Amorti: Jurnal Studi Islam Interdisipliner
Vol. 5 No. 2 April 2026, pp. 1676-1691
http://journal.amorfati.id/index.php/amorti | | ISSN 2962-9209

Interdisciplinary Scope of Contemporary Islamic Studies • Interdisciplinary Islamic Education • Interdisciplinary Islamic Law, Ethics, and Fatwa Studies • Interdisciplinary Islamic Economics, Finance, and Philanthropy • Islam, Society, and Culture • Islam, Politics, Governance, and Public Policy • Islam, Gender, Family, and Human Rights • Islam, Media, Communication, and Digital Da'wah • Islam, Health, Environment, and Sustainable Development • Islam, Science, Technology, Artificial Intelligence, and Digital Transformation

The Strategic Role of Islamic Educational Institutions in Campaigning for Religious Moderation on Social Media in the Digital Age

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history
Received:
19 January 2026
Revised:
26 February 2026
Accepted:
25 March 2026
Available online:
29 April 2026

Keywords
Religious Moderation;
Wasathiyyah;
Islamic Educational Institutions;
Social Media;
Digital Religion;
Digital Literacy

ABSTRACT

Social media has become a primary arena in which religious knowledge, authority, and identity are produced and contested. In Indonesia, the same platforms that disseminate wasathiyyah (moderate) Islamic teachings also circulate intolerance, religious hoaxes, and radical propaganda. Islamic educational institutions are widely positioned as guardians of religious moderation, yet existing scholarship concentrates on curricula, campus programs, and offline mainstreaming, and has not offered an integrated account of their online campaigning. This article analyzes the strategic role of Islamic educational institutions (madrasahs, pesantren, and Islamic higher education institutions) in campaigning for religious moderation on social media. Using qualitative library research with six-phase thematic content analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), it synthesizes 36 scholarly publications issued between 2021 and 2025, complemented by foundational policy and theoretical texts. The analysis identifies five interrelated strategic roles: normative-epistemic anchoring, participatory narrative production, platform-sensitive communication, digital religious literacy, and networked governance. The reviewed studies mostly describe institutional accounts broadcasting moderation messages or organizing socialization and literacy training, in which students and santri appear as audiences or trainees; few document them producing and circulating moderate content themselves, and few report engagement, reach, or attitudinal outcomes. The novelty of this article is an integrated five-pillar framework (Anchor, Produce, Adapt, Protect, and Connect). Whereas prior studies treat doctrinal grounding, digital literacy, content production, and institutional collaboration separately, the framework combines them into one institutional strategy that positions students and santri as producers of moderate content and links campaign activity to evaluation. The framework offers a basis for policy design and future empirical testing.

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Introduction

Developments in digital communication have changed how religion is learned, practiced, and displayed in the public sphere. Mediatization theory views media not merely as channels but as agents that change how religion operates in society (Hjarvard, 2008), and digital religion scholarship emphasizes that online environments do not simply transfer offline religious life but reorganize ritual, authority, identity, and community through the affordances of networked media (Campbell & Tsuria, 2021). In the Muslim world, this reorganization was anticipated early through the concept of cyber Islamic environments, digital spaces to which interpretation, fatwa seeking, and da'wah have migrated, so that traditional gatekeepers must compete with new voices (Bunt, 2003). Recent studies show that religious authority on social media is shifting from ulama and institutions to popularity-driven figures (Rachman et al., 2025), and that short da'wah clips attract far higher engagement than long formats that demand depth (Alfi et al., 2025). Indonesia, with the world's largest Muslim population and a highly connected young demographic, is a critical locus of this transformation. Because the country is ethnically, religiously, and culturally plural, the state has made religious moderation a national policy priority grounded in national commitment, tolerance, rejection of violence, and accommodation of local culture (Ministry of Religious Affairs, 2019; Subchi et al., 2022). In the Islamic intellectual tradition, this orientation rests on wasathiyyah, or the "middle path," which Indonesian scholars link to established theological traditions such as Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah (Kanafi, 2021).

However, digital space is not inherently moderate. Lim (2017) shows that social media algorithms in Indonesia create "algorithmic enclaves" that group users by preference and intensify identity polarization. Studies of religious hoaxes show that disinformation on platforms such as YouTube and Twitter relies on logical fallacies and the exploitation of sensitive religious issues to strengthen divisive narratives (Fathurrohman et al., 2024). Indonesia's own antiterrorism regulation has begun to acknowledge that digital technology makes it easier for young people to be exposed to radical ideas online, so that a soft, counter-narrative approach is needed alongside law enforcement (Setiyono & Rasyid, 2022). Critical discourse analysis reveals self-radicalization and self-recruitment among millennials in digital space (Suryanatha et al., 2023), and the spread of radicalism on social media has been linked to shifts in millennial literacy (Fanindy & Mupida, 2021). Campuses are not immune: students at state Islamic higher education institutions encounter nonviolent extremist content that questions the legitimacy of the state and offers the caliphate as an alternative, and algorithm-driven exposure demands stronger critical evaluation skills (Mala & Rahman, 2024). The role of the Coordinating Board for Campus Da'wah Institutions in spreading radicalism has been critically examined (Setia & Syarif, 2022), and state Islamic higher education institutions are urged to respond to extremist exposure through early-warning systems and institutional moderation programs (Ahmadiono & Rahman, 2025).

The problem is therefore two-sided. Islamic educational institutions possess legitimacy, textual authority, curricula, and trained cadres, yet their moderation work is concentrated in classrooms and campus programs, while the very groups they seek to protect increasingly form their religious views on algorithm-driven platforms. A content analysis of 105 TikTok accounts belonging to students at a state Islamic university, for example, found that among 7,730 analyzed videos, the three largest

categories were pointless humor (about 27.74%), dance challenges (about 17.9%), and everyday-life content (about 11.98%), whereas educational religious content was not among the dominant categories (Arifa, 2023). The digital attention economy thus rewards forms of content that institutional moderation programs rarely design. Understanding how institutions can act strategically in this environment requires bringing together three bodies of research that have so far developed largely in parallel.

The first body of research examines religious moderation as an educational and institutional project. A survey of 578 students at state Islamic higher education institutions showed that religiosity positively predicts religious moderation, alongside gender and parental income (Subchi et al., 2022). Literature reviews have mapped moderation strategies and counter-radicalism policies in Indonesian higher education (Afwadzi & Miski, 2021), and Nasir and Rijal (2021) examined how Islamic higher education institutions mainstream moderation. Case studies in madrasahs highlight integrated curricula, multicultural leadership, and teacher role modeling (Rohman et al., 2022). In universities, research has documented dissemination activities, lecturer training, admission criteria, and community service themes (Aslati et al., 2022); experiential, habituation, emotional, functional, and rational learning strategies (Ma'arif et al., 2022); and the revitalization of campus pesantren (Ahmadiono & Rahman, 2025). Policy-oriented work distinguishes autonomous, integrative, collaborative, and enrichment models of moderation education (Latif et al., 2023). This research explains what institutions teach and organize, but it treats social media at most as a peripheral channel and does not ask how platform logic shapes the success of institutional messages.

The second body of research examines moderation, radicalism, and the digital environment itself. It shows that algorithms create enclaves that intensify identity polarization (Lim, 2017), that religious hoaxes exploit sensitive issues and logical fallacies (Fathurrohman et al., 2024), and that self-radicalization and self-recruitment occur among young people online (Suryanatha et al., 2023; Fanindy & Mupida, 2021). Other work addresses religious authority and content formats (Rachman et al., 2025; Alfi et al., 2025), TikTok creators promoting tolerance amid extreme narratives and low digital literacy (Superdi, 2025), and the da'wah ethics and counter-radicalism framing of major organizations such as MUI, NU, and Muhammadiyah (Sultan, 2023; Hapsari et al., 2023). Internationally, Hotait and Ali (2024) analyzed 2,983 TikTok videos from 43 German Islamic creators and found that indicators of radicalism rarely appeared among mainstream creators. This research explains how digital space works and where the risks lie, but educational institutions mostly appear as the setting of the problem rather than as strategic actors with their own communication strategies.

A small third body of research connects the two. Dimyati et al. (2023) trained santri to produce alternative moderation narratives and found that they were still largely passive consumers of digital content. Hakim (2021) designed a pesantren-based literacy model for writing infused with moderation, and Fitri et al. (2022) documented a pesantren media literacy strategy built on social media optimization, a media center, and training. Zuhri (2025) examined how Pondok Pesantren Lirboyo disseminates moderation messages on Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok with strict content review. Wulandari and Sari (2023) showed that a state Islamic university's moderation strategic plan was realized mainly through news dissemination on its official website, and Nasih et al. (2023) tested an official LINE account for delivering moderate Islamic

views to university students.

Taken together, these bodies of research leave four areas insufficiently explored. First, the link between institutional roles and digital communication strategies is missing. Research on institutions tells us what they are and do but not how they should communicate under platform logic, while research on the digital environment tells us how platforms work but not which institutional role should guide communication within them. Second, the studies that bridge the two are largely single-case in design: a single pesantren workshop (Dimyati et al., 2023), a single university website (Wulandari & Sari, 2023), the guidelines of a single organization (Sultan, 2023), or a single platform (Superdi, 2025). Few studies compare or integrate madrasahs, pesantren, and Islamic higher education institutions within one analytical frame, so it remains unclear what collectively constitutes their strategic role. Third, these studies mostly describe institutions as senders of messages, with students appearing as audiences or trainees, as in Dimyati et al. (2023). Whether and how students and santri can become producers of moderate content within an institutional strategy has not been systematically examined. Fourth, evidence on campaign effects is thin: existing studies describe activities and perceptions but rarely specify mechanisms and indicators for assessing effectiveness in an algorithmically mediated environment. As a result, institutions lack a coherent framework for deciding what to communicate, through whom, on which platform, with what safeguards, and with which partners.

The novelty of this article lies in connecting institutional roles with digital communication strategies, two perspectives that prior research has treated separately. Rather than proposing another stand-alone program, the article synthesizes recent scholarship to conceptualize institutional campaigning as a system of five strategic roles (normative-epistemic anchoring, participatory narrative production, platform-sensitive communication, digital religious literacy, and networked governance). It translates them into the Anchor–Produce–Adapt–Protect–Connect framework presented in Section 3.6, in which each role is tied to a communication strategy and, in the case of Produce, to the positioning of students and santri as content producers. Two research questions guide the study: 1) What strategic roles do Islamic educational institutions play in campaigning for religious moderation on social media, according to recent scholarship? 2) How can these roles be organized into an operational framework that links institutional roles to digital communication strategies across madrasahs, pesantren, and Islamic higher education institutions? The article contributes a cross-institutional synthesis, a conceptualization of platform-sensitive institutional strategy, and a set of propositions that can be tested in subsequent empirical research.

Method

This study uses qualitative library research with thematic content analysis of published scholarly literature. The procedure adapts the stages of a systematic literature review (question formulation, structured search, criteria-based selection, data extraction, and synthesis; Snyder, 2019; Xiao & Watson, 2019) and follows the reporting principles of PRISMA 2020 (Page et al., 2021). This design was chosen because the study aims to conceptually synthesize evidence dispersed across types of institutions in order to build a strategic framework; it does not estimate intervention effects or report field data from a single institution (Zed, 2004). The data are secondary, namely the findings, arguments, and recommendations reported in each publication.

The researcher was the primary instrument, reading, coding, and interpreting the texts.

Two complementary perspectives guided the reading of the data. Digital religion theory treats online and offline religious life as intertwined and examines how media affordances reshape authority, identity, and community (Campbell & Tsuria, 2021), in line with the mediatization thesis that media act as agents of religious change (Hjarvard, 2008). The cyber Islamic environments perspective directs attention to how Muslim discourse, interpretation, and authority are reconfigured in digital space (Bunt, 2003). In this study, a *strategic role* is defined as a deliberate, institutionally mandated activity that aligns normative mission, pedagogy, communication, and partnerships with an explicit moderation goal. This definition served as the criterion for deciding which parts of a publication were coded as data. Sources were retrieved from Google Scholar, the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), Portal Garuda, and publisher journal portals, and were supplemented by backward citation tracing from relevant articles. Keywords were organized into three groups combined with Boolean operators: (a) moderation concepts ("religious moderation," "moderasi beragama," "wasathiyyah," and "kontra-radikalisme"); (b) institutional settings ("pesantren," "madrasah," and "pendidikan tinggi Islam"); and (c) digital space ("social media," "media sosial," "dakwah digital," "literasi digital," "kontra-narasi," and "hoaks"). Each group was searched in English and Indonesian. The search was limited to publications from 2021 to 2025 so that the corpus reflects post-pandemic developments, when da'wah and religious learning moved massively online.

Selection proceeded in four stages. In the identification stage, all retrieved records were pooled and duplicates were removed. In the screening stage, titles and abstracts were assessed against the inclusion criteria (published between 2021 and 2025, in English or Indonesian, and addressing Islamic educational institutions, religious moderation or counter-radicalism, and social media or digital literacy) and the exclusion criteria (duplicates and publications outside this scope). In the eligibility stage, full texts or detailed bibliographic records were read to confirm that each publication contained traceable data, findings, or arguments on all three topics. In the inclusion stage, the final analytical corpus of 36 publications was established, comprising qualitative case studies, surveys, content analyses, document analyses, literature reviews, and community service programs conducted in madrasahs, *pesantren*, Islamic higher education institutions, religious organizations, and social media content. Eleven additional works were retained solely for conceptual, policy, and methodological framing and were not counted in the corpus: a policy text (Ministry of Religious Affairs, 2019), theoretical references (Bunt, 2003; Hjarvard, 2008; Lim, 2017; Nisa, 2018), and methodological references (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Nowell et al., 2017; Page et al., 2021; Snyder, 2019; Xiao & Watson, 2019; Zed, 2004).

Data from each publication in the corpus were recorded on an extraction sheet containing source identity (author and year), type and location of the institution, research design, key findings, and relevance to social media campaigning. The analysis then followed the six phases of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). First, the researcher reread the corpus to become familiar with the data. Second, initial codes were generated inductively from the findings, arguments, and recommendations of each source, for example "curriculum integration," "student content production," "religious hoaxes," "literacy training," and "organizational guidelines." Third, related codes were grouped into candidate themes. Fourth, candidate themes were reviewed against the codes and the entire corpus. Fifth, themes were defined and named as five

strategic roles. Sixth, the themes were synthesized into an integrated framework and propositions. A source–theme matrix was used to monitor coverage and to identify areas with thin evidence. Interpretations that go beyond what the sources report are explicitly marked in Section 3 as analytical inferences. Trustworthiness was pursued through four criteria of qualitative rigor (Nowell et al., 2017). Credibility was supported by triangulation across institution types (madrasahs, *pesantren*, and universities) and research designs (surveys, case studies, content analyses, and document analyses). Dependability was supported by an audit trail of explicit coding decisions, and confirmability by separating reported findings from inferences. Transferability was supported by specifying the setting of each source so that readers can judge its fit with other contexts. The study is limited by its reliance on openly indexed literature in English and Indonesian, the absence of primary data, and the heterogeneity of the synthesized studies, which precluded statistical synthesis.

Results and Discussion

Normative-Epistemic Anchoring: Grounding Campaigns in Institutional Religious Authority

The first and most distinctive role of Islamic educational institutions is to anchor moderation in recognized sources of religious authority. These institutions transmit the textual traditions and interpretive methods that justify *wasathiyyah*, and this epistemic capital distinguishes them from secular or commercial content producers. Kanafi (2021) argues that Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah theology contributes to building moderate Islam in Indonesia, while educators and religious leaders in West Sulawesi were found to ground moderation in the Qur'an and hadith and to equate *wasathiyyah* with the moderation values promoted by the state (Latif et al., 2023). Madrasahs operationalize this anchoring through curricula integrated with *pesantren*, multicultural leadership, and teacher role modeling (Rohman et al., 2022). Universities do so through learning strategies that combine experiential, habituation, emotional, functional, and rational approaches (Ma'arif et al., 2022), through structured programs and the integration of Aswaja-based courses (Ulumuddin et al., 2024), and through institutional structures such as campus *pesantren* (Ahmadiono & Rahman, 2025). Evidence on student attitudes shows that understanding, attitudes, and practices of moderation reinforce one another (Lathif, 2024).

Three points deserve emphasis. First, the survey finding that religiosity, across its intellectual, ideological, public practice, private practice, and experiential dimensions, positively predicts moderation (Subchi et al., 2022) suggests, as an analytical inference, that campaign messages should present moderation as an expression of deep religiosity rather than a compromise of it. Anchoring is thus both a source of legitimacy and a framing resource. Second, the textual authority of institutions now competes with popularity-driven authority. Studies of social media da'wah show a shift of authority from ulama and institutions to celebrity figures and influencers (Rachman et al., 2025), and short clips that simplify teachings attract several times the engagement of long formats (Alfi et al., 2025). Anchoring therefore cannot consist of a claim that the institution holds a scholarly chain of transmission (*sanad*); it must be visible in content that can be traced to its sources. Third, the reviewed studies almost without exception situate anchoring in offline structures such as classrooms, curricula, and campus programs. No study in this corpus explains in detail how institutional textual authority is translated into content that can compete for attention on social media. Anchoring is thus a necessary condition, but on the evidence reviewed not a sufficient one, for an

effective digital campaign: it supplies the substance of the message, not the means of its circulation.

Participatory Narrative Production: Students and Santri as Co-Producers of Moderate Content

The second role concerns who produces moderate narratives. Evidence from *pesantren* is particularly instructive. A community service program in Pati used an asset-based approach to equip *santri* to produce alternative moderation narratives against intolerant narratives on social media, but found that *santri* remained passive consumers of digital content with limited awareness of themselves as producers (Dimyati et al., 2023). Other studies propose a *pesantren*-based literacy model that links writing training with moderation values and positions *santri* as agents of peace (Hakim, 2021), and document how one *pesantren* built media literacy by optimizing social media, establishing a media center, and running training programs (Fitri et al., 2022). Pesantren Lirboyo uses Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok to reach young people with creative content while applying strict content review (Zuhri, 2025). At the university level, the realization of moderation strategic plans occurs largely through news dissemination on institutional websites (Wulandari & Sari, 2023), which is essentially one-way communication from institution to audience, a pattern consistent with the partial shift of digital da'wah from one-way to two-way communication (Salwa, 2024).

Read together with the finding that the TikTok output of students at a state Islamic university is dominated by humor, dance challenges, and everyday-life content (Arifa, 2023), these studies point to a production gap. Institutions appear to rely on official channels that speak with institutional authority but have limited peer reach, while the creative capacity of students and *santri*, who are the most embedded in young people's digital culture, has not been mobilized. The possibility of such mobilization is not hypothetical: the ODOJ (*One Day One Juz*) movement shows that young Muslims can build collective religious practices that depend on member participation in messaging applications (Nisa, 2018). As an analytical inference, the strategic task of institutions is to act not as sole publishers but as authorizing environments that provide training, scholarly review, editorial mentoring, and recognition so that students and *santri* can produce moderate content in their own voices. This reframing turns the campaign's target audience into co-producers and addresses the passivity repeatedly reported in the literature, although it also raises quality control and reputation issues that must be managed through clear editorial protocols.

Platform-Sensitive Communication: Adapting Moderation Messages to Digital Audiences

The third role is to communicate in ways that fit the logic of the platforms on which audiences spend their time. The reviewed evidence shows that the digital religious landscape is more heterogeneous than a simple dichotomy of moderate versus radical. Hotait and Ali (2024), analyzing 2,983 TikTok videos from 43 accounts, identified two main content clusters, namely religious practice concerning social and lifestyle issues, and political activism around Muslim grievances, and found that radical indicators rarely appeared, with victimization the most frequent. Religious advocacy was the most common topic, and topics such as the hijab served as a meeting point between religious practice and politicized narratives. Although this study concerns German creators and cannot be generalized to Indonesia, it suggests that themes of grievance

and identity, rather than doctrine alone, are the terrain on which radicalizing and moderating narratives meet.

Evidence from Indonesia supports this reading. Studies of religious hoaxes show that misinformation exploits logical fallacies and emotionally sensitive issues (Fathurrohman et al., 2024), and platform algorithms create enclaves that intensify identity polarization (Lim, 2017). Students at state Islamic higher education institutions are aware of the extreme narratives they encounter, but algorithm-driven exposure still demands stronger evaluation skills (Mala & Rahman, 2024). From the campaign perspective, TikTok creators who promote tolerance and balance succeed when their content is accessible and digitally adaptive, but are constrained by extreme narratives and hostile audience reactions (Superdi, 2025), while an official LINE account has proved able to serve as an individualized, technology-based means of delivering moderate Islamic views to students (Nasih et al., 2023). Setiyono and Rasyid's (2022) regulatory analysis recommends counter-narrative, counter-propaganda, and counter-ideology as soft, preventive strategies.

Three analytical inferences can be drawn from these findings. First, institutional campaigns need to address the identity anxieties and grievances that make radical narratives attractive, rather than merely refuting them doctrinally. Second, because hoaxes depend on recognizable rhetorical patterns, campaigns can teach audiences to recognize these patterns instead of rebutting claims one by one. Third, format, duration, tone, and calls to action need to be adapted to the affordances of each platform; the reviewed literature offers very little systematic guidance on this, which is itself a finding. Institutions should also be cautious about securitized labeling that frames audiences as threats, because such framing can erode the trust on which peer-oriented campaigns depend.

Digital Religious Literacy: Building Audience Resilience Against Hoaxes and Radical Narratives

The fourth role positions literacy as protective infrastructure for the entire campaign. Fanindy and Mupida (2021) link the spread of radicalism on social media to shifts in millennial literacy, while one *pesantren*'s media literacy strategy combines platform use, a dedicated media center, and training (Fitri et al., 2022). Fathurrohman et al. (2024) conclude that improving media literacy, strengthening interfaith dialogue, and enforcing content regulation are needed to curb religious hoaxes, and multicultural Islamic education has been proposed as a vehicle for internalizing moderate values (Alawi & Maarif, 2021). Community-level initiatives show similar concern, for example the strengthening of religious moderation literacy among Muhammadiyah branch leaders in Medan (Hasanuddin & Ginting, 2021).

Synthesizing these strands, digital religious literacy in Islamic education can be understood as having at least four layers: technical literacy (using platforms and recognizing algorithmic dynamics), epistemic literacy (verifying sources and distinguishing legitimate from performative religious authority), ethical literacy (complying with the legal and ethical guidelines that Islamic organizations have formulated for da'wah on social media; Sultan, 2023), and civic literacy (responding to difference constructively in line with national commitment and tolerance). The reviewed evidence treats literacy mainly as stand-alone training. A more strategic arrangement, proposed here as an inference, is to pair literacy with campaign

participation so that students learn by producing and verifying moderate content rather than only receiving instruction.

Networked Governance: Institutional Partnerships and Campaign Evaluation

The fifth role recognizes that Islamic educational institutions do not campaign alone. Sultan (2023) shows that MUI, NU, and Muhammadiyah use different methodological orientations, respectively normative-juridical, inclusive-cultural, and rational-progressive, in formulating digital da'wah guidelines, and Hapsari et al. (2023) examine how Muhammadiyah and NU frame counter-radicalism. NU-affiliated universities have developed explicit strategies against radicalism and intolerance (Abdul Aziz et al., 2023), the role of the Coordinating Board for Campus Da'wah Institutions has been critically reviewed (Setia & Syarif, 2022), and women's organization wings such as Fatayat NU contribute to mainstreaming moderation at the provincial level (Nurfitria, 2023). Regulatory analysis complements this picture by showing that state regulation increasingly accommodates soft, preventive approaches (Setiyono & Rasyid, 2022), and a narrative review of digital da'wah emphasizes that regulation, infrastructure, and socioeconomic conditions also shape campaign outcomes (Salwa, 2024).

These studies imply an ecosystem composed of religious organizations, educational institutions, community actors, and the state. Within this ecosystem, institutions contribute scholarly credibility, a ready audience of students and alumni, and training capacity, while organizations contribute reach, ethical-legal guidance, and grassroots networks. Two dimensions of governance emerge as analytical inferences. Externally, institutions need partnership and coordination mechanisms so that campaigns complement rather than duplicate one another. Internally, institutions need social media policies, editorial roles, crisis response protocols, and evaluation routines. The corpus also shows that evaluation is the weakest dimension: most studies describe activities or perceptions, and none establishes standard indicators for assessing whether institutional campaigns change attitudes or behavior. Institutions should also be alert to the risk that messages too closely aligned with the state may be perceived by some audiences as instrumental, which makes transparent scholarly grounding all the more important.

The Anchor–Produce–Adapt–Protect–Connect Framework and Testable Propositions

The five roles are interdependent. Anchoring supplies content and legitimacy; production creates and circulates that content through credible voices; adaptation shapes it to platform logic and audience identity; protection builds the literacy that makes audiences resilient to hoaxes and radical narratives; and connection embeds the campaign in partnerships and evaluative governance. Table 1 translates these roles into an operational framework applicable in Islamic madrasahs, *pesantren*, and universities, with indicative indicators that address the evaluation gap identified

above. The framework is a conceptual synthesis and has not been empirically validated; its indicators are proposals for subsequent testing.

Table 1. The Anchor–Produce–Adapt–Protect–Connect Framework

Pillar	Strategic objective	Operational strategies	Indicative indicators
Anchor	Ground the campaign in the institution's scholarly authority	Derive content from *wasathiyyah* sources and the curriculum; establish scholarly review panels; frame moderation as an expression of devout religiosity	Proportion of content traceable to reviewed sources; reviewer coverage
Produce	Mobilize students and *santri* as co-producers	Creator training; media centers; editorial mentoring; awards and incentives; student-managed accounts under institutional guidance	Number of student works; proportion passing review; peer engagement
Adapt	Tailor messages, formats, and tone to platforms and audiences	Platform-specific formats; empathetic engagement with identity and grievance themes; avoidance of securitized framing; education on rhetorical patterns	Reach and quality of engagement; sentiment; audience segment coverage
Protect	Build resilience against hoaxes and radical narratives	Layered literacy (technical, epistemic, ethical, civic); verification routines; rapid rebuttal protocols	Verification competence; response time to circulating hoaxes
Connect	Embed the campaign in partnerships and governance	Collaboration with NU, Muhammadiyah, MUI, and the government; social media policy; evaluation cycles; inter-institutional knowledge sharing	Active partnerships; policy adoption; periodic impact reviews

The framework yields four propositions for empirical testing. P1: Campaigns clearly anchored in the institution's scholarly authority will be perceived as more credible than unanchored campaigns. P2: Student-produced content that is institutionally reviewed will generate higher peer engagement than institutional broadcast content. P3: Platform-adapted formats that address identity and grievance themes will outperform purely doctrinal rebuttals in engagement and attitudinal outcomes. P4: Institutions that combine literacy training with campaign participation will show lower

vulnerability to religious misinformation among their students. These propositions can be tested through social media analytics, surveys, and quasi-experimental designs.

Policy Implications, Implementation Challenges, and Future Research

For institutional leaders and policymakers, this synthesis suggests that social media should be treated as a core channel of the institutional mission rather than an additional public relations task. Practical implications include establishing a digital moderation unit or dedicated media center, allocating capacity-building resources for lecturers, teachers, and students, embedding digital production and literacy in the curriculum, and implementing evaluation routines with clear indicators. For the Ministry of Religious Affairs, which has promoted moderation as a national program (Ministry of Religious Affairs, 2019), the findings imply that policy instruments need to expand from program dissemination to digital capacity and evaluation.

Several challenges deserve acknowledgment. Institutional capacity varies greatly between well-resourced universities and small *pesantren* or madrasahs. Quality control can conflict with the spontaneity that makes peer-created content persuasive. Religious authority is increasingly contested online, so institutions must earn attention rather than presume it (Rachman et al., 2025). Algorithmic amplification may favor sensational over deliberative content (Lim, 2017). Finally, the ethical obligations of da'wah, including accuracy, respect, and the avoidance of harm, must be upheld even in a competitive attention environment (Sultan, 2023). The limitations of this study, namely its reliance on published literature and the absence of primary data, point to a clear research agenda: mixed-methods studies that combine platform analytics with interviews and surveys, comparative designs across madrasahs, *pesantren*, and universities, and quasi-experimental evaluations of campaign interventions.

Conclusion

This article examined the strategic role of Islamic educational institutions in campaigning for religious moderation on social media through a thematic synthesis of recent scholarship. Five interrelated roles emerged: normative-epistemic anchoring, participatory narrative production, platform-sensitive communication, digital religious literacy, and networked governance. The synthesis suggests that institutions possess substantial legitimacy and educational capacity, but that this capacity remains oriented toward offline programs; that students and santri appear more often as audiences than as producers; that platform logic and audience identity receive limited systematic attention; and that evaluation of digital campaign impact remains underdeveloped.

The main contribution of the article is the Anchor–Produce–Adapt–Protect–Connect framework, which connects institutional roles with digital communication strategies, two perspectives that prior research has largely treated separately. The framework proposes that institutional mandate (Anchor), participatory production by students and santri (Produce), platform adaptation (Adapt), literacy-based protection (Protect), and partnership-based governance (Connect) be planned as one strategy rather than as isolated programs. Theoretically, it contributes a cross-institutional, platform-sensitive conceptualization of institutional strategy to the digital religion literature.

The framework carries practical implications for Islamic educational institutions. First, social media should be treated as a core channel of the institutional mission rather than an additional public relations task, supported by a digital moderation unit

or media center, capacity building for teachers, lecturers, and students, the integration of digital production and literacy into the curriculum, and evaluation routines with clear indicators. Second, the pillars apply differently across settings. Pesantren can build on their textual authority and existing media centers and content review to involve santri as producers. Islamic higher education institutions can move beyond one-way website announcements toward student-produced content and systematic evaluation. Madrasahs, for which the reviewed evidence on digital campaigning is thinnest, can begin by extending curriculum-based moderation education into guided digital literacy activities. Third, for the Ministry of Religious Affairs, policy instruments need to expand from program dissemination to digital capacity and evaluation.

These implications should be read with caution. The framework is derived from a literature-based synthesis and has not been empirically tested; its propositions (P1–P4) represent a conceptual proposal rather than demonstrated effectiveness. Its application also faces challenges, including uneven institutional capacity, tension between quality control and the spontaneity of peer-created content, contested religious authority online, and the ethical obligations of da'wah. Moreover, because the reviewed digital studies concentrate on pesantren and universities, evidence on madrasahs remains limited. Future research should therefore test P1–P4 through mixed-methods studies that combine platform analytics with interviews and surveys, comparative designs across madrasahs, pesantren, and universities, and quasi-experimental evaluations of campaign interventions. Such evidence would allow the moderation campaigns of educational institutions to move from well-intentioned activity toward demonstrable impact.

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