



The Role of Social Media in Constructing Religious Moderation Discourse: an Analysis of Tiktok

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Received: 3 Juli 2025 | Accepted: 11 Agustus 2025 | Published: 31 Desember 2025

Abstract

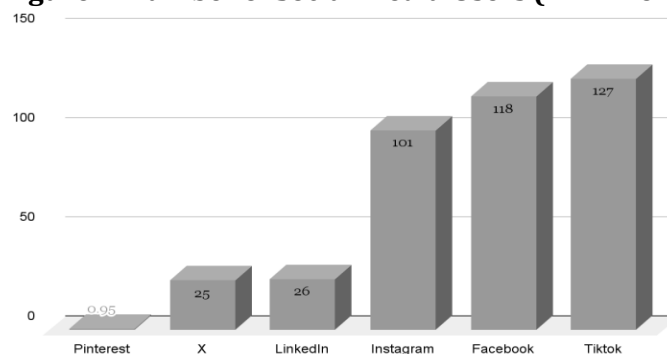
The transformation of religious communication in the digital era has positioned social media as a new space for disseminating religious values. TikTok, as one of the most popular platforms in Indonesia, functions not only as a source of entertainment but also as an arena for contesting religious discourse. This study aims to examine the role of TikTok in shaping the discourse of religious moderation among the younger generation. The method employed is a literature review using a thematic approach, involving analysis of various academic publications from 2020 to 2025 that are relevant to the themes of religious moderation, social media, and digital communication. The findings indicate that several TikTok content creators have successfully represented the values of moderation—such as *tawasuth* (moderation), *tasamuh* (tolerance), *tawazun* (balance), and *i'tidal* (justice)—through visual storytelling, informal language, and communication strategies that are contextual and adaptive to digital culture. Nevertheless, several challenges remain, such as the dominance of extreme religious narratives, negative audience responses, and limited digital literacy. This study concludes that TikTok holds strategic potential for disseminating messages of moderate and inclusive religiosity, provided that appropriate communication strategies are employed, digital literacy is strengthened, and collaboration is fostered among content creators, communities, and religious institutions through the establishment of a systematic and organized moderation content task force.

Keywords: Digital Da'wah, Religious Literacy, Religious Moderation, Social Media, Tiktok.

1. INTRODUCTION

Religious communication in the digital era has undergone a significant transformation in tandem with the growing penetration of the internet. This shift demands that the strategies for conveying religious messages adapt to the patterns of digital consumption. Digitalization has led society to coexist with social media (Nasution, 2019). A report titled “*Digital 2024 Indonesia*” states that the total number of social media users in Indonesia has reached 167 million, accounting for 60.4% of the total population. This indicates that social media platforms have become viable channels for shaping and disseminating religious narratives within digital society. As the number of social media users continues to rise, TikTok has emerged as one of the most widely used platforms across various age groups (Kushardianti, 2021).

Figure 1. Number of Social Media Users (in millions)



Source: datareportal (2024)



TikTok has become one of the most popular social media platforms in Indonesia. Its short video format, combined with personalized algorithms, has made it a dynamic and accessible space for communication across diverse audiences (Adistri & Rusman, 2024). Today, TikTok has evolved into a medium for religious preaching (*dakwah*), learning, and even debate surrounding issues of faith (Parhan et al., 2022). The platform’s openness to public opinion creates a duality of perception regarding its use. The phenomenon of "TikTok preachers"—Muslim content creators who convey religious messages through short videos—is a concrete manifestation of the transformation of religious discourse. Their use of informal language, engaging visuals, and contemporary approaches serves to communicate messages effectively to users (Andayani et al., 2025).

However, not all religious content on TikTok is positive or promotes moderation. A key finding from PPIM UIN Jakarta (2020), through the CONVEY Indonesia program, revealed that conservative religious narratives dominate social media at 67.2%, followed by moderate (22.2%), liberal (6.1%), and Islamist (4.5%) perspectives. Fitriyah and Yaqin (2024) argue that the religious content consumed online can influence individual perspectives on tolerance and diversity. This highlights that TikTok is not merely an entertainment platform but also a powerful agent of change in shaping religious understanding. The transformation of the public sphere from conventional to digital media has influenced how religious discourse is disseminated (Mabrur & Khairul, 2022). On social media, anyone can become a “religious authority” without clear scholarly accountability. This often leads to the oversimplification of religious teachings and binary framing of truth, opening the door to the growth of exclusive ideologies that claim absolute truth while marginalizing groups with differing beliefs or religious views.

Table 1. Comparative Analysis of Intolerance in the Digital and Physical Worlds

Aspect	Digital Sphere	Physical Sphere
Forms of intolerance expression	Hate speech, religious hoaxes, provocative comments, offensive meme content	Direct discrimination, social exclusion, symbolic violence, physical violence
Perpetrators	Anonymous users, fake accounts, extremist influencers	Real individuals or community groups, radical organizations
Reach and distribution	Fast, viral, reaching a global audience within minutes	Geographically limited, local or community-based
General motivation	Popularity, monetization, ideological agenda, provocation	Ideological, social pressure, political or economic interests
Public response	Comment polarization, echo chambers, cyberbullying actions	Community reactions, mediation by community leaders, or reporting to authorities
Legal handling	Difficult to trace, dependent on platform policy and cyber regulations	Easier to verify, can be directly prosecuted by law
Media’s role	Amplifies intolerant narratives through algorithmic bias	Conventional media can filter content, but may also provoke if lacking neutrality
Victim vulnerability	Anyone can be targeted, including moderate figures and minorities	Typically religious minorities, belief groups, or vulnerable local communities

Source: Author’s compilation



Amid the rising tide of intolerance, the urgency of promoting the values of religious moderation becomes increasingly apparent. Phenomena such as hate speech, discrimination against minority groups, and the proliferation of exclusive religious narratives frequently surface in digital spaces (Nole & Lauterboom, 2024). Additionally, out-of-context clips of religious sermons often go viral and are used as a basis for attacking particular groups or viewpoints (Musyafak & Ulama'i, 2020). These tensions not only disrupt social harmony but also threaten the foundation of diversity that characterizes the Indonesian nation. In the context of Indonesia's pluralism, values such as tolerance, justice, and inclusivity form the foundation of religious moderation practices that can address the challenges of an increasingly borderless digital era (Haluti et al., 2025). The rapid and uncontrollable flow of information requires society to be more discerning in filtering religious messages. This underscores the importance of strengthening both religious and digital literacy to foster critical understanding of religious texts.

In the context of religious literacy, religious moderation offers an opportunity to balance commitment to faith with openness to diversity (Saputra, 2021). Religious moderation also serves as a bridge between Islamic values and national identity. The core values of religious moderation include *tawasuth* (moderation), *tasamuh* (tolerance), *tawazun* (balance), and *i'tidal* (justice) (Haidar et al., 2023). A moderate religious attitude can sustain social harmony and reinforce national integration amid identity-based conflicts. When Islamic values rooted in *rahmatan lil 'alamin* (mercy to all creation) are practiced contextually and inclusively, religion becomes a source of peace and inspiration rather than division.

Since 2019, the Indonesian government through the Ministry of Religious Affairs has formally mainstreamed the Religious Moderation Program (Sazali & Mustafa, 2023). This program aims to build social harmony and counter religious radicalism that has the potential to divide the nation. Religious moderation has also been incorporated into the National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN) and integrated into the curricula of various educational institutions (Noviani & Yanuarti, 2023). Furthermore, the government promotes the integration of moderation values into the curricula of Islamic schools (*madrasah*), *pesantren*, and religious higher education institutions.

Figure 2. Religious Moderation Development in the Formal Sector



Source: www.kemenag.go.id

On the other hand, social media and digital spaces have begun to be recognized as strategic tools for disseminating peaceful and tolerant religious narratives. The government has collaborated with young figures, content creators, and digital communities to produce religious content that is peaceful, educational, and in line with national values. Campaigns promoting religious moderation have also been expanded through festivals, interfaith dialogues, and digital content competitions involving youth from various regions.

However, a major gap remains in the uneven quality and distribution of human resources responsible for implementation. In some regions, educators and religious counselors lack strong literacy in religious moderation and may even perpetuate conservative narratives that counteract program goals. The absence of systematic monitoring and evaluation often renders the program ceremonial and ineffective in addressing core issues (Rofik, 2021). Therefore, structural improvements are



needed to enhance the effectiveness of religious moderation initiatives in society.

The urgency of this study lies in the reality that social media—especially TikTok—is no longer merely a space for entertainment but has evolved into a new ecosystem for shaping public religious opinion. Religious discourse on TikTok influences not only individual understanding but also contributes to the formation of collective narratives around tolerance, diversity, and moderation. With its powerful algorithm, TikTok is capable of disseminating religious messages rapidly and widely, whether constructive or problematic. Unfortunately, there remains a scarcity of academic studies that specifically focus on TikTok as the primary subject in the analysis of religious discourse, particularly within the framework of religious moderation. This article aims to fill that gap by examining how moderate religious narratives are constructed, communicated, and received on TikTok.

2. METHOD

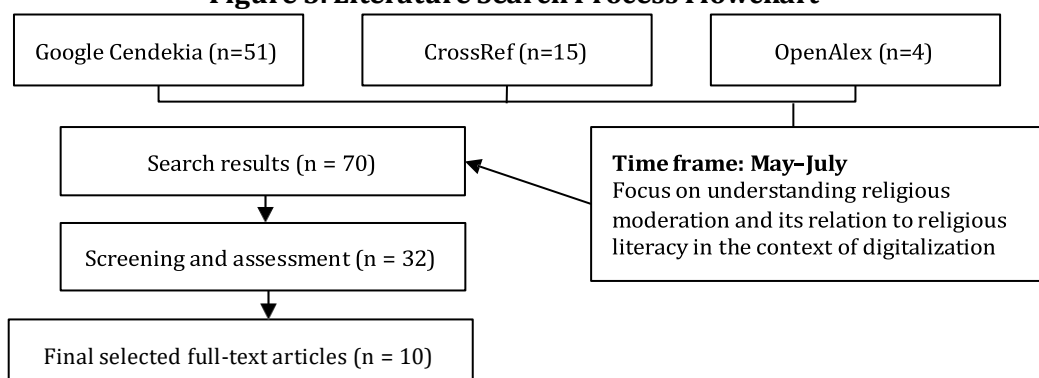
This study employed a literature review as its research method. A literature review involves collecting, evaluating, and analyzing various scholarly sources relevant to the research topic (Ridwan et al., 2021). This method was chosen because the study aims to explore and analyze previous scholarly findings related to religious discourse, social media, and religious moderation—specifically within the context of TikTok usage. The inclusion criteria for literature selection are as follows:

1. Relevance to the themes of religious moderation, digital discourse, and religious communication;
2. Publication between 2020 and 2025 to ensure data currency; and
3. Originating from academic sources or credible institutions.

Meanwhile, literature that was purely opinion-based without methodological grounding or that lacked direct relevance to the focus of this article was excluded from the analysis. The author's process in sourcing, assessing, and selecting relevant literature is illustrated in Figure 3.

Data analysis is conducted in a descriptive-analytical manner, namely by classifying important themes, examining the interrelationships between concepts, and critiquing emerging discourse trends, in order to obtain a comprehensive picture of the strategies, practices, and challenges of strengthening religious moderation in the realm of social media. The researcher also considers historical, sociological, and political aspects in analyzing religious digital narratives, ensuring that the analysis is not merely superficial but also reveals the ideological and cultural dimensions that accompany them. Through this approach, it is hoped that the research can contribute both theoretically and practically to the development of an inclusive and tolerant model of religious communication amid the complex currents of political and religious digitalization in Indonesia.

Figure 3. Literature Search Process Flowchart



Source : Author, 2025



As depicted in Figure 3, 51 sources were obtained from Google Scholar, 15 from CrossRef, and 4 from OpenAlex. These sources then underwent a screening and assessment phase based on the author's evaluation criteria. The selected literature was analyzed using a thematic analysis approach. This process involved categorizing recurring major themes, such as:

1. representation of religious moderation on social media,
2. strategies of digital religious communication,
3. the role of algorithms and virality in shaping religious opinions, and
4. the impact of TikTok content on the religious understanding of the younger generation.

The selected literature formed the basis for the author's analysis of the role of social media—particularly TikTok—in shaping religious moderation discourse.



Table 2. List of Selected Journals Using Thematic Analysis

No	Research Title	Author (Citation)	Accreditation	Objectives	Methodology	Research Findings	Research Gap
1	<i>Moderasi Beragama dalam Ruang Digital: Studi Pengarusutamaan Moderasi Beragama di Perguruan Tinggi Keagamaan Islam Negeri</i>	Wildani Hefni (Hefni, 2020)	Published in <i>Jurnal Bimas Islam</i> , the official journal of the Directorate General of Islamic Education, Ministry of Religious Affairs, Republic of Indonesia	1.To document efforts to mainstream religious moderation in the digital realm 2.To explore the role of Islamic State Higher Education Institutions (PTKIN) as "laboratories of peace" that promote moderate and tolerant narratives through digital media	This qualitative study adopts an exploratory-descriptive approach, focusing on describing and exploring the phenomenon of promoting moderate content on digital platforms by PTKIN	- The digital world facilitates the dissemination of religious narratives that may be extreme and conflict-prone - PTKIN leverage this momentum to offer content that promotes moderation, creating counter-narratives that are both moderate	- This article serves as a preliminary study and lacks interviews, surveys, or quantitative content analysis of PTKIN's digital media - Specific strategies (e.g., YouTube, Instagram, memes, etc.) and performance metrics have not yet been explored or analyzed



						and tolerant	
2	<i>Moderasi Beragama dalam Bingkai Toleransi: Moderasi Beragama dalam Bingkai Toleransi</i>	Mhd. Abror (Abror, 2020)	Published in a Sinta 4 accredited journal	To conduct an in-depth analysis of the concept of religious moderation through the lens of tolerance, particularly concerning the boundaries of permissible and impermissible actions in interreligious social interactions	The study employs a literature-based research methodology. Data were gathered from relevant literature and subsequently analyzed using content analysis to construct a theoretical framework for religious moderation within the context of tolerance	- Religious moderation plays a crucial role in fostering interreligious harmony - Tolerance is not defined as the merging of beliefs, but as tolerance in <i>mu'amalah</i> (social interactions), which operates within mutually agreed-upon boundaries	- The study does not address practical implementation, such as how decisions on what is 'permissible' vs. 'impermissible' are translated into real-world practice - It lacks a comparative analysis of the concept of moderation from the perspectives of different religious figures or traditions



3	<i>Prinsip Moderasi Beragama dalam Kehidupan Berbangsa</i>	Mustaqim Hasan (Hasan, 2021)	Published in a Sinta 4 accredited journal	To explore and articulate the principles of religious moderation within the context of national life in Indonesia, proposing them as a solution to the challenges of extremism and radicalism in the era of globalization	The study utilizes a literature-based research approach. Data were drawn from official documents, existing literature, and theoretical studies	The author details ten principles of religious moderation: <i>tawassuth</i> , <i>tawazun</i> , <i>i'tidāl</i> , <i>tasamuh</i> , <i>musawah</i> , <i>syura</i> , <i>ishlāh</i> , <i>aulawiyah</i> , <i>tathawwur</i> <i>wa ibtikar</i> , and <i>tahadhḍur</i> . These principles are presented as a framework for safeguarding national diversity and countering radical ideologies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The paper lacks case studies or concrete examples of how these principles are applied within communities or institutions - It does not analyze the contextualization of these principles in relation to contemporary phenomena, such as digitalization and identity politics
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4	<i>Moderasi Beragama; dari Indonesia untuk Dunia</i>	Babun Suharto (Suharto, 2021)	An anthology by the rectors of PTKIN (State Islamic Higher Education Institutions)	To define and formulate religious moderation as a uniquely Indonesian model with both local and global relevance	Utilizes a documentary analysis approach, examining archives, policies, and the discourse on moderation within PTKINs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Religious moderation is positioned as the core identity of Islamic Education, one that is harmonious with <i>Pancasila</i> and the Indonesian national identity - PTKIN campus media are described as a 'fortress' for disseminating moderation and a tool for countering the challenge of radicalism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The work lacks a comparative study; the differing approaches of each sector are not analyzed in-depth - Despite a title suggesting a global scope ('for the world'), the book insufficiently explores the international implications of the Indonesian model of moderation
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5	<p><i>Moderasi Beragama: Landasan Moderasi dalam Tradisi Berbagai Agama dan Implementasi di Era Disrupsi Digital</i></p>	<p>Muria Khusnun Nisa, Ahmad Yani, Andika Andika, Eka Mulyo Yunus, dan Yusuf Rahman (Nisa <i>et al.</i>, 2021)</p>	<p>Licensed under CC-BY-SA</p>	<p>This article discusses the fundamental principles of moderation derived from various world religious traditions and examines their implementation in the era of digital disruption.</p>	<p>The research employs a qualitative-descriptive-analytical method using a literature review approach, focusing on religious traditions (Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism) as well as the digital context</p>	<p>- Religious moderation has universal foundations rooted in major world religions And civilizations - Its implementation in the era of digital disruption is essential for shaping a generation that is resilient against radical ideologies in cyberspace</p>	<p>- It lacks platform-specific analysis and does not adequately address targeted Strategies for social media, applications, forums, and other digital spaces - It does not provide measurable indicators to assess the success of moderation efforts in digital domains, such as user engagement, attitudinal change, and related metrics</p>
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6	<i>Manajemen Pendidikan Moderasi Beragama di Era Digital</i>	Muhammad Faisal (Faisal, 2020)	Proceedings Article – ICRHD: Journal of International Conference on Religion, Humanity and Development	This article describes the management process of religious moderation education in the digital era, covering planning, organizing, directing, supervising, and evaluating efforts to achieve a balanced moderation goal	The study employs a qualitative Approach through a literature review, supported by secondary data, including the 2017 survey by PPIM UIN Jakarta	- The internet in the era of disruption has had a significant impact on the rise of intolerance among Generation Z - Digitalization has transformed the way religious education is accessed and practiced; students increasingly rely on online media, highlighting the need for adaptive educational management that responds to digital realities	- It lacks primary data, Relying solely on a single 2017 survey without incorporating more recent empirical findings - It does not discuss strategies, content design, engagement metrics, or the effectiveness of religious moderation efforts on social media platforms
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7	<i>Literasi Moderasi Beragama Sebagai Reaktualisasi "Jihad Milenial" Era 4.0</i>	Dedi Wahyudi dan Novita Kurniasih (Wahyudi dan Kurniasih, 2021)	Licensed under CC-BY-SA and indexed in DOAJ	Explores the concept of "millennial jihad" as an effort to promote religious moderation literacy through the use of information technology in the era of Industry 4.0, aiming to spread the values of <i>Islam rahmatan lil 'alamin</i> in digital spaces	Adopts a qualitative-library approach, using literature review and descriptive-analytical analysis of books, journals, and other relevant scholarly sources	- The concept of "millennial jihad" is interpreted as a contemporary form of jihad that is flexibly and contextually relevant to the digital age - Religious moderation literacy is considered a strategic tool to engage digital-native millennials with moderate values and counter extremist narratives in-	- It does not provide concrete examples of how "millennial jihad" is implemented on platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, or other digital forums
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							cyberspace
8	<i>Dakwah Digital sebagai Sarana Peningkatan Pemahaman Moderasi Beragama di Kalangan Pemuda</i>	Muh. Iqbal dan Asman Asman (Iqbal dan Asman, 2021)	Indexed in SINTA 2	Examines the extent to which digital <i>dakwah</i> influences young people's understanding of religious moderation, while also exploring the concept of digital etiquette in the practice of online preaching	The study uses a qualitative approach through literature review and content analysis, processed by data reduction and the construction of new conceptual frameworks	- The youth's familiarity with social media is seen as a significant opportunity for them to disseminate digital <i>dakwah</i> content	- The concept of digital preaching etiquette (<i>adab dakwah digital</i>) is not elaborated — the notion of "online <i>dakwah</i> ethics" is not discussed in detail



9	<i>Internalisasi Nilai-nilai Moderasi Beragama Abad 21 Melalui Media Sosial</i>	Andi Saefulloh Anwar, Kardi Leo, Uus Ruswandi, dan Mohamad Erihadiana (Anwar <i>et al.</i> , 2022)	Indexed in SINTA 4	Explores the formulation and internalization process of 21st-century religious moderation values through social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, YouTube), aiming to strengthen digital literacy in the era of Industry 4.0 among millennials	Based on library research, employing textual and contextual analysis of literature related to religious moderation and social media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Religious moderation and the role of social media are viewed as mutually reinforcing in cultivating a moderate mindset - Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube are identified as effective strategies for internalizing moderation values among millennials in the digital era 	The target group is generalized as “millennials,” without further demographic segmentation by age range, background, or geographic location
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10	<p><i>Revitalisasi Syiar Moderasi Beragama di Media Sosial: Gaungkan Konten Moderasi untuk Membangun Harmonisasi</i></p>	<p>Saibatul Hamdi, Munawarah, dan Hamidah (Hamdi <i>et al.</i>, 2021)</p>	<p>Indexed in SINTA 4</p>	<p>1.This article reveals the “bleak portrait” of the absence of religious moderation narratives on social media 2.It assesses the urgency and strategies for revitalizing moderation content to safeguard diversity 3.It encourages the involvement of government bodies, religious institutions, and individuals in promoting creative moderation content</p>	<p>The study is based on library research</p>	<p>- The absence of moderation -oriented narratives on social media has created a space dominated by conservativ e ideologies - Contempor ary moderate content Should portray a humanistic and accommoda tive vision of Islam - The revitalizatio n of religious messaging can be implemente d through a three-level approach: the governmen t,</p>	<p>The differences in effectiveness among the proposed agents — such as the comparative impact of government campaigns, religious institutions, and influencers — have not been Empirically analyzed in terms of audience reception</p>
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religious
institutions,
and
individuals
through
creative
content
initiatives

Source : Literature Review. 2025



3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The TikTok platform has become a dynamic space for expressing religious narratives, including those promoting religious moderation. Within the wide array of content available, values such as *tawasuth* (moderation), *tasamuh* (tolerance), *tawazun* (balance), and *i'tidal* (justice) are often represented through lighthearted communication styles, visually engaging formats, and approaches that resonate with the digital culture of youth. Moderation content is frequently packaged in short videos that respond to current issues, answer audience questions, or offer counter-narratives to extremist content. For instance, several content creators refute exclusive religious interpretations by citing verses or hadiths that emphasize compassion, interfaith dialogue, and contextual understanding. Each content creator has a unique style of *dakwah* and focuses on different aspects of religious teachings. Examples of content creators promoting religious moderation are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Content Analysis of Religious Moderation by TikTok Creators

Moderation Value	TikTok Creator	Username / Account	Content Description	Representation of Value
<i>Tawasuth</i>	Ali Hamza	@AliHamza	Light, educational Islamic preaching blended with humorous stories and unique facts. Non-extremist and non-provocative	Neutral and balanced between tradition and contemporary context. Does not lean toward either conservative or liberal narratives
<i>Tasamuh</i>	Husain Basyaiba n	@kadamsidik00	Content under the theme " <i>Toleransi Woy</i> " discusses the importance of mutual respect among religious communities	Promotes mutual respect without compromising or blending religious beliefs
<i>Tawazun</i>	Ustadz Agam	@hiyung_agam	Preaching campaign and fundraising for Qur'an distribution; combines spirituality with social action	Demonstrates a balance between ritual worship and social contribution
<i>I'tidal</i>	Agam & Husain (kolaborasi)	@hiyung_agam x @basyasman00	Social movement: Qur'an donations, live TikTok transparency, creative collaborations	A tangible effort toward realizing distributive justice in religious education

Source: TikTok. 2025

The table above demonstrates that the values of religious moderation have been creatively represented by several TikTok content creators. *Dakwah* is delivered using approaches that align with the characteristics of digital media users, especially the younger generation. These four creators highlight the potential of TikTok as a strategic medium for disseminating peaceful and inclusive religious narratives. In this context, digital religious communication strategies become crucial for promoting moderation values on social media, particularly TikTok. This platform requires a different approach than conventional *dakwah* methods. Content creators advocating moderate narratives must be able to deliver religious messages concisely, engagingly, and contextually. This involves not only the message's substance but also the delivery style—both verbally and visually.

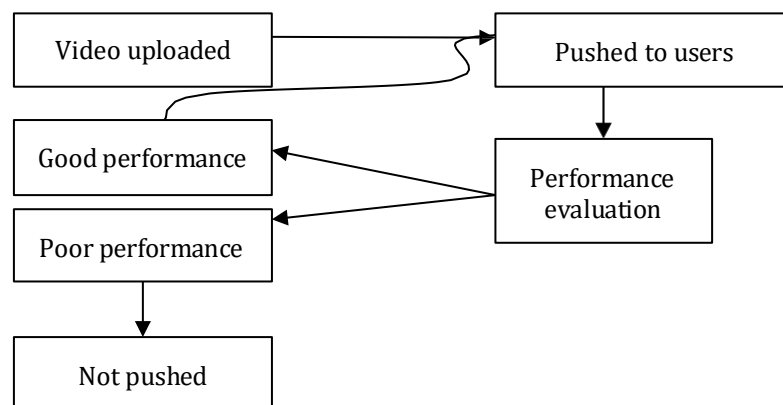


The communication style used by moderate creators tends to be informal, dialogic, and adaptive to the digital habits of younger users (Mutakin & Khasanah, 2023). Preaching in overly formal or rhetorical language is often perceived as “distant” and irrelevant by Generation Z audiences. Therefore, the use of colloquial language, trendy expressions, and popular metaphors is commonly employed to bridge religious messages with digital youth culture. This style does not diminish the message's substance; instead, it is a deliberate strategy to reach a broader audience.

In moderate communication on TikTok, visualization plays a key role. Creators who present themselves authentically are generally more trusted than those who appear rigid or preachy (Iqbal & Asman, 2021). Some creators even incorporate light animations or visual effects to enhance the appeal of their messages. Proper use of background, good lighting, and friendly facial expressions can significantly increase audience trust and engagement.

This trend is also driven by TikTok’s algorithm, which has its own structural logic. Content creators must understand how this algorithm works to ensure their dakwah content is both effective and well-targeted. The algorithm is summarized in Figure 4.

Figure 4. TikTok Video Algorithm



TikTok’s algorithm operates by initially pushing newly uploaded videos to a small group of viewers. It then evaluates the video’s performance based on metrics such as watch duration, watch-through rate, number of shares, comments, and likes. If the video performs well, it is promoted to a wider audience; if not, its distribution is limited. This mechanism highlights that the spread of content—including moderate religious messages—largely depends on early audience responses and the quality of engagement it generates. Therefore, creators must adapt to both the platform’s algorithm and their audience’s preferences.

Table 4. Top Five Religious Moderation Content Creators (June 2025)

No.	TikTok Creator	Total Followers (TikTok)	Content Focus
1	Ustadz Abdul Somad	4.6 million @sahabatuaschannel	<i>Fiqh</i> and <i>tafsir</i> lectures, spiritual motivation, studies on the Qur’an and Hadith
2	Husain Basyaiban	6.3 million @kadamsidik00	Light preaching, Q&A, Qur’anic recitation (<i>murrotal</i>), tolerance themes (“Toleransi Woy”), viral social reactions



3	Ustadz Adi Hidayat	1.2 million @adihidayatoffici4l	Hadith and tafsir studies, moderate discourse, ulama certification, intellectual discussions
4	Ustadz Syamsuddin Nur Makka	3.3 million @syam_elmarusy	Islamic law, family inspiration, daily <i>dakwah</i> activities, institutional religious propagation
5	Hiyung Agam	1.4 million @heyouw0	Practical <i>fiqh</i> explanations, correction of misleading content, traditional Islamic book studies

Source: Author. 2025

The five TikTok creators promoting religious moderation demonstrate a variety of approaches, ranging from traditional *dakwah* to lighthearted and interactive content, with delivery styles tailored to the characteristics of younger audiences. The high number of followers and audience engagement indicates that moderate messages can be widely accepted if presented in a relevant, communicative, and digitally dynamic manner. In several instances, moderate content creators collaborate with religious institutions such as the Ministry of Religious Affairs, Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*), or digital *dakwah* communities. These collaborations foster a more structured *dakwah* ecosystem and strengthen the legitimacy of moderate messages in digital spaces. For example, the “Moderasi Beragama untuk Gen Z” campaign involved Muslim influencers in producing short-form content that was curated and disseminated through both official and personal channels. Such partnerships effectively reach audiences previously untouched by institutional approaches.

Various studies have shown that today’s youth are more likely to obtain religious knowledge through social media than from formal institutions. A study by Parhan et al. (2022) revealed that Muslim students at the Indonesia University of Education (UPI) identified TikTok as one of the main sources for relevant and easily accessible *dakwah* content. This phenomenon points to a shift in religious authority from formal institutions to digital content creators, many of whom lack formal training in religious scholarship. Nevertheless, the presence of moderate creators offers a significant opportunity to disseminate values of tolerance and contextual Islamic understanding.

Creators like Husain Basyaiban (@kadamsidik00), who actively discusses interfaith tolerance in an accessible and engaging style, have reached millions of young viewers. Videos emphasizing mutual respect, peaceful coexistence, and countering hate speech have fostered healthy discourse in the comment sections. This illustrates TikTok’s potential as a strategic platform for mainstreaming religious moderation. Moreover, features such as “stitch” or “duet” allow users to express opinions or provide counter-narratives, serving as effective tools for shaping open religious discourse. This interactivity distinguishes TikTok from conventional *dakwah* media.

However, not all responses are positive. Moderate narratives often struggle for visibility amidst the influx of popular religious content that tends to be binary and simplistic. Some moderate content even faces backlash from ideologically polarized audiences. Cynical or provocative comments remain prevalent, especially when content touches on sensitive topics such as sectarian differences, divergent religious practices, or interfaith relations. This indicates that while TikTok offers a space for expression, it is equally susceptible to conflict dynamics and digital exclusion, mirroring tensions in the offline world.

In certain areas—particularly rural regions—access to high-speed internet, proper devices, and balanced digital religious content remains limited. As a result, communities may be more vulnerable to provocative or intolerant religious content due to a lack of credible alternatives. This digital gap exacerbates misinformation and undermines the presence of moderate narratives.

Against this backdrop, digital literacy becomes a crucial requirement for young people in navigating religious content on TikTok. Digital literacy encompasses the ability to understand context, evaluate



sources, and distinguish between educational and misleading forms of dakwah. Without comprehensive literacy, young audiences are easily swayed by extreme narratives or may unknowingly spread religious disinformation. Such literacy also helps audiences realize that viral popularity does not necessarily correlate with the truth or scholarly validity of the content.

In addition to literacy, counter-narrative strategies against extremist content are an urgent necessity. Counter-narratives do not imply confrontation, but rather involve providing alternative content that is factual, inclusive, and emotionally resonant. For instance, when content targets a particular group, moderate creators can produce calm, well-referenced, and visually appealing responses to offer clarification without triggering further conflict. However, effective counter-narratives must also consider timing and format. Delayed responses may lose viral momentum, while overly academic formats may fail to reach the general audience. Therefore, a creative team capable of responding swiftly and accurately to current issues is essential. The establishment of a “religious moderation content task force” at the community or university level could serve as an innovative solution

Table 5. Projected Effectiveness of Forming a Religious Moderation Content Task Force

Aspect	Before the Task Force	After the Task Force
Dominant narrative	Dominated by conservative, exclusive, or extreme content; moderate narratives were fragmented	Moderate narratives begin to be more coordinated, consistent, and gain wider exposure
Production of moderate content	Unstructured, sporadic, reliant on individual initiatives	Organized, theme-based, with editorial planning and long-term strategy
Visual and technical quality	Many moderate contents lagged behind in visual appeal and trends due to creators' limited skills	Significantly improved with the support of creative teams and adaptive media strategies
Response to viral issues	Slow, reactive, sometimes uncoordinated	Quick, strategic, based on monitoring and task assignments
Audience literacy	Limited religious and digital education; the public is easily influenced by religious hoaxes	Regular educational content on tolerance, ethics in preaching, and religious literacy is provided
Collaboration among actors	Minimal; each preaching actor operated independently	Partnerships are established among institutions, communities, and content creators
Effectiveness of counter-narratives	Weak; difficult to compete with rapidly spreading extreme narratives	More effective; counter-content is delivered timely with engaging formats

Source: Author. 2025

A religious moderation content task force is projected to transform digital religious communication from being unstructured to becoming more strategic, responsive, and collaborative. This transformation increases the chances for moderate religious narratives to rival—and even displace—the dominance of intolerant narratives in digital spaces such as TikTok. To ensure the effectiveness of such a task force, the following elements are essential:



1. Community-based formation (e.g., universities, digital pesantren, youth organizations).
2. Support through official regulations and platforms (e.g., Ministry of Religious Affairs or Ministry of Communication and Information).
3. Inclusion of public figures or influencers as spokespersons to broaden outreach.
4. Development of a thematic content roadmap, covering topics such as tolerance, anti-religious hoaxes, and digital civility education.

In today's digital era, *dakwah* is no longer just about conveying the truth—it must also be packaged with smart communication strategies grounded in values. TikTok's influence on young people's religious understanding is ambivalent; it can serve as a progressive educational tool, yet also a platform for radicalization if left unchecked. Viral messages devoid of meaning may distort public perception. Therefore, educational intervention, strengthened digital literacy, and support for creators promoting religious moderation are key to shaping TikTok into a spiritually and socially healthy public space. Ultimately, religious communication on TikTok must maintain a balance between theological substance and effective digital delivery.

4. CONCLUSION

The digital era has revolutionized the way society accesses and discusses religious issues. Social media—particularly TikTok—has emerged as a new arena where religious discourse evolves in dynamic and often unpredictable ways. With its algorithm-driven features and short-video format, TikTok enables the rapid and massive dissemination of religious messages. This creates both significant opportunities and serious challenges in conveying moderate, tolerant, and inclusive religious values to a broad audience, especially among younger generations.

Today, religious moderation content has appeared on TikTok in various forms. Values such as *tawasuth* (moderation), *tasamuh* (tolerance), *tawazun* (balance), and *i'tidal* (justice) are creatively represented by several creators using digital-friendly approaches. Communication strategies employed include storytelling, humor, visual aesthetics, and a relaxed language style that aligns with Generation Z's culture. This demonstrates that moderate *dakwah* can gain widespread acceptance when packaged in ways that are relevant to digital transformation.

Nevertheless, the dominance of extreme, exclusive, and provocative religious content remains a major challenge on TikTok. Black-and-white narratives that oversimplify the complexities of religious teachings tend to go viral more easily due to their emotional and sensational nature. Moderate content creators frequently face resistance in the form of negative comments, misinformation, and even misleading framing. This indicates that the presence of moderate content is still insufficient to counterbalance the overwhelming spread of extreme narratives in digital spaces.

In response, strengthening both digital and religious literacy has become an urgent necessity. Strong literacy skills will enable young audiences to evaluate information critically, understand context, and discern the quality of the religious content they consume. Additionally, counter-narrative strategies—implemented rapidly, creatively, and based on data—are essential to provide educational and inclusive alternatives amidst the flood of religious information online.

One key recommendation from this analysis is the formation of a community-based religious moderation content task force. Such a task force could serve as a frontline in systematically and sustainably producing and distributing moderate *dakwah* content. With regulatory support, digital platform integration, and collaboration with influencers or youth leaders, narratives of religious moderation could become more coordinated and effectively reach a wider audience.

In this transformative era, TikTok is not merely an entertainment platform but also a significant arena for the contestation of religious discourses. If managed wisely, the platform can become a



healthy public space that fosters contextual religious understanding. Therefore, synergy among content creators, religious institutions, the government, and the wider community is crucial to ensuring that the digital space remains inclusive and supports the broader goal of promoting religious moderation in Indonesia.

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