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## MUSLIM URBAN AND RELIGIOUS MINDSET: ASSESSING RELIGIOUS MODERATION AMIDST THE DIGITAL RADICALISM WAVE

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### Keywords:

Urban Muslims;  
Religious Mindset;  
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### ABSTRACTS

**Background:** Urban Muslims, or those living in metropolitan areas, face unique social and cultural dynamics in their religious lives. Unlike rural Muslim communities, which are generally more socially and religiously homogeneous, urban Muslims live amidst cultural diversity, interfaith interactions, and high exposure to globalization; (2) **Purpose of the Study:** This study explores the religious mindset of urban Muslims in Makassar and Bandung in responding to digital radicalism; (3) **Methods:** Using a qualitative phenomenological approach, data was collected through multiple sources to capture diverse perspectives; (4) **Results:** The findings reveal that urban Muslims in Makassar tend to selectively consume religious content that emphasizes moderation and tolerance, despite challenges posed by social media algorithms that promote exclusive content. Meanwhile, urban Muslims in Bandung demonstrate a stronger preference for academic and open-dialogue-based study communities, fostering a more rational and contextual understanding of Islam; and (5) **Conclusions:** The role of digital communities is critical in shaping religious perspectives, as many individuals actively filter and compare various sources to counteract judgmental narratives. However, exposure to conservative content remains a concern in both cities. Strengthening digital literacy and structured religious education is crucial to promoting an inclusive understanding of Islam in the digital era.

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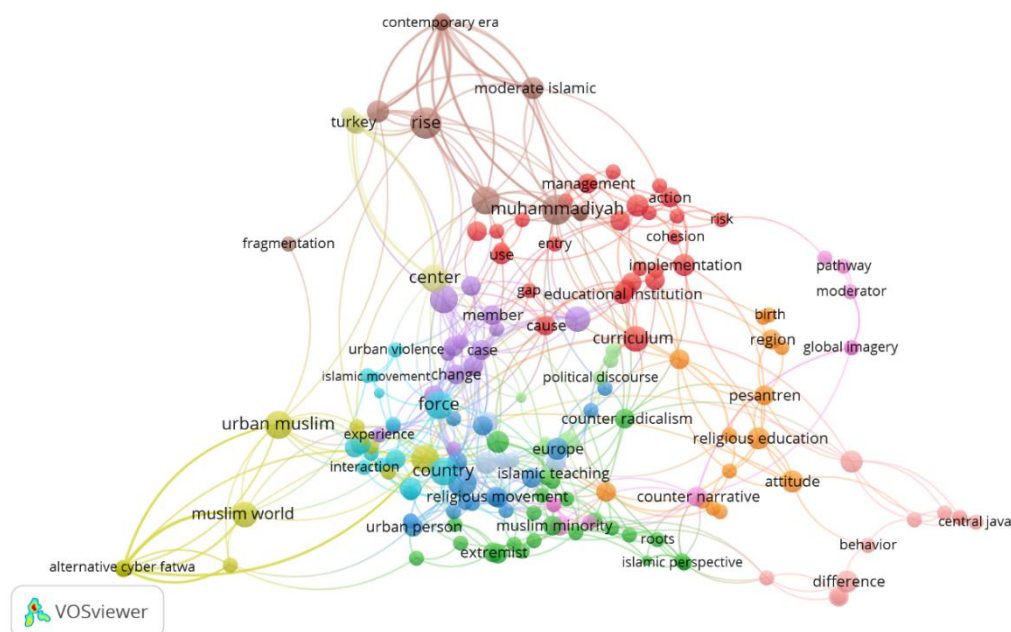
## A. INTRODUCTION

Urban Muslims navigate complex social dynamics that shape their religious perspectives. Unlike rural Muslim communities that tend to be homogeneous, urban Muslims interact with diverse cultural influences, interfaith dialogues, and rapid globalization. Consequently, their religious mindset is continuously shaped by contemporary issues, including religious moderation and digital radicalism (Musyafak, 2021). Religious moderation, as a countermeasure to extremism, has gained attention among scholars and policymakers (Yasin et al., 2023; Buddiga & Locey, 2024). Defined as a balanced approach to faith (Habibie et al., 2021; Hasan, 2021), religious moderation seeks to prevent both excessive liberalism and rigid conservatism. However, the digital era complicates this discourse as social media algorithms selectively amplify content, often favoring provocative narratives (Risnawati & Priyantoro, 2021). Previous studies highlight that individuals facing identity crises in fast-paced urban environments are more vulnerable to digital radicalism (Fuad & Masuwd, 2023).

Urban Muslims, or those living in metropolitan areas, face unique social and cultural dynamics in their religious lives. Unlike rural Muslim communities, which are generally more socially and religiously homogeneous, urban Muslims live amidst cultural diversity, interfaith interactions, and high exposure to globalization. This context influences their religious mindset, shaping how they understand Islamic teachings and respond to contemporary issues, including religious moderation and the challenges of digital radicalism (Musyafak, 2021). In recent years, the concept of religious moderation has garnered increasing attention from scholars and policymakers as a strategy to maintain social harmony and counter extremism (Yasin *et al.*, 2023; Buddiga and Locey, 2024; Nugroho *et al.*, 2024). Religious moderation emphasizes a balanced approach to faith (Habibie *et al.*, 2021; Hasan, 2021; Taufiq and Alkholid, 2021; Suryadi, 2023; Haluti *et al.*, 2025), avoiding both excessive liberalism and rigid conservatism. Urban Muslims tend to be more open to religious pluralism compared to other groups (Ternate, 1999; Masduki, 2016; Islamy, 2021; Mizani, 2022; Arman and Agus Riyanto, 2023), yet they are also more vulnerable to radical propaganda disseminated in the digital sphere.

The digital era has significantly transformed how urban Muslims acquire and interpret religious teachings. The widespread availability of religious information through social media, online forums, and digital platforms provides an opportunity for a more inclusive understanding of Islam (Risnawati and Priyantoro, 2021; Pascariati and Ali, 2022; Alfalah Riski, 2023; Burke, 2024; Souza and Debs, 2024). However, this phenomenon also opens avenues for extremist narratives that exploit digital technology to attract urban audiences. Studies indicate that individuals experiencing identity crises in the fast-paced urban environment are more susceptible to radical religious propaganda. The role of social media in shaping the religious mindset of urban Muslims cannot be overlooked (Bhandari, 2022; Fuad and Masuwd, 2023; Setiadi *et al.*, 2023; Buddiga and Locey, 2024; Made, Svari and Arlinayanti, 2024). With algorithms that promote engaging content, social media often becomes a space for the dissemination of intolerant and radical ideologies. Many extremist groups exploit these platforms to propagate exclusive narratives and polarize the Muslim community. As a result, urban Muslims often find themselves trapped in an information ecosystem that reinforces a narrow interpretation of religion, obscuring the values of moderation that are actually more relevant to their social lives.

The Indonesian government and Islamic organizations have launched various programs to strengthen religious moderation in the digital sphere (Hefni, 2020; Fauzian, Ramdani and Yudiyanto, 2021; Habibie *et al.*, 2021; Taufiq and Alkholid, 2021; Haluti *et al.*, 2025). However, their effectiveness faces several challenges, particularly in terms of outreach limitations and resistance from groups already exposed to radicalism (Rusmiati *et al.*, 2022). Additionally, religious authorities often struggle to engage urban audiences through digital platforms, losing ground to extremist groups that are more aggressive in content dissemination. Therefore, it is crucial to further examine how urban Muslims perceive and internalize the concept of religious moderation in their daily lives.



**Figure 1.** Bibliometric Analysis of VOSviewer on Urban Muslims and Religious Mindset

Based on bibliometric analysis using the VOSviewer application, research on urban Muslims and their religious mindset remains limited and lacks clear connectivity to religious moderation amidst the wave of digital radicalism. This study offers novelty in addressing this gap. While previous studies have examined digital radicalism and religious moderation separately, few have specifically explored how urban Muslims negotiate their religious mindset amidst algorithm-driven exposure to radical content. In particular, there is limited empirical research comparing urban Muslim communities in different Indonesian cities, such as Makassar and Bandung, to highlight the diversity of responses toward religious moderation in the digital era. This gap is what the present study seeks to address.

To tackle these challenges, an education- and digital literacy-based approach is crucial. Studies indicate that urban Muslims with strong digital literacy skills are more capable of recognizing and rejecting extremist narratives compared to those lacking such competencies (Fuadiah, 2021; Ginting *et al.*, 2021; Fitriyani and Nugroho, 2022; Rosmalina, 2022; Sagala, Naibaho and Rantung, 2024). Therefore, collaboration among scholars, religious leaders, government bodies, and civil society is essential to strengthening the discourse of religious moderation within the digital ecosystem. This

effort will enable urban Muslims to cultivate a more inclusive and tolerant religious mindset. This study is particularly relevant in understanding how urban Muslims develop their religious perspectives amid the overwhelming flow of digital information. By examining the challenges and opportunities of religious moderation in urban settings, this research aims to contribute to more effective strategies for preventing digital radicalization. Awareness of the importance of religious moderation must continue to be fostered so that urban Muslims can maintain a balanced and harmonious religious life in this complex digital era

## **B. METHOD**

This study employs a qualitative approach using the phenomenological method (Creswell, 2010), to understand the subjective experiences of urban Muslims in shaping their religious mindset amidst the wave of digital radicalism. The phenomenological approach was chosen because it allows researchers to explore in depth how individuals experience, understand, and assign meaning to specific phenomena. The research was conducted in two major cities in Indonesia, Bandung and Makassar, selected due to their high urbanization levels and diverse religious dynamics. The study participants consist of urban Muslims who actively access religious information through social media platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, WhatsApp, and Telegram.

Participants were selected based on specific criteria: they are between 18 and 40 years old, have a high level of digital religious content consumption, and have experience engaging with religious narratives related to religious moderation and digital radicalism. Participants were recruited through community networks, online religious forums, and recommendations from local scholars, applying purposive and snowball sampling techniques to ensure diverse representation from both cities. Data collection was carried out through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. The in-depth interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner to allow participants the freedom to express their experiences and views on religious moderation and digital radicalism. Additionally, participant observation was conducted by monitoring urban Muslims' interactions on social media, particularly in online religious discussion forums and digital communities. Document analysis was also performed on various digital religious content, such as online sermons, virtual discussions, and user comments and responses on social media.

For data analysis, this study follows the phenomenological steps developed by experts, which include several key stages. First, *epoche* or bracketing is conducted, where the researcher suspends personal assumptions to prevent bias in data interpretation. Second, phenomenological reduction is applied by identifying key themes emerging from participants' narratives. Themes were derived through iterative coding and categorization, where significant statements were clustered into meaning units before being synthesized into broader thematic patterns. Third, the patterns of meaning derived from participants' experiences are analyzed in relation to their understanding of religious moderation and digital radicalism. Finally, the research findings are integrated into a broader context, connecting them with religious theories and digital phenomenology.

Ethical considerations were observed by obtaining informed consent from all participants, ensuring anonymity through the use of pseudonyms, and securing confidentiality of digital data. The study followed ethical guidelines for social research

to protect participants' rights and well-being. To ensure data validity, this study employs data triangulation by comparing information obtained from interviews, observations, and document analysis. Additionally, member checking is conducted by verifying the analysis results with participants to ensure the accuracy of data interpretation. The study also applies an audit trail technique, documenting the research process in detail to maintain.

## C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Result

This study found that urban Muslims in Makassar exhibit diverse religious mindsets in navigating the wave of digital radicalism. Interviews with participants aged 18–40 revealed that most respondents access religious content through YouTube and TikTok due to their ease of access and diverse perspectives. These platforms are particularly favored because their algorithms promote content based on user engagement, making it easier for individuals to encounter religious materials aligned with their viewing history and interaction patterns. However, some participants expressed concerns about religious content that tends to be exclusive and provocative, as it often reinforces a singular perspective and discourages critical discussion. This type of content can lead to a narrow and rigid understanding of religion by limiting exposure to diverse interpretations and promoting an uncompromising stance on religious issues. One participant, a 24-year-old university student, stated:

*"I often watch religious lectures on YouTube, but now I'm more selective because many videos tend to target certain groups. I prefer following scholars who emphasize tolerance and dialogue."*

This statement reflects a growing awareness among urban Muslims in Makassar of the need to critically evaluate religious content, driven by increasing digital literacy and firsthand experiences with the negative impacts of extreme content. Additionally, participatory observations in online discussion forums revealed that urban Muslims in Makassar are actively engaged in sharing and discussing religious content. A 30-year-old young professional stated that he joined online communities to discuss a more moderate understanding of Islam:

*"I want to ensure that the teachings I learn are relevant to my social life in this city—not just about halal and haram, but how Islam can be a blessing for all."*

However, some respondents admitted to being exposed to more conservative religious narratives. A 35-year-old housewife shared her experience:

*"At first, I followed accounts that discussed Islam in-depth, but over time, the content became too judgmental. Eventually, I looked for more balanced studies."*

From data triangulation, it was found that urban Muslims in Makassar generally seek religious content that supports moderation and openness, a tendency influenced by their access to moderate scholars and participation in inclusive digital communities. However, challenges remain, particularly in dealing with social media algorithms that often suggest content with more extreme perspectives. These algorithms create a "filter bubble" by continuously recommending similar content based on users' previous interactions, limiting exposure to diverse viewpoints and reinforcing preexisting beliefs.

Some participants also highlighted the crucial role of religious figures and educational institutions in guiding society to avoid falling into digital radicalism. To enhance digital religious literacy, educational institutions can integrate media literacy

into religious studies curricula, provide training on identifying credible online sources, and collaborate with religious scholars to create balanced and accessible digital content.

Overall, this study shows that urban Muslims in Makassar have a high level of awareness in responding to the diversity of religious perspectives on social media. Despite being exposed to various narratives, they tend to adopt a moderate understanding of Islam with a more selective and critical approach to the information they consume. This awareness can be further strengthened through structured educational initiatives that equip individuals with the skills to navigate digital religious content wisely, ensuring that they engage with credible and diverse perspectives rather than falling into algorithm-driven echo chambers.

Meanwhile, the study on urban Muslims in Bandung also found diverse religious mindsets in confronting digital radicalism. Interviews with participants aged 18–40 revealed that most respondents access religious content through YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok. Instagram is particularly favored for religious discussions due to its *live streaming* feature, which allows real-time interaction between scholars and followers, fostering a more engaging and interactive learning experience compared to TikTok, which primarily focuses on short-form content.

Unlike in Makassar, urban Muslims in Bandung tend to be more actively engaged in online religious studies across various digital platforms, with a preference for academic and dialogue-based Islamic content. This tendency is influenced by a stronger religious literacy culture in Bandung, supported by the presence of various academic institutions and study groups that encourage critical thinking and open discussions on Islamic teachings.

A 22-year-old university student stated:

*"I often attend online religious studies via Instagram and YouTube. I have come across provocative content several times, but I try to find other sources to compare perspectives."*

This statement reflects a critical effort in filtering religious information. Awareness of the importance of selecting credible sources is a key aspect of the religious mindset of urban Muslims in Bandung, often influenced by their educational background and involvement in academic communities, which encourage a more analytical and evidence-based approach to religious learning. Furthermore, the study found that digital communities in Bandung significantly influence urban Muslims' understanding of Islam. Many participants were involved in online study groups that prioritize open discussions on contemporary Islamic issues, such as *Ngaji Filsafat* and *Islamic Discourse Forum* on WhatsApp and Telegram, which provide spaces for critical thinking, interfaith dialogue, and contextual interpretations of Islamic teachings.

A 28-year-old professional stated that he actively participates in online communities to broaden his perspective on Islam:

*"In Bandung, there are many study groups that are more inclusive. I join discussions in several WhatsApp groups that explore Islam with an academic approach. This helps me understand religion in a more rational and open manner."*

In terms of digital content consumption, urban Muslims in Bandung are more selective in choosing religious scholars to follow. Some participants revealed that they are more interested in scholars who contextualize Islamic teachings rather than those who adopt an exclusive stance. This indicates a tendency among urban Muslims in Bandung to prioritize a more moderate and socially relevant understanding of religion.

This finding aligns with previous studies, such as those by Rahman & Fauzi (2021) and Suryadi (2023), which highlight how higher religious literacy and exposure to academic discourse contribute to the preference for inclusive and contextualized interpretations of Islam. However, challenges remain. Some participants admitted to being exposed to religious narratives that are more conservative and exclusive. A 35-year-old housewife shared her experience:

*"I used to follow several religious preaching accounts on Instagram, but then I realized that some of them frequently spread narratives that were intolerant toward differences. Now, I'm more careful in selecting study sources."*

Additionally, social media algorithms often push users to consume content aligned with their previous interactions, making it challenging for urban Muslims in Bandung to find balanced content that does not merely reinforce their biases. To address this issue, implementing digital literacy programs focused on algorithm awareness is essential. These programs can educate users on how recommendation systems work, encourage them to diversify their content consumption, and provide strategies for accessing a broader range of religious perspectives beyond their algorithm-driven feeds.

From the results of data triangulation, it was found that despite exposure to various extremist narratives, urban Muslims in Bandung tend to maintain religious moderation values. This trend is supported by various initiatives from the government and religious institutions, such as the *Moderasi Beragama* program launched by the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs and community-based efforts by Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah, which actively promote tolerance, interfaith dialogue, and balanced Islamic teachings through digital platforms and educational programs. They recognize the importance of balance in understanding Islam and tend to seek sources that offer broader perspectives based on scholarly studies.

Overall, this study indicates that urban Muslims in Bandung have a more critical mindset in responding to digital religious content compared to urban Muslim groups in Makassar. A stronger academic environment, community diversity, and access to more moderate religious figures are the main factors shaping this tendency. However, challenges in dealing with social media algorithms and conservative narratives remain a major concern that needs to be addressed through a systematic approach to digital literacy and religious education.

## **Discussion**

The phenomenon of the religious mindset of urban Muslims in Makassar in facing the wave of digital radicalism reflects a complex dynamic between openness to information and selectivity in understanding Islamic teachings. In this context, religious moderation is a key concept that enables individuals to adhere to Islamic teachings while appreciating differences and rejecting extremism.

### **Religious Moderation as an Islamic Principle**

The term *moderation* is often used to describe a position or state that is in the middle, not leaning to the right or left. The word "moderation" itself comes from the Latin *moderatio*, which means balance, neither excessive nor lacking. In a religious context, moderation in Arabic is known as *wasat* or *wasatiyah*, while individuals who practice it are called *wasit*. The word *wasit* has several meanings, including mediator, intermediary, and peacemaker. Based on these terminological definitions, moderation

can be interpreted as a commendable attitude based on righteous teachings, balanced, neither excessive nor deficient in thinking, acting, and behaving. This attitude prevents individuals from extremism in various aspects. In the context of religion, moderation is understood by Muslims as *Islam wasathiyah* or *moderate Islam*, which is an Islamic teaching that takes the middle path, avoids violence, prioritizes peace, tolerance, and upholds noble values. Moderate Islam is also open to change and renewal for the benefit of society and accepts fatwas by considering geographical, social, and cultural conditions.

Islam *rahmatan lil 'alamin* embodies characteristics of religious moderation that must be embedded in one's soul, including.

**Tabel 1.** Karakteristik Moderasi Beragama

Characteristic	Description
<i>Wasathiyah</i>	A perspective that takes a middle path, avoiding excessiveness or reduction in religious teachings. This middle path combines scriptural teachings with societal context.
<i>Tawazun</i>	A perspective of balance that does not deviate from the established guidelines. The term <i>tawazun</i> is derived from <i>mizan</i> , meaning scale or balance.
<i>I'tidal</i>	Derived from the Arabic word <i>adil</i> , meaning fairness. In Indonesian, <i>adil</i> means impartial, not arbitrary.
<i>Tasamuh</i>	Derived from the Arabic word <i>samhun</i> , meaning to facilitate or be tolerant.
<i>Musawah</i>	Equality in status; Islam does not differentiate between people based on personal attributes.
<i>Syuro</i>	In the context of moderation, consultation ( <i>musyawarah</i> ) serves as a solution to minimize and eliminate prejudice and disputes among individuals and groups.
<i>Ishlah</i>	Derived from Arabic, meaning to improve or reconcile.
<i>Awlawiyah</i>	In the context of national life, prioritizing public interest for the common good.
<i>Tathawur Wa Ibtikar</i>	Dynamic and innovative traits, meaning openness to progress and renewal in accordance with contemporary developments for the benefit of society.
<i>Tahadhdhur</i>	Upholding morality, character, noble values, identity, and integrity as <i>khairu ummah</i> (the best community) in human civilization.

Based on the table above, *wasathiyah* represents a perspective or behavior that consistently strives to take a middle position between two extreme behaviors so that neither dominates one's mindset and actions. In the context of moderation, *mizan* (balance) is not merely a physical tool for weighing but signifies justice in all aspects of life, both worldly and in the hereafter. From this explanation, *tawazun* in the context of moderation is understood as acting justly and maintaining balance without bias, accompanied by honesty, so as not to deviate from the established principles. Injustice,



on the other hand, is a way to disrupt the balance and harmony of the universe, which has been ordained by Allah, the Almighty.

*I'tidal* is a perspective that places everything in its rightful place, distributes resources proportionally, upholds rights, and fulfills obligations. As Muslims, we are commanded to act justly toward everyone in all matters and to practice *ihsan* (excellence) with others. Justice is a fundamental value of religious teachings, as societal welfare cannot exist without justice. Islam also teaches that all humans have equal status, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, tradition, culture, or social rank, as everything is determined by the Creator. Humans have no right to alter divine decrees.

In the concept of moderation, *islah* provides a better framework for responding to change and progress based on public interest while upholding the principle of preserving beneficial traditional values and adopting new, better ones for collective welfare. This understanding fosters a society that consistently promotes peace and progress, embraces renewal, and upholds unity in national life. Meanwhile, *awlawiyah* refers to the ability to analyze and identify societal issues comprehensively, enabling individuals to pinpoint core problems and contribute theoretical solutions to address them. As mentioned in the Qur'an:

وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا لِتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَيَكُونَ الرَّسُولُ عَلَيْكُمْ شَهِيدًا

Meaning: *Islam teaches balance in practicing its teachings, as stated in the Qur'an:*

*"And thus We have made you a just (moderate) community so that you will be witnesses over the people, and the Messenger will be a witness over you."*

(RI, 2020)

Surah Al-Baqarah (2:143) emphasizes that Islam advocates balance in all aspects of life, whether in faith (*aqidah*), worship (*ibadah*), or social interactions. The term *wasath* in this verse linguistically means "middle" or "moderate," which, in the Islamic context, signifies a balance between two extremes: rigidity and radicalism on one side and excessive leniency and liberalism on the other. Ibn Kathir's interpretation explains that Muslims are called *ummatan wasathan* because they excel in justice, wisdom, and moderation compared to previous nations. In other words, Islam guides its followers to avoid religious extremism (*ghuluw*) while also not neglecting Islamic teachings.

In the context of urban Muslims in Makassar, interviews indicate that the majority recognize the importance of the *wasathiyah* principle in navigating the digital era's challenges. They tend to follow scholars and religious figures who emphasize balance in interpreting Islamic teachings, particularly when addressing contemporary issues such as pluralism, identity politics, and the spread of radical ideologies on social media. This aligns with Islamic principles that prioritize humanity, wisdom, and tolerance in social interactions. By adhering to the *wasathiyah* concept, urban Muslims in Makassar strive to practice Islam with awareness and intellectual depth, making them less susceptible to extreme narratives in digital spaces.

Similar dynamics are also observed in various multicultural urban settings worldwide. For instance, Muslim communities in Western Europe, such as in London and Paris, face challenges of algorithm-driven exposure to radical content but respond through interfaith dialogue initiatives and robust digital literacy programs. In Southeast Asia, Muslims in Malaysia and Singapore are increasingly engaged with state-supported digital platforms that promote inclusive religious narratives, while in the Middle East, countries such as Egypt and Jordan utilize official Islamic media outlets to disseminate messages of moderation and counter extremism. By comparing the findings from

Makassar and Bandung with these global trends, this study demonstrates that while there are local specificities, the patterns of urban Muslim responses to digital radicalism share commonalities across different contexts.

### **The Challenge of Filtering Digital Information**

The Society 5.0 era presents new challenges for urban Muslims in filtering digital information, particularly in maintaining a moderate (*wasathiyah*) religious understanding (Prihatini and Muhid, 2021; Md Sawari *et al.*, 2022; Mutaqin *et al.*, 2024). Digitalization provides broader and faster access to information, but at the same time, the spread of extreme narratives both radical and liberal has also become more prevalent. Surah Al-Baqarah (2:143) emphasizes that Muslims must be *ummatan wasathan*, a community that upholds balance in religion and serves as witnesses in promoting justice and wisdom.

Interviews with urban Muslims in Makassar reveal difficulties in distinguishing credible religious information from unreliable sources amidst the vast digital landscape. Many respondents acknowledge that social media algorithms often create filter bubbles, where users are repeatedly exposed to content that aligns with their existing beliefs. This phenomenon can reinforce narrow religious perspectives and lead to polarization. Additionally, clickbait tactics in digital preaching often attract public attention with provocative titles, despite lacking strong Islamic scholarly foundations.

The integration of technology into Society 5.0 offers both convenience in accessing religious knowledge and a demand for high digital literacy (Setiawan *et al.*, 2024). According to (Tamphu *et al.*, 2024), Society 5.0 places humans at the center of innovation, requiring them to manage and utilize information wisely (Fauzian, Ramdani and Yudiyanto, 2021). Therefore, urban Muslims must develop critical thinking skills when consuming religious content to avoid falling into digital radicalism that deviates from Islam's *rahmatan lil 'alamin* values.

### **The Role of Education in Strengthening Moderation**

To address these challenges, moderation-based religious education is a crucial solution in equipping society with a balanced understanding of Islam. As highlighted in the interviews, many urban Muslims in Makassar have begun seeking guidance from moderate scholars who emphasize tolerance and wisdom in religious practice. They are also increasingly participating in academic studies that explore *tafsir* (Qur'anic interpretation) and *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) comprehensively. This shift suggests that although the digital era presents challenges, it also provides opportunities for Muslims to cultivate a more critical and inclusive religious mindset in adapting to modern changes (Hidayati and Syamli, 2021).

Thus, in navigating the Society 5.0 era, urban Muslims must foster a moderate attitude supported by strong digital literacy, profound religious understanding, and a commitment to balance in practicing Islam. These efforts align with Islamic teachings that prioritize wisdom and justice in all aspects of life, ensuring that moderation in religion remains a fundamental principle in shaping Islamic civilization in the digital age.

### **The Role of Communities and Education in Preventing Digital Radicalism**

In addressing the challenge of digital radicalism in the Society 5.0 era, the role of communities and education becomes a key factor in shaping a moderate and inclusive religious understanding for urban Muslims (Lestari and Masyithoh, 2023). Effective Islamic education must be able to develop critical and analytical thinking in

understanding religious teachings so that students are not easily influenced by extremist narratives circulating in the digital world. This aligns with the concept of Islamic education, which emphasizes tolerance, justice, and balance in practicing religion. As stated in QS. Al-Baqarah: 143, Muslims are commanded to be *ummatan wasathan*, a moderate community that serves as an example for other civilizations. Therefore, Islamic educational institutions, such as madrasahs and pesantrens, must integrate character education and religious moderation into their curricula, using dialogue-based approaches and contextual understanding of Islamic teachings (Azhari, 2018).

Beyond formal education, communities play a strategic role in fostering critical awareness regarding religious information circulating in the digital world. Urban Muslims are often exposed to filter bubbles and social media algorithms that limit their access to broader Islamic perspectives. Therefore, religious communities and social organizations must actively promote digital literacy based on inclusive Islamic values. Engaging parents, religious figures, and the community in supporting moderate Islamic education can be an effective strategy in preventing radicalization among young generations (Nurhikmah, 2024). Additionally, the use of social media as a positive educational tool must be enhanced to serve as an alternative means of countering radical propaganda spreading online (Musyafak, 2021).

Beyond the general use of social media, the role of religion-specific media channels is also critical in moderating religious narratives. Moderate Islamic television programs, YouTube channels managed by inclusive scholars, official religious applications, and websites operated by credible Islamic institutions can serve as authoritative alternatives for urban Muslim audiences. Several countries have demonstrated the effectiveness of this strategy, such as the use of official Islamic television channels in the Middle East or state-supported religious applications in Southeast Asia (Rahman, 2022; Yusuf, 2024). In the Indonesian context, strengthening the visibility and credibility of moderate religious media could provide constructive alternative narratives and balance the dominance of radical content in the digital sphere.

In the context of Society 5.0, where technology increasingly dominates daily life (Malik, 2018; Park, Kim and Park, 2021; Setiyadi, Isnaeni and Ellianawati, 2021; Liam, Hui and Carsten, 2023; Setiadi *et al.*, 2023), the greatest challenge for urban Muslims is how to filter the vast amount of digital information available across various social media platforms. Digital radicalism often exploits algorithms and recommendation systems that unconsciously shape individuals' thinking in understanding religion. Therefore, Islamic education must adopt learning methods that not only focus on academic knowledge but also equip students with digital literacy skills. Critical understanding of credible Islamic information sources should be incorporated into the curriculum so that young generations can differentiate between authentic Islamic teachings and extremist propaganda (Faisal and Martin, 2019; Tabroni *et al.*, 2022; Merma-Molina *et al.*, 2023).

Furthermore, religious communities must adapt to technological advancements to strengthen their role as the primary defenders of religious moderation. Islamic studies should be widely published in engaging digital formats, such as educational videos, podcasts, or infographics, to reach a broader audience, especially young people who are more familiar with the digital world. Additionally, preachers and Islamic scholars should actively utilize social media as a platform for spreading messages of

peaceful and inclusive Islam. The use of artificial intelligence (AI) and data analytics can also assist in systematically detecting and countering the spread of radical ideologies (Hernawati and Mulyani, 2023)..

On the other hand, collaboration between educational institutions, communities, and the government is essential in formulating policies that support efforts to prevent digital radicalism. A strategic step includes strengthening character education programs based on moderate Islam in schools and madrasahs, as well as organizing digital literacy training for teachers, parents, and community leaders (Trisnawati and Sugito, 2020; Agustian and Salsabila, 2021; Tamin, Ubadah and Mashuri, 2022). Additionally, stricter regulations are needed to monitor the spread of deviant religious content without violating the principles of freedom of expression.

With the synergy between critical-thinking-based Islamic education, active community involvement in guiding the Muslim population, and supportive policies for religious moderation, urban Muslims will be better prepared to face challenges in the digital era. They will not only become intelligent technology users but also possess a strong Islamic foundation to maintain a balance between technological utilization and correct religious understanding. In this regard, Islam, as a *rahmatan lil 'alamin* (a mercy to all worlds), must continue to be introduced as a way of life that is peaceful, compassionate, and relevant to modern developments, offering solutions to contemporary challenges without falling into extremism.

#### D. CONCLUSION

This study reveals that urban Muslims in Makassar and Bandung exhibit diverse religious perspectives in responding to the wave of digital radicalism. While both groups access religious content through digital platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram, they differ in how they filter and interpret religious information. Urban Muslims in Makassar tend to be more selective, favoring studies that emphasize moderation and tolerance, although they still face challenges from social media algorithms that frequently recommend exclusive and provocative content. In contrast, urban Muslims in Bandung are more actively engaged in online academic-based study communities and open dialogues, which help them develop a more rational and contextual understanding of Islam. The findings also reveal that digital communities play a crucial role in shaping the religious understanding of urban Muslims. In Makassar, many individuals began seeking alternative religious studies after realizing that some da'wah accounts promoted judgmental and intolerant narratives. Meanwhile, in Bandung, participation in academic-based online study forums has been a key factor in fostering a more critical religious mindset. However, in both Makassar and Bandung, some participants admitted to having been exposed to conservative content that could potentially narrow their religious perspectives.

Overall, this study indicates that urban Muslims in Bandung have a more critical mindset in responding to digital religious content compared to urban Muslim groups in Makassar. A stronger academic environment, community diversity, and access to more moderate religious figures are the main factors shaping this tendency. However, challenges in dealing with social media algorithms and conservative narratives remain a major concern that needs to be addressed through a systematic approach to digital literacy and religious education. To enhance digital literacy among urban Muslims, concrete policies should be implemented, such as integrating digital literacy modules

into religious education curricula, conducting workshops on critical media consumption in collaboration with religious and academic institutions, and promoting government-supported fact-checking initiatives to counter misinformation in religious content. Additionally, partnerships with social media platforms can be established to develop algorithmic transparency features that allow users to access a more diverse range of religious perspectives. Despite challenges posed by social media algorithms and extremist narratives, urban Muslims in both cities tend to adopt a more moderate and selective approach when consuming religious content.

Therefore, systematic efforts in digital literacy and religious education through the roles of religious leaders and educational institutions are essential to guide society toward an inclusive and contextual understanding of Islam in the digital era. As a practical implication, this study recommends that policymakers integrate digital literacy into national deradicalization programs and religious education curricula at schools and universities. Religious organizations should strengthen the role of moderate scholars and preachers in producing alternative digital content that is inclusive, tolerant, and accessible to the wider public. Meanwhile, educators at schools and higher education institutions need to develop project-based and dialogical learning methods to equip younger generations with the ability to critically evaluate religious information. Cross-sector collaboration between government bodies, educational institutions, and religious communities is therefore essential to reinforce religious moderation amidst the growing wave of digital radicalism.

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