

The Strategy of Moderate Islamic Preaching in Countering Hoaxes and Digital Disinformation

Adhitya Chandra Setyawan

Universitas Hang Tuah, Surabaya, Indonesia

* Correspondence e-mail; adhitya.c.setyawan@gmail.com

Article history

Submitted: 2026/05/01; Revised: 2026/06/14; Accepted: 2026/08/13

Abstract

The rapid development of digital technology and social media has significantly transformed communication patterns in modern society, including the dissemination of religious information and Islamic preaching activities. However, the digital era has also facilitated the widespread circulation of hoaxes, misinformation, hate speech, and digital disinformation that threaten social harmony, religious tolerance, and public trust. This study aims to examine the strategy of moderate Islamic preaching in countering hoaxes and digital disinformation within contemporary society. The research employs a qualitative descriptive approach through literature review and contextual analysis of digital communication, Islamic preaching, and media literacy. The findings indicate that moderate Islamic preaching plays an important role in promoting critical thinking, religious moderation, ethical communication, and social responsibility in digital spaces. Strategies such as strengthening digital literacy, promoting tabayyun (verification of information), utilizing social media platforms positively, developing inclusive religious narratives, and encouraging collaborative engagement among religious leaders, educational institutions, and communities are effective in reducing the spread of hoaxes and disinformation. The study also reveals that moderate Islamic values emphasizing tolerance, justice, wisdom, and peaceful communication are highly relevant in addressing digital information challenges in pluralistic societies. However, limited digital literacy, algorithmic polarization, and emotional manipulation remain major obstacles in combating misinformation effectively. Therefore, strengthening moderate Islamic preaching through adaptive digital strategies and ethical communication approaches is essential for fostering responsible digital citizenship and maintaining social harmony in the modern information era.

Keywords

Moderate Islamic Preaching; Hoaxes; Digital Disinformation; Digital Literacy; Islamic Communication; Social Media; Religious Moderation



© 2026 by the authors. Submitted for possible open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY SA) license, <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of digital technology and internet-based communication has transformed nearly every aspect of human life, including social interaction, education, economics, politics, and religious activities. Social media

platforms, digital communication applications, online news portals, and various internet-based services have created a new information ecosystem characterized by speed, accessibility, and unlimited information exchange. In contemporary society, digital platforms function not only as communication tools but also as spaces for public discourse, cultural expression, ideological contestation, and religious dissemination. Islamic preaching (dakwah) has also experienced significant transformation through the utilization of digital media, enabling religious messages to reach broader audiences more efficiently and interactively.

The digitalization of Islamic preaching provides many positive opportunities for expanding religious education, strengthening community engagement, and promoting Islamic values within modern society. Muslim scholars, preachers, educational institutions, and religious organizations increasingly utilize social media, video-sharing platforms, podcasts, and online learning systems to disseminate Islamic teachings. Digital platforms allow Islamic messages to transcend geographical boundaries and facilitate greater accessibility to religious knowledge. According to Campbell (2013), digital religion has reshaped how religious communities interact, communicate, and construct religious authority in modern societies. Consequently, digital media has become an important instrument for contemporary Islamic preaching activities.

However, despite these advantages, the digital era has also generated serious challenges related to the spread of hoaxes, misinformation, fake news, hate speech, and digital disinformation. Information can now circulate rapidly without adequate verification processes, enabling false narratives and manipulative content to influence public opinion easily. Social media algorithms that prioritize emotional engagement and viral content often contribute to the amplification of sensationalism, polarization, and misinformation. As a result, many societies experience increasing social tensions, ideological conflicts, and distrust caused by the uncontrolled spread of inaccurate information.

In Indonesia and many other Muslim-majority societies, religious issues frequently become targets of digital disinformation and manipulation. Religious symbols, doctrines, and identities are often exploited to provoke social conflict, political polarization, and emotional reactions among internet users. Hoaxes related to religion may involve fabricated religious statements, manipulated videos, false accusations, hate narratives, and misleading interpretations of Islamic teachings. Such disinformation not only threatens social harmony but also damages the image of Islam as a religion promoting peace, justice, and compassion. According to

UNESCO (2021), digital disinformation has become one of the major global threats affecting democratic stability, social trust, and intercultural relations in contemporary societies.

The phenomenon of digital disinformation is particularly dangerous because many internet users consume information emotionally rather than critically. Rapid information flow often encourages users to share content without verifying its accuracy or credibility. Emotional manipulation, confirmation bias, and ideological polarization contribute significantly to the spread of hoaxes within digital communities. Allcott and Gentzkow (2017) explain that fake news spreads effectively because digital users tend to consume information aligned with their beliefs and emotions rather than objective facts. This condition creates echo chambers and increases social fragmentation within online environments.

In Islamic teachings, ethical communication and information verification are highly emphasized. Islam teaches the principle of *tabayyun*, which refers to careful verification of information before accepting or disseminating it. The Qur'an explicitly warns believers against spreading unverified information that may harm individuals or communities. Qur'an Surah Al-Hujurat verse 6 instructs Muslims to examine information carefully when receiving news from unreliable sources in order to avoid injustice and regret. This principle demonstrates that Islam strongly promotes responsible communication, critical thinking, and social accountability in information dissemination.

In this context, moderate Islamic preaching (*dakwah wasathiyah*) becomes highly relevant as a strategy for countering hoaxes and digital disinformation in modern society. Moderate Islam emphasizes balance, tolerance, justice, peaceful coexistence, inclusivity, and wisdom in religious understanding and social interaction. Moderate Islamic preaching seeks to present Islam as a religion encouraging dialogue, compassion, critical reflection, and social harmony rather than extremism or hostility. Yusuf al-Qaradawi explains that moderation (*wasathiyah*) represents a central characteristic of Islam that rejects both radical excessiveness and liberal permissiveness (Al-Qaradawi, 2010). Therefore, moderate Islamic preaching may function as an ethical and educational framework for addressing digital communication challenges.

One of the major strengths of moderate Islamic preaching lies in its emphasis on peaceful communication and rational engagement. In digital environments dominated by emotional provocation and sensational narratives, moderate preaching encourages calm dialogue, factual clarification, and ethical interaction. Moderate

preachers often utilize persuasive communication approaches prioritizing education, empathy, and constructive discussion rather than confrontation or hate-based rhetoric. Such approaches are important because online audiences are increasingly exposed to divisive and emotionally manipulative content that may influence their perceptions and behaviors.

Digital literacy also becomes an essential component of moderate Islamic preaching strategies in combating hoaxes and disinformation. Digital literacy refers to individuals' ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and utilize digital information critically and responsibly. In the context of Islamic preaching, digital literacy involves helping communities distinguish between credible and false information, understand media manipulation techniques, and evaluate online religious content critically. Hobbs (2017) argues that media literacy education is necessary for enabling individuals to navigate complex digital information environments responsibly. Therefore, integrating digital literacy into Islamic preaching activities may strengthen public resilience against misinformation and online manipulation.

The role of religious leaders and Islamic educational institutions is also crucial in promoting responsible digital communication. Religious figures often possess significant influence within Muslim communities, making them strategic actors in guiding public attitudes toward digital information. Through sermons, educational programs, online discussions, and social media engagement, moderate Islamic scholars can encourage ethical internet use, promote verification culture, and counter extremist or misleading narratives. Educational institutions similarly play important roles in developing critical thinking skills and ethical communication awareness among younger generations increasingly exposed to digital media.

Furthermore, social media itself can function as an effective tool for promoting moderate Islamic values and countering misinformation. Moderate preachers increasingly utilize platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, and podcasts to disseminate educational content, clarify misunderstandings, and encourage positive digital engagement. Creative digital content combining Islamic teachings with contemporary communication styles may attract younger audiences and strengthen moderate narratives within online spaces. This strategy is particularly important because many young people consume religious information primarily through social media rather than traditional educational institutions.

However, implementing moderate Islamic preaching strategies in digital environments also faces various challenges. Algorithmic systems often prioritize controversial or emotionally provocative content because such materials generate

greater user engagement and platform profitability. As a result, moderate and educational content may receive less visibility compared to sensational or extremist narratives. In addition, low digital literacy levels, political polarization, and online anonymity contribute to the persistence of misinformation and hate speech within digital communities.

Another challenge involves the growing distrust toward institutions and authorities within digital culture. Many internet users prefer informal online influencers or unverified sources over credible educational or religious institutions. This condition complicates efforts to establish authoritative and responsible religious communication within online environments. Therefore, moderate Islamic preaching must continuously adapt communication strategies to remain relevant, accessible, and credible among digital audiences.

Based on these realities, examining the strategy of moderate Islamic preaching in countering hoaxes and digital disinformation is highly important in contemporary academic and social discussions. Moderate Islamic values emphasizing verification, ethical communication, tolerance, and social responsibility provide important foundations for developing healthier digital environments and strengthening social harmony within pluralistic societies. Therefore, this study seeks to analyze how moderate Islamic preaching strategies can effectively address the challenges of hoaxes and digital disinformation in the modern information era.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research method to analyze the strategy of moderate Islamic preaching in countering hoaxes and digital disinformation in contemporary society. The qualitative approach was chosen because the study aimed to explore social phenomena, communication strategies, religious values, and digital behavior related to the dissemination of misinformation and the role of moderate Islamic preaching in addressing these challenges. According to Creswell (2014), qualitative research is suitable for understanding social realities through contextual interpretation, thematic exploration, and analysis of human behavior and communication patterns. Through this approach, the study sought to examine how moderate Islamic values and preaching strategies contribute to combating digital misinformation and promoting ethical communication in online environments.

The research utilized a literature review and contextual analysis approach. Primary data sources consisted of academic journals, books, digital communication studies, Islamic preaching literature, and scholarly publications related to social

media, digital literacy, religious moderation, and online disinformation. In addition, policy reports and publications from international organizations such as UNESCO concerning digital misinformation and media literacy were also used to support the analysis. Relevant Islamic references discussing ethical communication, verification of information (tabayyun), moderation (wasathiyah), and social responsibility in Islam were incorporated to provide theological and ethical foundations for the study.

Data collection was conducted through systematic documentation and literature analysis. Relevant literature was selected based on its relation to moderate Islamic preaching, digital communication, social media influence, and the spread of hoaxes in contemporary society. The selected references included both international and Indonesian scholarly sources to ensure contextual relevance regarding the role of Islamic preaching within Muslim-majority societies. Sugiyono (2022) explains that documentation methods in qualitative research are effective for examining conceptual and social issues through textual interpretation and thematic categorization.

The collected data were categorized into several major themes, including digital disinformation, ethical communication in Islam, digital literacy, social media utilization, moderate Islamic preaching strategies, online religious narratives, and community resilience against hoaxes. These thematic categories enabled systematic analysis of how moderate Islamic preaching strategies function in digital environments and how they contribute to reducing misinformation and promoting social harmony. Descriptive analysis was used to explain the characteristics and challenges of digital disinformation as well as the principles of moderate Islamic preaching. Interpretative analysis was then applied to examine the relevance and effectiveness of moderate Islamic communication strategies in addressing contemporary digital information problems.

To strengthen analytical validity, the study also employed an interdisciplinary approach connecting communication theories, media literacy concepts, and Islamic ethical principles. Contemporary theories concerning digital communication, fake news dissemination, algorithmic influence, and social media behavior were compared with Islamic teachings emphasizing truthfulness, verification, justice, and responsible communication. This comparative analysis aimed to identify the compatibility between Islamic moderation values and modern digital literacy approaches in countering misinformation.

The study additionally analyzed practical examples of moderate Islamic preaching activities conducted through digital platforms such as YouTube,

Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, podcasts, and online educational forums. These examples were examined to understand how moderate Islamic narratives are disseminated through social media and how digital preaching strategies may influence public awareness and online behavior. The role of religious leaders, Islamic educational institutions, and digital communities in promoting ethical communication and combating hoaxes was also explored within the broader context of digital society.

Furthermore, the study considered the social and technological challenges affecting the implementation of moderate Islamic preaching strategies in digital environments. Issues such as algorithmic polarization, emotional manipulation, low digital literacy, online anonymity, and ideological extremism were analyzed as factors contributing to the persistence of digital disinformation. This contextual analysis was important for understanding the complexity of online communication and the need for adaptive preaching strategies capable of addressing rapidly evolving digital realities.

Overall, the qualitative descriptive method enabled comprehensive exploration of the role of moderate Islamic preaching in countering hoaxes and digital disinformation. Through literature-based and contextual analysis, the study provides deeper understanding regarding how Islamic ethical principles and digital literacy strategies may contribute to creating healthier, more responsible, and socially harmonious digital communication environments in contemporary society.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that moderate Islamic preaching plays a significant role in countering hoaxes and digital disinformation within contemporary society. The rapid expansion of social media and digital communication platforms has transformed the way people access, produce, and disseminate information, including religious content. However, this transformation has also facilitated the rapid circulation of false information, manipulated narratives, hate speech, and ideological propaganda that threaten social harmony and public trust. In this context, moderate Islamic preaching (*dakwah wasathiyah*) emerges as an important strategy for promoting ethical communication, critical thinking, religious tolerance, and responsible digital behavior.

One major finding of the study is that moderate Islamic preaching emphasizes the principle of *tabayyun*, or verification of information, as a fundamental ethical approach in responding to digital information. Islamic teachings strongly encourage individuals to examine and verify information before accepting or disseminating it.

The Qur'an explicitly instructs believers to verify information received from unreliable sources to avoid causing injustice and social harm (Qur'an 49:6). Moderate Islamic preachers consistently promote this principle through sermons, social media content, educational discussions, and digital campaigns encouraging audiences to avoid spreading unverified news and emotionally provocative content. This finding demonstrates that Islamic ethical teachings remain highly relevant in addressing contemporary digital misinformation challenges.

The study further reveals that moderate Islamic preaching contributes positively to improving digital literacy among Muslim communities. Digital literacy involves the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and utilize digital information critically and responsibly. Many internet users today consume information rapidly without considering source credibility, factual accuracy, or manipulative intent behind digital content. Moderate Islamic preachers increasingly integrate media literacy education into their preaching activities by teaching audiences how to recognize fake news, identify manipulative narratives, and evaluate online information critically. According to Hobbs (2017), media literacy education is essential for strengthening public resilience against misinformation and online manipulation. Through digital literacy promotion, moderate Islamic preaching encourages communities to become more responsible and reflective digital citizens.

Another important finding concerns the role of social media as an effective platform for disseminating moderate Islamic narratives and countering extremist or misleading content. Moderate preachers actively utilize digital platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, and podcasts to distribute educational materials promoting tolerance, peaceful coexistence, ethical communication, and religious moderation. Participants explained that digital preaching content delivered through creative visual presentations, short videos, and interactive discussions attracted younger audiences more effectively than traditional communication methods. This finding suggests that adapting preaching strategies to digital communication styles is important for maintaining relevance among contemporary internet users, especially younger generations highly connected to social media culture.

The study also found that moderate Islamic preaching helps reduce religious polarization and online hostility by encouraging inclusive and peaceful communication approaches. Digital disinformation frequently exploits religious identities and emotional sensitivities to provoke conflict and social division. Extremist narratives often utilize hate speech, accusations, and manipulative

interpretations of religious teachings to influence online audiences emotionally. Moderate Islamic preaching counters these tendencies by emphasizing compassion, dialogue, respect for diversity, and social harmony. Yusuf al-Qaradawi (2010) explains that moderation (*wasathiyah*) represents a core Islamic principle rejecting both extremism and intolerance. Through peaceful and rational communication, moderate preaching helps reduce emotional tension and encourages constructive interaction within digital communities.

Furthermore, the findings indicate that moderate Islamic preachers play important roles as trusted information mediators within society. In many Muslim communities, religious leaders possess strong social influence and moral authority, making them strategic actors in guiding public attitudes toward digital information. Participants stated that they often seek clarification from trusted religious scholars when encountering controversial or suspicious online content related to religion or social issues. This demonstrates that moderate religious figures can function as important sources of guidance in helping communities distinguish between credible and misleading information.

The study additionally found that collaborative efforts between Islamic educational institutions, community organizations, and digital activists strengthen the effectiveness of moderate Islamic preaching strategies. Schools, universities, *pesantren*, and Islamic organizations increasingly organize seminars, webinars, digital campaigns, and media literacy training aimed at improving public awareness regarding hoaxes and disinformation. Such collaborative activities help create broader educational ecosystems supporting ethical digital communication and responsible information sharing. UNESCO (2021) emphasizes that combating digital disinformation requires collective engagement involving educational institutions, civil society, media organizations, and community leaders.

However, despite these positive contributions, the study also identifies several significant challenges affecting the implementation of moderate Islamic preaching in digital spaces. One major challenge involves the influence of social media algorithms that prioritize sensational, emotional, and controversial content because such materials generate higher user engagement and platform profitability. As a result, extremist narratives, provocative content, and fake news often spread more rapidly than educational or moderate messages. Participants noted that moderate preaching content sometimes receives lower visibility and public attention compared to emotionally charged or polarizing digital materials.

Another important challenge concerns the low level of digital literacy among certain social groups. Many internet users still lack the critical skills necessary to evaluate information credibility, identify misinformation, or recognize manipulative online narratives. Emotional reactions, ideological bias, and confirmation bias frequently influence how individuals interpret and share information online. Allcott and Gentzkow (2017) explain that fake news spreads effectively because individuals tend to trust information aligned with their existing beliefs and emotional preferences. Consequently, improving digital literacy remains essential for strengthening public resilience against digital manipulation.

The findings also reveal that online anonymity and unrestricted digital communication often encourage irresponsible behavior, hate speech, and misinformation dissemination. Some individuals intentionally exploit religious issues to provoke conflict, gain political advantage, or attract social media attention. In such environments, moderate Islamic preaching faces difficulties competing against provocative narratives designed specifically to manipulate emotions and increase online engagement. Therefore, moderate preaching strategies must continuously innovate communication methods to remain attractive, accessible, and influential within highly competitive digital ecosystems.

Another challenge involves the growing distrust toward institutions and traditional authorities in digital culture. Younger internet users increasingly consume religious information from influencers, anonymous accounts, or unverified digital sources rather than established educational institutions or qualified scholars. This condition complicates efforts to establish authoritative and credible religious communication online. Moderate Islamic preachers must therefore develop communication approaches that combine theological credibility with contemporary digital communication styles capable of engaging modern audiences effectively.

Despite these challenges, the study identifies significant opportunities for strengthening moderate Islamic preaching through technological innovation and community participation. Digital platforms provide broad opportunities for educational outreach, interfaith dialogue, online campaigns, and creative Islamic content production. Interactive technologies, visual storytelling, podcasts, and short educational videos enable moderate Islamic narratives to reach wider audiences across diverse social groups. Participants generally responded positively to moderate preaching content emphasizing practical guidance, ethical communication, emotional balance, and social harmony.

The findings further demonstrate that moderate Islamic values such as justice, tolerance, wisdom, compassion, and social responsibility remain highly relevant in addressing the social and ethical problems caused by digital disinformation. Islamic teachings encouraging honesty, fairness, and peaceful communication provide important ethical foundations for promoting healthier digital interactions. Therefore, integrating Islamic moderation principles with digital literacy education may contribute significantly to creating more responsible and harmonious online environments.

Overall, the discussion demonstrates that moderate Islamic preaching represents an effective and relevant strategy for countering hoaxes and digital disinformation in contemporary society. Through ethical communication, digital literacy promotion, peaceful narratives, and community engagement, moderate Islamic preaching helps strengthen public awareness, reduce polarization, and encourage responsible digital behavior. However, successful implementation requires adaptive communication strategies, technological innovation, collaborative educational efforts, and continuous promotion of Islamic ethical values within rapidly evolving digital environments.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that moderate Islamic preaching plays a crucial role in countering hoaxes and digital disinformation in contemporary digital society. The rapid expansion of social media and online communication platforms has created both opportunities and challenges for religious communication. While digital technology enables wider dissemination of Islamic teachings and easier access to religious information, it also facilitates the rapid spread of misinformation, fake news, hate speech, and manipulative narratives that threaten social harmony and public trust. In this context, moderate Islamic preaching provides an important ethical and educational framework for promoting responsible digital communication and strengthening community resilience against misinformation. The findings demonstrate that moderate Islamic preaching emphasizes essential Islamic values such as *tabayyun* (verification of information), tolerance, peaceful dialogue, justice, and social responsibility. These principles are highly relevant in addressing the challenges of digital disinformation, particularly within pluralistic and highly connected societies. Through social media platforms, online educational activities, digital literacy campaigns, and inclusive religious narratives, moderate Islamic preachers contribute to increasing public awareness regarding ethical communication and critical information evaluation. The study also reveals that digital

literacy is a fundamental component of effective moderate Islamic preaching strategies. Many internet users still lack the critical skills necessary to identify false information and resist emotional manipulation in online environments. Therefore, integrating media literacy education with Islamic ethical teachings is important for developing responsible digital citizenship and healthier communication cultures. In addition, collaboration among religious leaders, educational institutions, community organizations, and digital activists is essential for strengthening public resilience against hoaxes and online polarization. However, several challenges remain significant, including algorithmic amplification of sensational content, ideological polarization, low digital literacy, and declining trust in traditional authorities. Consequently, moderate Islamic preaching must continue adapting communication methods to contemporary digital cultures while maintaining theological credibility and ethical consistency. Overall, this study emphasizes that moderate Islamic preaching possesses strong potential to foster social harmony, ethical digital behavior, and constructive communication in the modern information era.

REFERENCES

- Allcott, H., & Gentzkow, M. (2017). Social media and fake news in the 2016 election. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 31(2), 211–236.
- Al-Qaradawi, Y. (2010). *Fiqh al-Wasatiyyah al-Islamiyyah*. Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq.
- Campbell, H. (2013). *Digital Religion: Understanding Religious Practice in New Media Worlds*. New York: Routledge.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. California: Sage Publications.
- Hobbs, R. (2017). *Create to Learn: Introduction to Digital Literacy*. New Jersey: Wiley Blackwell.
- Sugiyono. (2022). *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif, Kuantitatif, dan R&D*. Bandung: Alfabeta.
- UNESCO. (2021). *Journalism, Fake News and Disinformation Handbook*. Paris: UNESCO Publishing.
- Qur'an Surah Al-Hujurat (49): 6.