the close relationship between *Fiqh Mu‘āmalah* and the objectives of *Maqāsid al-Sharī‘ah* in governing ethical communication within contemporary digital society.

Table 1. Transformation of Religious Authority in the Digital Era from the Perspective of *Fiqh Mu‘āmalah*

Aspect	Conventional Religious Authority	Digital Religious Authority	<i>Fiqh Mu‘āmalah</i> Evaluation
Source of authority	Formal Islamic education, scholarly certification, institutional legitimacy	Visibility, followers, algorithmic amplification, public engagement	Authority should remain grounded in knowledge, honesty, and accountability.
Knowledge transmission	Structured learning, <i>sanad</i> , face-to-face education	Open access, social media, podcasts, videos, live streaming	Digital dissemination is permissible provided information is accurate and beneficial.
Verification process	Peer review by scholars and religious institutions	Public evaluation through engagement metrics and platform popularity	Information must be verified to prevent <i>gharar</i> , deception, and misinformation.
Communication pattern	Hierarchical and institutional	Interactive, participatory, decentralized	Public participation is encouraged when conducted ethically and responsibly.
Opportunities	Stable scholarly authority	Wider outreach, rapid dissemination, digital <i>da'wah</i> , interfaith dialogue	Supports <i>maṣlahah</i> through broader religious education and inclusive communication.
Challenges	Limited public accessibility	Polarization, misinformation, hate speech, ideological extremism, algorithmic bias	Harmful content contradicts the principles of <i>al-ḍarar yuzāl</i> and public welfare.
Islamic legal implication	Authority based on scholarly competence	Authority must combine digital competence with ethical and scholarly legitimacy	Digital religious communication should realize justice, transparency, and social harmony in accordance with <i>Maqāsid al-Sharī‘ah</i> .

3. Contestation of Religious Moderation Through the Perspective of Fiqh Mu‘āmalah

The findings indicate that contemporary contestation of religious moderation extends beyond ideological disagreement into ethical questions concerning responsibility in producing and disseminating religious information.²³ Fiqh Mu‘āmalah emphasizes that every communicative act constitutes a social transaction carrying legal and moral consequences. Similar to commercial transactions requiring honesty, transparency, consent, and fairness, religious communication must also uphold truthfulness (*ṣidq*), trustworthiness (*amānah*), justice (*‘adl*), and accountability (*mas’ūliyyah*).

Within this framework, digital religious narratives promoting tolerance, dialogue, peaceful coexistence, and mutual respect conform to the objectives of Islamic social interaction. Conversely, narratives that intentionally disseminate false information, provoke sectarian hostility, stigmatize particular communities, or encourage violence violate fundamental principles of Islamic jurisprudence because they generate social harm. Such practices contradict the legal maxim *al-ḍarar yuzāl*, which requires every form of harm to be prevented or eliminated.²⁴

Furthermore, the principle of *jalb al-maṣāliḥ wa dar’ al-mafāsid* requires that digital religious communication be evaluated according to its broader societal consequences. The legitimacy of religious discourse therefore cannot be determined solely by textual arguments or theological claims but must also consider whether such discourse contributes to social harmony, public benefit, and peaceful coexistence. This finding broadens the application of Fiqh Mu‘āmalah beyond commercial activities by demonstrating its relevance as a normative framework for evaluating ethics in digital public communication.

4. Maqāṣid al-Sharī‘ah as a Framework for Evaluating Digital Religious Narratives

The analysis further demonstrates that Maqāṣid al-Sharī‘ah provides a comprehensive evaluative framework for assessing religious moderation in cyberspace. Rather than focusing exclusively on legal permissibility, the maqāṣid approach emphasizes whether religious communication advances the higher objectives of Islamic law and contributes to human welfare. *First*, the protection of religion (*ḥifẓ al-dīn*) requires religious discourse to strengthen authentic religious understanding while preventing extremism, intolerance, and ideological manipulation. Moderate religious

²³ Mohammad Hashim Kamali, “Maqāṣid al-Sharī‘ah and Ijtihad as Instruments of Civilizational Renewal,” *Islam and Civilisational Renewal* 2, no. 2 (2011): 245–271. <https://doi.org/10.52282/icr.v2i2.435>.

²⁴ Mohamed Azam Mohamed Adil and Mohammad Naqib Ishan Jan, “The Application of Maqāṣid al-Sharī‘ah in Islamic Jurisprudence,” *Journal of Islam in Asia* 17, no. 3 (2020): 1–23. <https://doi.org/10.31436/jia.v17i3.984>.

narratives therefore preserve the integrity of religion by promoting balanced interpretations rooted in mercy (*rahmah*), justice, and wisdom.

Second, the protection of intellect (*hifz al- 'aql*) requires combating misinformation, conspiracy theories, religious disinformation, and digital manipulation that distort public reasoning. The widespread circulation of misleading religious content threatens rational public deliberation and weakens informed religious understanding. *Third*, the protection of life (*hifz al-nafs*) extends beyond physical security to include preventing online incitement, digital harassment, and narratives capable of encouraging violence or social conflict. Religious communication that fuels hatred or legitimizes aggression directly contradicts the objectives of Islamic law. *Fourth*, the protection of human dignity (*hifz al- 'ird*) requires digital communication to respect individual honor, privacy, and reputation. Cyberbullying, character assassination, and defamatory religious accusations violate fundamental Islamic ethical values because they undermine social trust and communal harmony.²⁵ Finally, the protection of public welfare (*maṣlahah 'āmmah*) requires digital platforms to become spaces that cultivate constructive dialogue, civic responsibility, and social solidarity. Religious moderation therefore represents not merely a political slogan but an implementation of the higher objectives of Sharī'ah within contemporary digital society.

5. Ethical Challenges of Algorithmic Digital Communication

The findings reveal that one of the most significant contemporary challenges arises from algorithm-driven communication systems. Digital platforms prioritize user engagement, emotional responses, and content virality, often amplifying sensational, divisive, or controversial religious narratives. As a result, moderate voices frequently receive less algorithmic visibility than polarizing content despite their greater contribution to social harmony. From the perspective of Fiqh Mu'āmalah, technological neutrality cannot justify harmful outcomes. Although algorithms function as technological mechanisms, their social consequences remain subject to ethical evaluation because Islamic jurisprudence evaluates actions according to both intentions and consequences. When algorithmic systems systematically facilitate misinformation, discrimination, or polarization, multiple stakeholders—including platform providers, content creators, religious institutions, and users—share moral responsibility for minimizing harm.

²⁵ Nadirsyah Hosen, "Online Fatwa in Indonesia: From Fatwa Shopping to Googling a Kiai," *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 12, no. 1 (2018): 1–24. <https://doi.org/10.15642/JIIS.2018.12.1.1-24>.

This finding illustrates the continuing relevance of Islamic legal maxims in addressing emerging technological realities. The principle *al-darar yuzāl* requires preventive measures against digital harms, while *al-‘ādah muḥakkamah* recognizes that evolving digital practices may be accommodated within Islamic law provided they remain consistent with justice, transparency, accountability, and public welfare.

The study argues that strengthening religious moderation requires an integrated model of digital Sharī‘ah governance involving religious institutions, Islamic universities (PTKI), government agencies, digital platform providers, and civil society organizations. Rather than relying solely on legal regulation or content moderation, digital governance should promote ethical literacy grounded in Islamic jurisprudence. Islamic higher education institutions occupy a strategic position because they possess scholarly authority, academic credibility, and educational resources necessary to produce evidence-based religious content capable of counterbalancing misinformation. Through interdisciplinary collaboration among Islamic jurisprudence, communication studies, information technology, and digital media, PTKI can strengthen the presence of moderate Islamic scholarship within the digital public sphere.

Furthermore, digital literacy should incorporate not only technical competencies but also ethical awareness derived from Fiqh Mu‘āmalah and Maqāṣid al-Sharī‘ah. Such an approach encourages digital citizens to evaluate religious information critically, verify sources responsibly, respect differences of opinion, and prioritize public benefit over ideological confrontation. Consequently, religious moderation evolves from being merely a normative discourse into an operational ethical framework that guides responsible participation in contemporary digital society. Overall, the findings demonstrate that the integration of Fiqh Mu‘āmalah and Maqāṣid al-Sharī‘ah offers a comprehensive normative paradigm for evaluating religious communication in digital media. This integrated framework shifts the focus of Islamic legal analysis from purely doctrinal correctness toward the broader objectives of justice, social harmony, public welfare, and sustainable peace, thereby reaffirming the continuing relevance of Islamic jurisprudence in responding to the ethical challenges of the digital age.

D. Conclusion

This study concludes that the rapid development of digital media has fundamentally transformed religious communication by decentralizing traditional religious authority and intensifying the contestation of religious narratives within digitally mediated public spaces. While digital platforms offer significant opportunities for promoting religious moderation, they also facilitate the spread of misinformation, ideological polarization, hate speech, and extremist

interpretations that threaten social cohesion. The findings demonstrate that Fiqh Muʼāmalah provides a comprehensive ethical framework for evaluating digital religious communication through principles of honesty (*ṣidq*), trustworthiness (*amānah*), justice (*ʿadl*), transparency (*bayān*), responsibility (*masʿūliyyah*), and public benefit (*maṣlahah*), while Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah complements this framework by emphasizing the protection of religion, intellect, human dignity, life, and public welfare as the primary objectives of Islamic law. Accordingly, the legitimacy of religious narratives should be assessed not only by their theological correctness but also by their social consequences in fostering peace, justice, tolerance, and harmonious coexistence. The study further highlights the strategic role of Islamic Higher Education Institutions (PTKI), religious organizations, scholars, and digital platform providers in strengthening moderate Islamic discourse through ethical digital communication and digital literacy initiatives. By integrating Fiqh Muʼāmalah and Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah, this study offers a normative framework that demonstrates the continuing relevance of Islamic jurisprudence in addressing the ethical challenges of digital communication. Nevertheless, because this research is based on a normative legal approach, future studies should incorporate empirical analyses of digital religious practices, social media interactions, and online religious communities to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the implementation of Islamic ethical principles in contemporary digital society.

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