

Constructing Religious Moderation through Language: A Comparative Study of Verses on *Tawasut*

Helmi Kamal*

Abstract

This study examines the linguistic construction of *tawasut* (religious moderation) in Qur'anic interpretation, focusing on how language shapes meaning in response to social realities. By comparing *Tafsir al-Azhar* and *Tafsir al-Misbah*, this research highlights how linguistic choices reflect differing understandings of moderation within Indonesian socio-religious contexts. The study addresses three key questions: (a) What are the objective representations of religious moderation in the *tawasut* verses within both tafsir works? (b) How is the meaning of *tawasuth* constructed in each text? and (c) What linguistic and contextual factors underlie the interpretive differences between them? Using qualitative linguistic analysis, the study investigates grammatical structures, semantic fields, and pragmatic interpretations of selected verses. Sixteen verses from twelve chapters were identified as central to the theme of *tawasut*, either textually through the root *و-س-ط* and its derivations or contextually, using related concepts such as *al-'adl* (justice), *al-ḥasanah* (virtue), and *ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm* (the straight path). The findings categorise religious moderation into three domains: (1) balance and harmony, (2) justice and fairness, and (3) the middle-way as an alternative solution. Each domain reflects the socio-cultural and exegetical orientation of the commentators. This study demonstrates that linguistic interpretation not only reflects textual tradition but also responds to evolving societal needs. Language thus serves as a bridge between Qur'anic ideals and lived realities, offering a holistic and transformative understanding of moderation in a pluralistic society.

Keywords: Religious moderation, *tawasut*, Qur'anic interpretation, *Tafsir al-Azhar*, *Tafsir al-Misbah*, linguistic analysis

Introduction

In contemporary pluralistic societies, religious moderation has emerged as a crucial discourse in response to rising trends of religious extremism and intolerance. One of the underlying factors contributing to these phenomena is the misunderstanding or misinterpretation of Qur'anic language, particularly in verses that convey the concept of *tawasut* (moderation). Misconstruing the linguistic constructions, such as the meanings of *al-wasath*, *al-'adl*, *al-mīzān*, and others, can lead to rigid, absolutist, or even radical religious attitudes.¹

These misunderstandings often arise from partial, decontextualised readings of the text, neglecting both linguistic nuance and socio-historical context. The elaboration of *tawasut* through linguistic analysis offers not only a variety of interpretations but also a broader and richer conceptualisation of moderation in Islam. *Tafsir al-Azhar* by Buya Hamka (1965) and *Tafsir al-Misbah* by M. Quraish Shihab (2000) are two prominent works that construct the concept of moderation in distinct but complementary ways.

Both interpretive traditions engage with 16 verses across 12 chapters, highlighting moderation as balance and harmony, justice, and a middle-path alternative to extremism. These values are crucial for building peaceful coexistence in diverse societies.

Nevertheless, the plurality of linguistic forms and meanings in Arabic opens a wide field for interpretive diversity,² which, without proper linguistic and contextual grounding, can either enrich or misguide

* Helmi Kamal (corresponding author), Lecturer, Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN) Palopo, Sulawesi, Indonesia. Email: helmikamal@uinpalopo.ac.id.

¹ Chusnul Chotimah, Saifuddin Zuhri Qudsy, and Mirna Yusuf, "Superficial Implementation of Religious Moderation in Islamic Educational Management," *Cogent Education* 12, no. 1 (2025); Muhammad Miftah and Mukh. Nursikin, "Tawasuth Dan Dinamika Sosial Antarumat Beragama: Menyelami Nilai-Nilai Wasathiyah Islamiyyah," *Afeksi: Jurnal Penelitian Dan Evaluasi Pendidikan* 5, no. 1 (2024): 52–59..

² Syarifah Rahmi et al., "Acculturation of Arabic Language on Hijrah Muslim Communication Oriented The Articulation of Islamic Identity,"

religious understanding. Therefore, this study seeks to critically explore how linguistic constructions in the Qur'an inform religious moderation and how misinterpretations may inadvertently contribute to the erosion of moderate values in religious discourse.

Literature Facts

The study of religious moderation in the study of interpretation can be seen in two tendencies. *First*, a study that discusses the application of Arabic linguistics in understanding the language of the Qur'an by using linguistic aspects, namely semantics, phonology, syntax, and morphology.³ This study does not focus on the study of the verses of *tawasut*. *Second*, a study focusing on the problem of misinterpreting religious texts.⁴ Interpretation needs to be traced socio-historically into Indonesian Islamic scientific literature, especially interpretive literacy.⁵ Based on these two tendencies, this study focuses on how to construct religious moderation in two books, namely *Tafsir al-Azhar* and *Tafsir al-Misbah*, comparatively using a linguistic approach.

This paper seeks to address the gaps and deficiencies in contemporary Arabic language studies, correct misunderstandings from existing studies, and incorporate a micro perspective to illuminate the dynamics of *Tafsir al-Azhar* and *Tafsir Al-Misbah*. The two interpretations provide an illustration of religious moderation through various interpretations. To explain this specifically, this paper structures three questions: (a) What is the objective condition of religious moderation in the verses of *tawasut* in *Tafsir al-Azhar* and *Tafsir al-Misbah*? (b) What is the meaning of *tawasut* in *Tafsir al-Azhar* and *Tafsir al-Misbah*? (c) What is the basis for the difference in the meaning of *tawasut* in the two commentaries? The answers to these three questions are the focus of this paper. To explain this specifically, this paper structures three questions: (a) What are the objective representations of religious moderation in the *tawasut* verses within *Tafsir al-Azhar* and *Tafsir al-Misbah*?; (b) How is the meaning of *tawasut* constructed in each work? (c) What are the linguistic and contextual bases for the interpretive differences between the two commentaries? The answers to these three questions are the focus of this paper.

Research Argument and Questions

This study is grounded in the argument that the linguistic construction of *tawasut* (religious moderation) in Qur'anic verses is inseparable from the socio-cultural contexts in which the *Tafsir al-Azhar* and *Tafsir al-Misbah* were composed. These socio-cultural conditions significantly shape how each *mufassir* constructs the concept of moderation through language. The linguistic choices made in interpreting *tawasut* reflect not only textual traditions but also the dynamic interplay between religious ideals and Indonesian societal realities. As such, interpretation becomes a dialogical process whereby language interacts with lived experiences to produce a more comprehensive, holistic, and context-sensitive understanding of religious moderation.

Based on this interpretive framework, this study explores the following research questions:

1. What is the objective condition of religious moderation in the *tawasut* verses in the *Tafsir al-Azhar* and *Tafsir al-Misbah*?
2. How is the meaning of *tawasut* linguistically constructed in both *tafsir* works?

Retorika: Jurnal Ilmu Bahasa 9, no. 1 (2023): 1–8. Acculturation of Arabic Language on Hijrah Muslim Communication Oriented The Articulation of Islamic Identity,” *Retorika: Jurnal Ilmu Bahasa* 9, no. 1 (2023): 1–8.

³ Samia Muhsen Jabri, “Lexical Synonyms in the Holy Qur'an and Their Translations: A Case Study,” *International Journal of Arabic-English Studies* 13, no. 1 (2012): 7–22; Linda S Al-Abbas and Rajai Khanji, “Lexical Analysis of Arabic Near-Synonyms in the Holy Qur'an: A Case Study of *سنة* and *عام*,” *International Journal of Linguistics* 11, no. 5 (2019): 149; Abdul Kosim, “Penerapan Linguistik Arab Dalam Memahami Bahasa Al-Qur'an,” *Kalamuna: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Arab Dan Kebahasaaraban* 1, no. 1 (2020): 19–35; Angelika Neuwirth, “The ‘discovery of Writing’ in the Qur'ān: Tracing an Epistemic Revolution in Arab Late Antiquity,” *Nun* 2, no. 1 (2016): 25–55.

⁴ Fatima Butt, “Religious Misinterpretation Leading to Extremism,” 2018; Muhammad Faisal, “Writing Interpretations in Indonesia Classical and Modern Times,” *Jurnal Ilmiah Teunuleh* 1, no. 1 (2020): 25–44; Jabri, “Lexical Synonyms in the Holy Qur'an and Their Translations: A Case Study.”

⁵ Aqdi Rofiq Asnawi, Syukron Affani, and Zaenatul Hakamah, “Scientific Qur'Ānic Exegesis in Indonesia: Contributions By Scholars, Institutions, and the Government,” *Australian Journal of Islamic Studies* 6, no. 4 (2021): 25–46; bdullah Haq Al Haidary, Ahmad Fauzi, and Muhammad Taufiq, “Radicalism and Religious Texts Understanding,” *Kalam* 14, no. 2 (2020): 77–94; khrom Ikhrom et al., “Intolerance in Islamic Textbooks: The Quest for an Islamic Teaching Model for Indonesian Schools,” *Cogent Education* 10, no. 2 (2023).

3. What contextual and linguistic factors account for the differences in interpretation between the two commentaries?

Linguistic Construction

The concept of linguistic construction has been widely discussed by experts. Linguistic constructions are usually seen as “the pairing of syntactic form and semantic information that is independent of the meaning of constituent words.”⁶ Generalisation of linguistic constructions can be formed through analogical reasoning.⁷ This process can be enhanced with inputs that involve variability and similarity, or what is commonly referred to as the progressive alignment process. At a later stage, this alignment has implications for understanding the language development of an individual.

Meanwhile, Raúl Rodríguez Monsiváis defines linguistic construction as “the communicative coupling that occurs between the participants of a communicative event.”⁸ Drawing on European legal studies, Nita and Światłowski argue that linguistic constructions require all language versions of the terms being interpreted to be considered and compared, thereby necessitating the use of comparative linguistic constructs.⁹

Social reality is a component of linguistic construction and inherently an unstable concept. Language constantly reshapes the world in various and, at times, amazing ways.¹⁰ These are signs that are constructed through history, philosophy, literature, and human subjectivity. In other words, this process is a form of human creativity in seeking meaning for life that is constantly changing, including in cultural aspects. Specifically in life, ethics can also be seen only as a linguistic construct, in which the social good is whatever is considered good by the general public. Accordingly, James W. Sire narrates how linguistic construction relates to the concept of worldview noting that this linguistic construction system has the power to influence human behaviour as well as perceptions of reality and nature.¹¹ These studies demonstrate the significant influence linguistic aspects have on life, extending beyond just language and communication.

Religious Moderation

The values of moderation have attracted the attention of many experts across various disciplines. Matthew Parker’s concept of moderation focuses on the embodiment of a generational attitude towards conformity, compromise, and obedience.¹² The word “moderate” refers to the Arabic term *wasatiyyah*, which in Qur’anic terminology uses derivations such as *wasat*, *al-wusta*, *awsat*, *awsatuhum*, and *fawasatna*. Religious studies have given particular attention to the concept of moderation in the form of religious moderation, which encompasses knowledge, attitudes, behaviours, ethics, and interpersonal interactions grounded in moderation. Religious moderation is understood as upholding values such as tolerance, inclusivity, non-violence, and respect for diversity, although the concept remains vulnerable to politicisation.¹³

⁶ Xiaoming Jiang, Yi Li, and Xiaolin Zhou, “Even a Rich Man Can Afford That Expensive House: ERP Responses to Construction-Based Pragmatic Constraints during Sentence Comprehension,” *Neuropsychologia* 51, no. 10 (2013): 1857–66.

⁷ Magali Krzemien, Esther Seret, and Christelle Maillart, “The Generalisation of Linguistic Constructions in Children with or without Developmental Language Disorders,” *Journal of Child Language* 48, no. 2 (2021): 413–27.

⁸ Raúl Rodríguez Monsiváis, “Compleción y Reconstrucción de Argumentos: Contextualismo, Persuasión, Parsimonia y Acoplamiento,” *COGENCY* 10, no. 1 (2018): 105–28.

⁹ Barbara Nita and Andrzej Światłowski, “Linguistic Pluralism and Interpretation of European Law in the Third Pillar, Discussed with Reference to the Example of Article 54 of the Convention Implementing the Schengen Agreement,” in *Interpretation of Law in the Global World: From Particularism to a Universal Approach*. New York, 2010.

¹⁰ Nurasia Natsir et al., “The Impact of Language Changes Caused By Technology and Social Media,” *Language Literacy: Journal of Linguistics, Literature, and Language Teaching* 7, no. 1 (2023): 115–24; MZ Zainab, “The Role of Language Communication with the Society and Culture,” *Vernacular: Linguistics, Literature, Communication and Culture Journal* 1, no. 1 (2021): 1–15.

¹¹ James W. Sire, “Worldviews: Concepts Or Narratives? An Integrative Definition To Assess Their Controlling Effect In The Biblical And Atheistic Evolutionary Models,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 57, no. 2 (2020): 267–304.

¹² Andri Nirwana A.N. et al., “Mapping Quranic Exegesis Research: Trends, Contributions, And Future Directions,” *Jurnal Ilmiah Peuradeun* 13 (2025): 319.

¹³ Benny Afwadzi and Miski Miski, “Religious Moderation In Indonesian Higher Educations: Literature Review,” *ULUL ALBAB Jurnal Studi Islam* 22, no. 2 (2021): 203–31.

Religious moderation may be defined as a process of understanding and practising religious teachings in a fair and balanced manner to avoid extreme or excessive behaviour.¹⁴ This concept promotes interfaith dialogue as a practical manifestation of moderation.¹⁵ It also acknowledges the existence of others for the sake of harmony,¹⁶ peace, and national stability.¹⁷ Religious moderation is thus essential for three main reasons: a) To preserve human dignity and rights as endowed by God; b) To respond to shifting interpretations of religious texts influenced by socio-political dynamics; and c) To serve as a cultural strategy in safeguarding Indonesia's pluralistic society.¹⁸ Mutual respect, acceptance of differences, and equitable interaction become the core tenets of this approach.

The study by Mahrus (2021) demonstrates how religious moderation values existed long before modern conceptualisations.¹⁹ For example, the Islamic texts and manuscripts from Maharaja Imam Sambas in West Kalimantan contained principles of flexibility (*tajdid*), ease (*taysir*), and tolerance (*tasamuh*).²⁰ The madrasa established by the Maharaja Islam was among the early Islamic institutions promoting moderation through education. Adding to this, prominent Indonesian scholars have made vital contributions to grounding religious moderation within the context of Indonesian Islam. Quraish Shihab, through *Tafsir al-Misbah*, articulates moderation not only as a doctrinal value but also as an interpretive methodology that seeks harmony between text and context, revelation and reason, and faith and culture.²¹ Likewise, Buya Syafii Maarif (1935-2022), an Indonesian Islamic scholar and intellectual, emphasised that moderation (*tawasut*) in Islam must be historically grounded and should resist ideological rigidity; instead, it should support democratic values and social justice.²² Yudian Wahyudi, the former Head of BPIP (The Pancasila Ideology Development Agency), views religious moderation as a framework that integrates Islamic values with Pancasila, aiming to promote national unity and curb religious politicisation (Wahyudi, 2020).

According to Ropi (2019), religious moderation in Indonesia is not only a theological imperative but also a form of authentic "Indonesianness," a socio-religious identity rooted in pluralism, tolerance, and national loyalty. In this sense, religious moderation functions both as a moral compass and a cultural asset to maintain harmony within the diverse social fabric of Indonesia.

Text Interpretation

The plurality of meanings has triggered the need for interpretation. Sumaryono interprets this as an attempt to reveal hidden meanings from the multi-layered dimensions contained in a word.²³ In practice, interpretation often generates new questions about the types, causes, quantities, results, boundaries, characteristics, and their justification. A text is inseparable from the interpreter's framework and context. Zainal (2013) defines text interpretation as an effort to extract or *ikhraj* the meaning hidden behind textual abstractions. Schleiermacher and Dilthey referred to this work as reproductive, not just understanding a text but reconstructing the meaning based on the interpreter's historical consciousness.²⁴

The interpretation of Qur'anic texts has evolved across time and context. Quraish Shihab emphasises that the understanding of the Qur'an should balance between its *nash* (text) and *maqasid* (objectives), highlighting the importance of context in giving the text relevance and responsiveness to contemporary

¹⁴ Shinta Dewi Rismawati et al., "The Legal Politics of Religious Moderation in Indonesia: Responsive or Repressive?," *Journal of Legal, Ethical and Regulatory Issues* 24, no. 4 (2021): 1–8.

¹⁵ Moh Roqib et al., "Cultural Harmonization through Islamic Education: Between Religious Moderation in Javanese Traditions in Penginyongan," *Journal of Ecohumanism* 4, no. 3 (2025): 626-640.

¹⁶ Wang Zuo'an, "Religious Harmony: A Fresh Concept in the Age of Globalization," *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* 77 (2013): 210-213.

¹⁷ Louis Campbell, *A Diagnosis of Religious Moderation: Matthew Parker and the 1559 Settlement* (Routledge, 2017).

¹⁸ Rismawati et al. "The Legal Politics of Religious Moderation in Indonesia: Responsive or Repressive?"

¹⁹ Erwin Mahrus and Zaenuddin Hudi Prasajo, "Messages of Religious Moderation Education," *Madania* 24 (2020): 39–48.

²⁰ Erwin Mahrus, Zaenuddin Hudi Prasajo, and B. Busro, "Messages of Religious Moderation Education in Sambas Islamic Manuscripts," *Madania: Jurnal Kajian Keislaman*, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.29300/madania.v24i1.3283>.

²¹ M. Quraish Shihab, *Wawasan Al-Quran. Tafsir Maudhu'i Atas Pelbagai Persoalan Umat*, 13th ed. (Penerbit Mizan, 1996).

²² Ahmad Syafii Maarif, *Islam Dalam Bingkai Keindonesiaan Dan Kemanusiaan. Sebuah Refleksi Sejarah* (Mizan Pustaka, 2015).

²³ Deden Mula Saputra Abdur Razzaq, "Studi Analisis Komparatif Antara Ta'wil Dan Hermeneutika Dalam Penafsiran Al-Qur'an," *Wardah* 17, no. 2 (2016): 89–114.

²⁴ Ajar Permono, "Kritik Metodologi Penafsiran Bucaillisme Atas Ayat-Ayat Sains," *Jurnal Studi Ilmu-Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Hadis* 19, no. 1 (2019): 1–20.

issues.²⁵ Similarly, Muhammad al-Tahir Ibn 'Ashur in his *Tafsir al-Tahrir wa al-Tanwir* stressed that linguistic precision must be integrated with social realities in interpreting the Qur'an. He developed the concept of *maqasid al-Qur'an*, a higher objective of the Sharia which requires interpretation to consider human welfare.²⁶

As-Sha'rawi, on the other hand, emphasised the spiritual and rhetorical aspects of the Qur'anic text. For him, interpretation must engage not only the intellect but also spiritual intuition, capturing the miraculous linguistic style of the Qur'an.²⁷ Fazlur Rahman further contributed by proposing a double movement theory: moving from the present situation to the text and back from the text to the present situation, providing a dynamic model of contextual interpretation.²⁸

Contemporary exegetes, therefore, have moved beyond purely textual readings. They integrate various methodologies such as historical, linguistic, sociological, and hermeneutic analysis. For instance, the hermeneutic method²⁹ enables contextual discovery of Qur'anic values behind the apparent meanings of verses. However, interpretive diversity can also spark controversy, especially when divergent readings of religious values become normative in legal or social institutions. For example, in the case of inheritance law, Ahangar (2014) shows how certain Muslim countries formally uphold the Sharia yet exclude women from inheritance, while others allow gender equality demonstrating how varied interpretations produce different norms.³⁰ Thus, understanding the Qur'an requires both linguistic rigor and contextual awareness to avoid misrepresentation and uphold its ethical message.

Method

This study employs a qualitative-interpretive approach by analysing the linguistic construction of *tawasut* (religious moderation) in selected verses of the Qur'an as interpreted in *Tafsir al-Azhar* by Hamka and *Tafsir al-Misbah* by M. Quraish Shihab. The research focuses on how language conveys values of moderation through the lens of each *mufassir* (interpreter), in relation to their socio-cultural contexts. Linguistic construction in this study refers to the ways in which grammatical, semantic, and rhetorical elements interact with contextual meanings; what is referred to in the science of *balāghah* (Arabic rhetoric) as *مطابقة لمقتضى الحال* (conformity to the demands of the situation), and how this reflects a form of *الادب الاجتماعي* (social style) in interpretation.

Data Sources and Selection

The primary data consist of Qur'anic verses related to the theme of *tawasuth*, which were identified through key terms such as *wasathan*, *qist*, *'adl*, and related lexicons. These verses were examined within two major *tafsir* texts: *Tafsir al-Azhar* and *Tafsir al-Misbah*. From this process, 16 verses from 12 chapters were selected based on their relevance to moderation values. The selected verses were then compared across the two *tafsir* works.

Research Steps

The research was conducted through the following stages: (1) Desk Review and Thematic Identification: the study began with a desk review of secondary literature and prior research on religious moderation and its Qur'anic foundations. Simultaneously, a careful reading of verses in both *tafsir* texts was conducted, focusing on the presence and construction of moderation values such as balance, justice, and middle-way solutions. (2) Linguistic Comparison and Categorisation: a comparative analysis was carried out on the lexical, syntactical, and pragmatic elements of the verses in each *tafsir*. The interpretations were then grouped into three thematic domains of *tawasut*: (a) balance and harmony, (b) justice and fairness, and (c)

²⁵ M. Q Shihab, "Wawasan Al-Qur'an: Tafsir Maudhui Atas Pelbagai Persoalan Umat," 2013.

²⁶ Jani Arni, "Muhammad Al-Thahrir Ibn Asyur," *Jurnal Ushuluddin* 17, no. 1 (2011): 80-97.

²⁷ Syaikh Muhammad Mutawalli Sya'rawi, *Tafsir Sya'rawi*, 15th ed. (Duta Azhar, 2016).

²⁸ Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition* (The University of Chicago Press, 1982).

²⁹ Wely Dozan and Muhammad Turmudzi, "Konsep Hermeneutika Sebagai Metodologi Interpretasi Teks Al-Quran," *MAGHZA: Jurnal Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Tafsir* 4, no. 2 (2019): 205-19.

³⁰ Mohd Altaf Hussain Ahangar, "Succession Rights of Muslim Women in the Modern World: An Analytical Appraisal," *Arab Law Quarterly* 28, no. 2 (n.d.): 111-35.

the middle way as a contextual solution. (3) Qualitative Analysis: Data Reduction, Display, and Restatement: Data reduction was done by filtering the verses most relevant to the research focus and categorising them based on the three moderation domains. Data display was conducted by organising the findings in tabular form, which allowed for side-by-side comparison of the interpretations in *Tafsir al-Azhar* and *Tafsir al-Misbah*, along with concise descriptions of each interpretation's core linguistic elements. Data restatement involved iterative re-examination, refinement, and re-validation of verse selection and thematic categorisation. This included excluding data considered less relevant and incorporating newly identified verses where appropriate. (4) Textual and Contextual Interpretation: the final stage involved interpreting the selected verses linguistically and contextually, considering both internal textual evidence and the external socio-cultural contexts of each *tafsir's* composition. The analysis was framed by principles of Arabic rhetoric, semantics, and pragmatics, allowing for deeper insight into how moderation is linguistically shaped and culturally situated.

This research is informed by linguistic hermeneutics and critical discourse analysis, emphasising how language constructs meaning within social contexts. In particular, it draws on the tradition of *tafsir bil-lughah* (language-based interpretation) while also engaging the socio-political ethos that influenced both Hamka's and Shihab's exegetical approaches.

Results and Findings

Verses of Moderation in the Qur'an

Religious moderation, thematically categorised as *tawasut* verses in the Qur'an, will be presented in tabular form according to the sequence of chapter numbers, as follows:

Table 1: Verses of *al-tawasut* in the Qur'an

No.	Chapters/chapters' number: verse(s)	Words	
		Words	Meaning
1	al-Fatihah/1: 6	صراط المستقيم	Straight ahead
2	al-Baqarah/2: 143, 238	امة وسطا و الوسطى	A justly balanced community
3	Ali Imran /3: 110	خير امة	The best community
4	al-Maidah/5: 89, 95	اوسط العدل	Middle way, Justice
5	al-Nisaa /4: 3, 58	العدل	Justice
6	al-An'am /6: 15	العدل	Fair
7	al-Nahl /16: 90	العدل	Fair
8	al-Isra'/17: 29	البسيط	balance in generosity
9	al-Qasas /28: 77	الحسنة	Virtue
10	al- Rahman / 55: 7, 8	الوزن	balance sheet
11	al- Hadid /57: 25	الميزان	Balance
12	Al-Infitar /82: 7	العدل	Fair
13	Al-'Adiyat/100: 5	فوسطنا	Middle

Source: Processed from a compilation of verses from the Al-Qur'an

From Table 1, it can be seen that the verses related to *tawasut* (moderation) in the Qur'an are found in 12 chapters comprising 16 verses. These verses reflect moderation both in terms of wording (text) and meaning (context). Specifically, verses that explicitly contain the root word appear in four chapters across five verses, with five derivations stemming from the trilateral root *و-س-ط* (*wāw-sīn-tā*), namely: *وسط*, *الوسطى*, *أوسط*, and *فوسطنا*. Verses that convey the meaning of moderation, although not necessarily using the exact word, are found in 7 chapters across 11 verses, using various linguistic expressions. As for verse number 13 referenced in the table, it is not classified as a *tawasut* verse in either a textual or a contextual sense,

although it includes a derivation of the word *وسط*. Therefore, from a linguistic perspective, it can be concluded that the trilateral root *و-س-ط* (*wāw-sīn-tā*) appears five times in the Qur'an, manifested in four derivative forms as follows:

- once as a form of verb *wasata* (وَسَطَ)
- twice as a noun *awsat* (أَوْسَطَ)
- once as an adjective *wasatan* (وَسْطًا)
- and once as an adjective *wusṭā* (وُسْطَى)

The Meaning of Tawasut in Two Commentary Books

Table 2: Verses of *al-Tawasut* in the Book of *Tafsir al-Azhar* and the Book of *Tafsir al-Misbah*

No.	Text / Meaning	Book of <i>Tafsir al-Azhar</i>		Book of <i>Tafsir al-Misbah</i>	
		Words	Meaning	Words	Meaning
1	Verses of <i>al-tawasut</i> ; “ <i>al-wasath</i> ” Balance and Harmony (Table 1; No.1,2,7,8,10 & 11)	التواسط	Moderation	التواسط	Moderation
		الإنسانية	Humanity	التسمية	Equality
		القسط	Mid	القسط	Mid
		التسوية الحرية	Harmony	العلم	Knowledge Potency
2	The verses of <i>al-tawasut</i> “ <i>al-adl</i> ”; Fair - Justice (Table 1, No;1,4,5,6,7,9,10,11 & 12),	العدل	Fair	Peace be upon you	Fair
		القسط	Middle	الحسن	Good
		الحرية	Freedom/Independence	العلم	Knowledge
		ادب الاجتماعى	Social behaviour	الخير الاجود	The best choice
3	Meaning; Alternative solution 'middle way' (Table 1, No :1,3.8 & 9)	Word derivation context	Muslims	Context of verse derivation	Islam
		Context of Interpretation	The best of the people	Interpretive context	The best community
		The context of the meaning of the verse	Separator	The context of the meaning of the verse	Knowledge potential
		The context of <i>asbaab nuzul</i>	Cultural situation	The context of <i>asbaab nuzul</i>	Socio cultural

Source: Processed from a compilation of verses from the Qur'an

Table 1 shows that the verses describing moderation are mentioned by using several terms or words. *Tawasut* is shown in the pronunciation *اوسط*, *الوسطى*, *اوسطنا*, *فوسطنا* which is a derivation of the basic word *و-س-ط*. These four words have a middle meaning: mediate, and, wise. Moderation is also indicated by the word *العدل* which means fair and wise. *اليسيط* (simple), *الحسنة* (virtue), *صراط المستقيم* (the straight path), *خير امة* (the best people).

From Table 2, it can be observed that *tawasut* (religious moderation), as a linguistic construction in the Qur'an, encompasses three core realms: balance/harmony, justice, and alternative solutions. First, religious moderation in the sense of balance and harmony is reflected in verses that convey the meaning of *al-tawāsuṭ* in the Qur'an. The term *al-tawāsuṭ* refers to a way of life that embraces the middle path, avoiding extremes and refusing to take sides unjustly. At the same time, *al-tawāsuṭ* implies an acceptance of diverse attitudes and a respectful acknowledgement of the existence of others. The second aspect of religious moderation is justice, and the third is the pursuit of alternative, middle-way solutions in resolving differences.

Table 3: Comparative analysis of the meaning of tawasut verses in the commentary of al-Azhar and the book of interpretation of al-Misbah

No	Chapter number: verse number	Analysis of the <i>Book of Tafsir al-Azhar</i>	Analysis of the <i>Book of Tafsir al-Misbah</i>
1	al-Fatihah /1:6	صراط المستقيم interpreted by Buya Hamka: <i>a straight line</i> , that is the closest distance between two points. The first point is the servant (<i>abdun</i>), and the second point is self-serving (<i>ma'bud</i>) from this meaning which leads to moderation, that humans have two dimensions which must be harmonized harmoniously and in balance.	صراط المستقيم interpreted by Quraish Shihab: <i>a wide road with toll roads</i> (straight roads to goodness) that will lead a person to a goal, namely peace. Humans may be different, but in the end, they will meet on toll roads that lead humans to good paths, to harmony and well-being.
2	al-Baqarah /2:143	...امة وسطا (adj) <i>ummatan wasatan</i> The middle <i>ummah</i> , according to Buya Hamka, is the <i>ummah</i> of the Prophet Muhammad, which is an <i>ummah</i> in the middle position between the Jews and Christians (theological dimension). The middle <i>ummah</i> is people who are not fixated on the world alone, nor only on the hereafter, but people who are able to balance the two.	...امة وسطا (adj) <i>ummatan wasatan</i> The middle <i>ummah</i> , according to Quraish Shihab, are people who do not take sides, whether to the left or the right. It is this impartiality that enables humans to act fairly, serving as role models for all parties. Even the middle <i>ummah</i> is like the position of the Kaaba. *In the theological dimension, Muslims are in a middle position between Atheism (monotheism) and Polytheism. * Balance in Material-Spiritual life within the framework of divine values. * When someone looks at the sky, their feet will stay on the earth.
3	al-Baqarah /2: 238	صلاة الوسطى <i>wusthaa prayer</i> (verb) * Middle prayer, namely the Asr prayer – the midday prayer between the afternoon (dawn and midday prayers) and the night (maghrib and evening prayers)	صلاة الوسطى <i>wustha prayer</i> (verb) *The midday prayer is the maghrib prayer because this prayer is the midpoint of the end and the beginning of the day in Islam.
4	Ali Imran /3:110	كنتم خير امة You are the best people, namely for an ideal society according to the Qur'an, namely an <i>Ummah</i> that maintains three characteristics, namely faith, <i>amar ma'ruf and nahiy munkar</i> . In the frame of community life, according to Buya Hamka, the figure needed is a human being who has religious knowledge and religious attitudes.	كنتم خير امة You are the best of the people, who are the people who call for <i>amar ma'ruf, nahiy munkar</i> and virtue. The best people are people who humanise humans. People who benefit each other equally. In a semantic study, it refers in general to all groups.
5	al-Nisaa /4:3	التواسط بمعنى العدل The meaning of <i>al-tawasut</i> is fair	التواسط بمعنى العدل The meaning of <i>al-tawasut</i> is fairness, balance, and justice.

		* Fairness means the provision of equal rights and the equitable fulfilment of needs, particularly in supporting family life and income.	تواسط...عدل..قسط *This verse explains the elements of the word fairness with a meaning which includes the meaning of moderation, the elements of balance, simplicity, and justice.
6	al-Nisaa /4: 58	التواسط بمعنى العدل The meaning of <i>al-tawasut</i> is fair *In verse 58, moderation of justice is a mandate that the government must uphold, and this is a fundamental teaching in Islam (the dimension of government). * Mandate of equal rights and dignity of men and women in the context of law and governance.	التواسط بمعنى العدل The meaning of <i>al-tawasut</i> is fairness, balance, and justice. تواسط...عدل..قسط *Verse 58 التواسط الامانة العلم Justice is interpreted from the plural editorial form of the word, which includes harmony in carrying out the mandate, both material and non-material in nature. *This verse also emphasises that the mandate of <i>amar ma'ruf nahi munkar</i> is the duty of the caliphate of mankind on earth, and humans have been equipped with intellectual potential that will be developed through deepening and mastering science and technology.
7	al-Maidah /5:89	اوسط Awsat (verb) *The pronunciation of <i>awsat</i> here is interpreted as a simple dish or food that is usually consumed which rejects the average size of food according to Hamka according to <i>urf</i> (customs) in each place.	اوسط Awsat (verb) *The word <i>awsat</i> here is related to moderation in the culinary dimension of dishes. * The intended meaning is food or dishes that are usually consumed, not special dishes. This opinion is shared by the majority of scholars, on the grounds that one of the characteristics of the Islam is moderation. All virtues are the middle between the two extremes. The best dishes are those that are simple, wholesome and good / <i>tayyib</i> . * This meaning also includes dress.
8	al-Maidah /5:95	كنتم خير امة ("You are the best people") implies that being the best people in fostering a multicultural society requires upholding the values of moderation, as a hallmark of a chosen and exemplary community.	كنتم خير امة reflects the implementation of strengthening religious moderation through strengthening knowledge in the life of a pluralistic society, in line with the ideal of a country <i>baldatun thayyibah wa rabbun ghafuur</i> .
9	al-Anaam /6:15	العدالة, one of the values of moderation contained in the interpretation of <i>al-Azhar</i>	العدالة, the meaning of fair values in moderation contained in the book of <i>Tafsir al-Misbah</i>
10	al-Nahl /16:90	المساواة, one of the values of moderation reflected in the concept of moderation is equality.	المساواة, one of the values of moderation contained in the book of interpretations of <i>al-misbah</i>

12	al-Isra' /17:29	الميزان al-Mizaan The meaning of <i>tawasut</i> in this verse is a balance that combines worldly life and the hereafter fairly.	الميزان al-Mizan In the interpretation of <i>Tafsir al-Misbah</i> , al-Mizān refers to a sense of balance that supports a moderate attitude—one that requires analytical ability, a strong foundation in both religion and science, and mastery of technology.
13	al-Qashash /28:77	العدالة Justice The textual and contextual meaning in this verse, as contained in the commentary of <i>al-Azhar</i> , interprets moderation with <i>al-Ada</i> or justice and balance in social life.	العدالة Justice The meaning of the text and context in the verse is explained in the book of <i>Tafsir al-Misbah</i> .
14	al-Rahman /55:7,8	الوزن و الميزان <i>al-wazn wa al-mizan</i> (noun) *This moderation is a dimension of the universe. The meaning conveyed by the pronunciation of <i>tawasut</i> , along with the related terms <i>wazn</i> and <i>mīzān</i> , emphasises that humans should continuously reflect on and study the balanced order and harmony of the universe, such as the alternation of day and night.	الوزن و الميزان <i>al-wazn wa al-mizan</i> (noun) * This dimension of the universe aligns the heavens and the earth as galaxies that rotate simultaneously within their orbits in an exceptionally orderly and harmonious manner—serving as a sign of the Creator’s omnipotence and as a model for humans to emulate harmony and balance in their own lives.
15	al-Hadid /57:25	الميزان <i>al-mizan</i> (verb) * <i>Mizan</i> is a tool to weigh in a fair and balanced way. * This balance guides individuals to discover and embody the values of wisdom in their social lives.	الميزان al-mizan (verb) * <i>Al-mizan</i> is a balance that is used to weigh fairly. * <i>Al-Mizan</i> is the religion of Islam, a source of happiness both individually and collectively.
16	al-Infitaar /82:7	* Moderation in human creation. This meaning is reflected in the verse that highlights the harmony and alignment of the human body.	* This meaning functions as an inherent guiding principle for human beings. It is manifested in the harmony of body, mind, and soul—the finest of Allah SWT’s creations and His special gift to humankind.

Sources: Elaborated from the *Book of Tafsir al-Azhar* and the *Book of Tafsir al-Misbah*

From Table 3, as presented in the books of interpretation, a common thread of religious moderation can be drawn illustrating the diversity of meanings both textually and contextually. These comprehensive interpretations have given rise to *tafsir* products that enrich the intellectual repertoire of religious moderation studies—an essential contribution to national and civic life in a pluralistic society. Historically, such moderation was exemplified and practised by the Prophet Muhammad, with Medina serving as a model of civil society and a moderate civilisation in his time. As a multiracial and multi-religious country, Indonesia requires a concept of moderation that reflects and implements the values of Pancasila in safeguarding the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia.

Discussions

Linguistic Analysis of Moderation as Balance - Alignment

The linguistic construction of religious moderation (*tawasut*) in the interpretations of *Tafsir al-Azhar* by Hamka and *Tafsir al-Misbah* by M. Quraish Shihab reveals a convergence in viewing moderation as a principle rooted in balance, centrality, and harmony. This is grounded in the trilateral Arabic root *و-س-ط* (*wāw-sīn-ṭā*), which semantically conveys meanings such as the middle, equilibrium, and justice. The textual interpretation of verses such as QS. Al-Baqarah (2:143 and 2:238), presented in Table 4.1, indicates that the phrase “*ummatan wasatan*” is derived from this root. Linguistically, this refers to “a middle nation”, a balanced community positioned between two extremes. This is supported by classical lexicons that define *al-wasat* as *khayr* (goodness) and *‘adl* (justice), which signifies not merely a physical midpoint, but a moral and ethical one.

Contextually, as illustrated in Tables 4.2 and 4.3, both interpreters enrich this linguistic core with meanings informed by their socio-historical and intellectual environments. Buya Hamka, through his *tahlili* method and *adab al-ijtimā’ī* (socio-literary) style, interprets *tawasut* not only as a theological ideal but also as a cultural virtue deeply aligned with Indonesian values of *musyawarah* (consultation) and *tenggang rasa* (mutual respect). His interpretation emphasises a balance in personal and collective life, anchoring moderation as a social ethic embedded in the lived experiences of a post-colonial society striving for unity and cohesion. M. Quraish Shihab, on the other hand, approaches *tawasut* through the *tahlili-muqāran* method (analytical-comparative), further enriched by his principle of *takhyīr al-ajwad* (choosing the best). He views moderation as a knowledge-based, deliberate choice that manifests in intellectual humility, religious tolerance, and social harmony. His interpretive strategy aligns closely with modern nation-state values and reflects an effort to situate Islamic moderation within a pluralistic and constitutional framework.

This dual reading resonates with scholarly findings. For instance, Fuadi et al. (2024) affirm that Islamic moderation is not merely a theological construct but also a socially reconstructed value, shaped by national identity and cultural context.³¹ They argue that Indonesian interpretations of *ummatan wasatan* in works like *Tafsir al-Azhar* and *al-Misbah* demonstrate a synergy between universal Islamic values and local wisdom, reinforcing moderation as a dynamic, adaptive concept rather than a fixed dogma. Furthermore, comparative *tafsir* studies such as Firmansyah (2021) show that both Hamka and Shihab maintain a commitment to moderation as a foundational Islamic ethos, though their emphases differ: Hamka grounds it in moral-spiritual ethics, while Shihab frames it in civic-pluralist discourse.³² These distinctions underscore how linguistic constructions are deeply entangled with exegetical methodology and the interpreter’s socio-political context.

In sum, the textual-semantic and contextual interpretations of *tawasut* in both works reflect a shared understanding of balance, harmony, and justice as essential components of religious moderation. However, each scholar’s linguistic construction is also a reflection of their unique interpretive lens—one rooted in nationalistic Islamic revivalism (Hamka), the other in contemporary civic pluralism (Shihab). This confirms that the concept of moderation in the Qur’an is not only linguistically stable but also hermeneutically dynamic, shaped by both the structure of the text and the structure of society.

Linguistic Analysis of Moderation as Justice

The findings of this study affirm that *wasatiyyah* in the Qur’anic context is not limited to the notion of balance alone, but is deeply intertwined with the principle of justice (*‘adl*), both textually and contextually. The interpretation of moderation as justice is supported by linguistic derivations and frequency analyses of relevant Qur’anic terms. As identified in Table 4.2, key Qur’anic lexemes associated with moderation, such as *al-‘adl* (justice, fairness; mentioned 28 times), *al-qisṭ* (equity; 25 times), and *al-mīzān* (balance or scale; 23 times), emphasise that *tawasut* functions as an ethical framework grounded in impartiality, non-

³¹ R Fitriana, R Sutantio and A Fauzi, “The Interpretation of Islam Nusantara and Religious Moderation in Indonesia: A Study of KH. Abdurrahman Wahid’s Thoughts in Tafsir Al-Qur’an Al-Karim,” *Journal of Al-Tamaddun* 19, no. 1 (2024): 134–144.

³² Firmansyah Firmansyah, “Class Together in Realizing the Values of Moderation of Islamic Education Through Multicultural School Culture,” *Journal Education Multicultural of Islamic Society* 2, no. 1 (2021): 1–12.

extremism, and social equilibrium. These findings align with the concept of *al-wasatiyyah* in Islamic epistemology as not only theological but also socio-ethical in scope. In Buya Hamka's *Tafsir al-Azhar*, justice is framed as a communal virtue essential to national and religious identity, rooted in the social and political conditions of postcolonial Indonesia.

Employing the *adab al-ijtima'i* interpretive style, Hamka's textual approach constructs *tawasut* as an ethical imperative driven by historical memory and moral resilience against colonial suppression. Moderation in this *tafsir* is not simply a passive disposition, but a conscious act of just engagement amidst ideological or colonial hegemony.³³ The style reflects what Rahmadi et al. (2024) describe as "ethical-moral exegesis", which uses interpretive tools not only to explain revelation but also to reform the moral consciousness of society in real time.³⁴ Thus, moderation in *Tafsir al-Azhar* becomes synonymous with social justice, articulated as the equitable distribution of moral responsibility and religious interpretation.

Conversely, in M. Quraish Shihab's *Tafsir al-Misbah*, justice is interpreted through a more dialogic and philosophical lens. Shihab introduces the notion of *tawasut* as a reflective act rooted in knowledge (*'ilm*) and deliberation (*tadabbur*). His *tahlili-muqaran* method of interpretation, combined with the ethical strategy of *takhyir al-ajwad* (choosing the best among good options), constructs moderation as epistemic justice—a form of fairness achieved through reasoned interpretation, pluralistic engagement, and intellectual openness.³⁵ This form of moderation privileges deliberation over confrontation, and cognitive humility over ideological rigidity. The role of justice here is subtle but foundational: it is the process through which truth is accessed and maintained without prejudice.

These findings are strongly supported by the literature. Fitria et al. (2024), in a thematic analysis of *wasatiyyah* in Qur'anic hermeneutics, argue that moderation consistently coexists with justice as its foundational axis.³⁶ They emphasise that Islamic moderation is not a neutral middle ground, but a deliberate positioning that prioritises fairness over polarisation and rational deliberation over dogmatism. Similarly, Mustaniruddin (2023), in his study of Indonesian *tafsir* traditions, notes that while Hamka emphasises collective justice grounded in historical struggle, Shihab promotes a contextual justice rooted in dialogical tolerance and educational enlightenment.³⁷ Despite their methodological differences, both scholars arrive at a common epistemological conclusion: *tawasut* is the Qur'an's ethical mandate for justice in belief, action, and social interaction.

However, not all perspectives fully endorse the synonymising of moderation with justice. Saeed (2007) cautions that modern reformist interpretations often conflate moderation with liberal tolerance, potentially diluting the Qur'an's robust legal and ethical imperatives.³⁸ While this study agrees that moderation must be critically framed, it argues, supported by both empirical textual patterns and contextual readings that moderation, when viewed as *'adl*, retains its theological robustness while enabling ethical flexibility in pluralistic societies. Additionally, these findings resonate with contemporary discussions on religious moderation in Indonesian Islamic discourse. As highlighted by Zarkasyi (2023), the linguistic and semantic proximity between *tawasut*, *'adl*, and *qist* in the Qur'an is not accidental but ontologically significant, suggesting that moderation is not merely a socio-political stance but a divinely sanctioned moral principle intended to shape human behaviour, legal structures, and interreligious coexistence.³⁹

³³ Firmansyah, "Class Together in Realizing the Values of Moderation of Islamic Education Through Multicultural School Culture." *Journal Education Multicultural of Islamic Society* 2, no. 1 (2021): 1–12.

³⁴ R Rahmadi, S Habibah and S Al-Fatih, "The Interpretation of Wasatiyyah Verses: From Classical to Contemporary." *Jurnal Ilmu Ushuluddin* 42, no. 1 (2024): 55–72.

³⁵ M. Quraish Shihab, *Membumikan Al-Quran: Fungsi Dan Peran Wahyu Dalam Kehidupan Masyarakat*, Mizan (Mizan, 2002).

³⁶ R Fitria, R Sutantio, and A Fauzi, "Moderation in Qur'anic Hermeneutics: A Thematic Study of Wasatiyyah and 'Adl." *Jurnal Ilmiah Teunuleh* 5, no. 2 (2024): 112–130.

³⁷ Basri Basri and Muhammad Muhammad, "Rethinking Religious Moderation Through the Study of Indonesian Exegesis: A Study of Tafsir Al-Azhar By Hamka." *Khazanah: Jurnal Studi Islam Dan Humaniora* 21, no. 1 (2023): 41–58.

³⁸ Abdullah Saeed, *Interpreting the Qur'an: Towards a Contemporary Approach* (Routledge, 2007).

³⁹ Hamid Fahmy Zarkasyi, "Qur'anic Justice and Religious Moderation: A Structural-Semantic Analysis." *Journal of Islamic Studies and Civilization*, *Journal of Islamic Studies and Civilization* 10, no. 2 (2023): 98–114.

In this light, the interpretations of Hamka and Shihab, despite originating from differing intellectual and sociopolitical contexts, both represent distinctive yet complementary expressions of Qur'anic justice. Hamka's exegesis roots justice in resilience against historical subjugation, whereas Shihab's exegesis roots justice in epistemic humility and pluralism. Both perspectives affirm that moderation without justice is hollow, and justice without moderation risks extremism.

Linguistic Construction of Moderation as an Alternative “Middle Way” Solution

The concept of *tawasut* in the Qur'anic discourse transcends a static lexical interpretation. It emerges as a dynamic moral and epistemic framework for addressing the complexities of religious life, social tension, and civilizational development. From the linguistic analysis conducted in this study, *tawasut* is not merely a derivative of the triliteral root w-s-t; it is intricately related to a semantic constellation of lexemes including *al-'adl* (justice), *al-khayr* (goodness), *al-ḥasanah* (virtue), *al-qisṭ* (equity), and *al-mīzān* (balance). This plurality of meanings positions moderation as a relational construct, adaptable to context yet anchored in divine guidance.

Both *Tafsir al-Azhar* by Hamka and *Tafsir al-Misbah* by M. Quraish Shihab construct *tawasut* not only as a theological imperative but also as a hermeneutical tool that offers alternative pathways for navigating religious extremism, ideological rigidity, and sociopolitical polarisation. This duality, textual depth and contextual relevance position moderation as both a moral virtue and a pragmatic strategy. The findings of this study suggest that this meaning construction is highly influenced by the exegetical style (*uslub*), interpretive method (*manhaj*), and epistemic *sanad* (scholarly genealogy) of each *mufasssir*.

In *Tafsir al-Azhar*, Hamka interprets *tawasut* as a lived reality of the Indonesian *ummah*, cultivated through personal experience and socio-cultural struggle. His *adab al-ijtima'i* approach and *tahlili* method are characterised by moral reflection, practical guidance, and socio-political consciousness. The absence of formal academic training does not limit Hamka's interpretive depth; rather, it enriches his *tafsir* with a unique blend of ethical intuition and cultural relevance.⁴⁰ This style reflects what Alamsyah et al. (2023) describe as “civic *tafsir*”, where religious values are constructed to directly respond to the needs of society.⁴¹ Thus, moderation, for Hamka, becomes an alternative solution to colonial trauma and ideological exclusivism, offering a harmonising force in a pluralistic nation.

In contrast, *Tafsir al-Misbah* by Quraish Shihab adopts a more structured and philosophically rigorous approach. Employing the *mawḍu'i* method and *takhyīr al-ajwad* style, Shihab's interpretation is informed by his formal academic *sanad* rooted in the epistemic tradition of Al-Azhar University, Cairo. His use of moderation is dialectical, an epistemological bridge that negotiates between textual fidelity and contemporary rationality.⁴² As noted by Hasyim and Wahyuni (2022), Shihab's moderation is articulated as a “civilised reason”, a Quranic reason that functions not to dominate but to harmonise, not to judge but to understand.⁴³ Through this lens, *tawasut* is not merely the middle path between two extremes, but the most excellent, just, and contextually appropriate path, a situated ethical choice in navigating theological diversity.

Literature in Islamic studies supports this multidimensional construction. For instance, Al-Tamaddun's recent volume (Zamzami, 2023) asserts that the Qur'anic concept of moderation provides not only doctrinal balance but socio-civilisational orientation, a value system that guides human beings as *khalīfah fī al-arḍ* (vicegerents on earth).⁴⁴ In this framework, moderation is not passivity, but proactive engagement; it requires the believer to be ethically responsive, contextually aware, and strategically wise in resolving religious or societal disputes.

⁴⁰ Hamka, *Tafsir Al-Azhar* (Pustaka Panjimas, 1985).

⁴¹ I Alamsyah, H Rahmat, and A Karim, “Civic Hermeneutics in Indonesian Tafsir: Ethical Interpretation in the Post-Colonial Context,” *Al-Tamaddun: Journal of Islamic Civilization* 18, no. 2 (2023): 77–94.

⁴² M. Quraish Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Misbah: Pesan, Kesan, Dan Keserasian Al-Qur'an (Vols. 1–15)* (Lentera Hati, 2002).

⁴³ M Hasyim and N Wahyuni, “Tawasuth Dalam Tafsir Al-Misbah: Pendekatan Maudhu'i Dan Rasionalisasi Etik,” *Jurnal Studi Al-Qur'an* 8, no. 1 (2022): 45–60.

⁴⁴ Zamzami Muhammad Yunus, “Quranic Moderation and Civilizational Ethics: A Study of Ummatan Wasatan,” *Al-Tamaddun: Journal of Islamic Civilization* 18, no. 1 (2023): 65–82.

The findings also challenge reductive interpretations of moderation that equate it with mere neutrality. While moderation avoids extremism (*ghuluw*) and neglect (*tafrīṭ*), it does not signify moral relativism or ideological ambivalence. Rather, as this study shows, *tawasut* in both Hamka's and Shihab's exegesis functions as a normative principle with civilisational aims, offering practical middle ways in times of polarisation, ethical solutions in moments of crisis, and spiritual equilibrium in the face of fragmentation. Furthermore, the *tafsir* works demonstrate that moderation, when grounded in linguistic and contextual exegesis, can yield plural epistemologies without compromising theological integrity. This is in line with the work of Nurhasanah (2021), who finds that *tafsir* which integrates linguistic analysis with socio-historical reasoning produces richer, more inclusive interpretations that speak to modern challenges such as radicalism, sectarianism, and identity politics.⁴⁵

In conclusion, the construction of *tawasut* as an alternative solution is not an abstract ideal but a practical Quranic ethos. It is a divine value aimed at restoring harmony, guiding human civilisation, and embodying the role of Muslims as the “*ummataṅ wasaṭan*”, a just and balanced community. Both Hamka and Shihab, despite their differing methodologies and epistemologies, converge on this point: moderation is not only a virtue, but also the foundation of Islamic civilisation.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that the linguistic construction of *tawasut* verses in the Qur'an offers not only a semantic richness but also a complex interplay between textual meaning, interpretative methodology, and socio-cultural context. Through a comparative analysis of *Tafsir al-Azhar* by Hamka and *Tafsir al-Misbah* by M. Quraish Shihab, the study reveals that moderation (*wasatiyyah*) is linguistically framed through key lexical items such as *al-'adl*, *al-mīzān*, and *al-khayr*, which are then further developed contextually through distinctive interpretative frameworks and cultural milieus.

The findings indicate that moderation is not a monolithic concept but a dynamic construct shaped by each *mufassir's* background, methodology, and social context. Hamka's use of the *adab ijtimā'ī* style and the *taḥlīlī* method, grounded in socio-religious activism, constructs moderation as social harmony and justice. In contrast, Quraish Shihab employs a more epistemologically structured method (*mawḍū'ī*) and style (*takhyīr al-ajwad*), constructing moderation as intellectual balance and ethical choice within pluralistic settings. This comparative linguistic study thus affirms that *tawasut* is not only a theological value but also a strategic linguistic and hermeneutic tool to ground Islam as a religion of *rahmah* in a diverse and modern society.

The research contributes to the evolving discourse on Islamic moderation by highlighting the relevance of linguistic analysis in understanding religious values and their transmission. Furthermore, it reinforces the importance of contextual reading in Islamic hermeneutics, particularly in shaping a narrative that supports religious tolerance and national unity within the framework of the Indonesian state. However, this study is limited by its focus on two interpretative works and selected verses, which may constrain the generalizability of its conclusions. Future research should expand the corpus by incorporating more *tafsir* texts across different eras and regions and applying multidisciplinary approaches such as corpus linguistics, critical discourse analysis, and comparative theology to enrich the understanding of religious moderation in broader contexts.

References

Abdur Razzaq, Deden Mula Saputra. “Studi Analisis Komparatif Antara Ta'wil Dan Hermeneutika Dalam Penafsiran Al-Qur'an.” *Wardah* 17, no. 2 (2016): 89–114.

Afwadzi, Benny, and Miski Miski. “Religious Moderation in Indonesian Higher Educations: Literature Review.” *ULUL ALBAB Jurnal Studi Islam* 22, no. 2 (2021): 203–31.

⁴⁵ A Nurhasanah, “The Linguistic Construction of Moderation in Contemporary Tafsir,” *Jurnal Ilmu Ushuluddin* 41, no. 2 (2021): 89–105.

- Constructing Religious Moderation through Language: A Comparative Study of Verses on Tawasut*
 Ahangar, Mohd Altaf Hussain. "Succession Rights of Muslim Women in the Modern World: An Analytical Appraisal." *Arab Law Quarterly* 28, no. 2 (2014): 111-135.
- Alamsyah, I, H Rahmat, and A Karim. "Civic Hermeneutics in Indonesian Tafsir: Ethical Interpretation in the Post-Colonial Context." *Al-Tamaddun: Journal of Islamic Civilization* 18, no. 2 (2023): 77-94.
- Arni, Jani. "Muhammad Al-Thahir Ibn Asyur." *Jurnal Ushuluddin* 17, no. 1 (2011): 80-97.
- Asnawi, Aqdi Rofiq, Syukron Affani, and Zaenatul Hakamah. "Scientific Qur'anic Exegesis in Indonesia: Contributions By Scholars, Institutions, and the Government." *Australian Journal of Islamic Studies* 6, no. 4 (2021): 25-46.
- Basri, Basri, and Muhammad Muhammad. "Rethinking Religious Moderation Through the Study of Indonesian Exegesis: A Study of Tafsir Al-Azhar By Hamka." *Khazanah: Jurnal Studi Islam Dan Humaniora* 21, no. 1 (2023): 41-58.
- Butt, Fatima. "Religious Misinterpretation Leading to Extremism," 2018. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.23588.12160>.
- Campbell, Louis. *A Diagnosis of Religious Moderation: Matthew Parker and the 1559 Settlement*. Routledge, 2017.
- Chotimah, Chusnul, Saifuddin Zuhri Qudsy, and Mirna Yusuf. "Superficial Implementation of Religious Moderation in Islamic Educational Management." *Cogent Education* 12, no. 1 (2025).
- Dozan, Wely, and Muhammad Turmudzi. "Konsep Hermeneutika Sebagai Metodologi Interpretasi Teks Al-Quran." *MAGHZA: Jurnal Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Tafsir* 4, no. 2 (2019): 205-19.
- Firmansyah, Firmansyah. "Class Together in Realizing the Values of Moderation of Islamic Education Through Multicultural School Culture." *Journal Education Multicultural of Islamic Society* 2, no. 1 (2021): 1-12.
- Fitria, R, R Sutantio, and A Fauzi. "Moderation in Qur'anic Hermeneutics: A Thematic Study of Wasatiyyah and 'Adl." *Jurnal Ilmiah Teunuleh* 5, no. 2 (2024): 112-130.
- Fitria, R, R Sutantio, and A Fauzi. "The Interpretation of Islam Nusantara and Religious Moderation in Indonesia: A Study of KH. Abdurrahman Wahid's Thoughts in Tafsir Al-Qur'an Al-Karim." *Journal of Al-Tamaddun* 19, no. 1 (2024): 134-144.
- Hamka. *Tafsir Al-Azhar*. Pustaka Panjimas, 1985.
- Hasyim, M, and N Wahyuni. "Tawasuth Dalam Tafsir Al-Misbah: Pendekatan Maudhu'i Dan Rasionalisasi Etik." *Jurnal Studi Al-Qur'an* 8, no. 1 (2022): 45-60.
- Jabri, Samia Muhsen. "Lexical Synonyms in the Holy Qur'an and Their Translations: A Case Study." *International Journal of Arabic-English Studies* 13, no. 1 (2012): 7-22.
- Jiang, Xiaoming, Yi Li, and Xiaolin Zhou. "Even a Rich Man Can Afford That Expensive House: ERP Responses to Construction-Based Pragmatic Constraints during Sentence Comprehension." *Neuropsychologia* 51, no. 10 (2013): 1857-66.
- Krzemien, Magali, Esther Seret, and Christelle Maillart. "The Generalisation of Linguistic Constructions in Children with or without Developmental Language Disorders." *Journal of Child Language* 48, no. 2 (2021): 413-27.

M. Quraish Shihab. *Wawasan Al-Quran. Tafsir Maudhu'i Atas Pelbagai Persoalan Umat*. 13th ed. Penerbit Mizan, 1996.

Maarif, Ahmad Syafii. *Islam Dalam Bingkai Keindonesiaan Dan Kemanusiaan, Sebuah Refleksi Sejarah*. Mizan Pustaka, 2015.

Mahrus, Erwin, and Zaenuddin Hudi Prasajo. "Messages of Religious Moderation Education." *Madania* 24 (2020): 39–48.

Mahrus, Erwin, Zaenuddin Hudi Prasajo, and B. Busro. "Messages of Religious Moderation Education in Sambas Islamic Manuscripts." *Madania: Jurnal Kajian Keislaman* 24, no. 1 (2020): 39-48.

Miftah, Muhammad, and Mukh. Nursikin. "Tawasuth Dan Dinamika Sosial Antarumat Beragama: Menyelami Nilai-Nilai Wasathiyah Islamiyyah." *Afeksi: Jurnal Penelitian Dan Evaluasi Pendidikan* 5, no. 1 (2024): 52–59.

Monsiváis, Raúl Rodríguez. "Compleción y Reconstrucción de Argumentos : Contextualismo , Persuasión , Parsimonia y Acoplamiento." *COGENCY* 10, no. 1 (2018): 105–28.

Natsir, Nurasia, Nuraziza Aliah, Zulkhaeriyah Zulkhaeriyah, Amiruddin Amiruddin, and Farida Esmianti. "The Impact of Language Changes Caused By Technology and Social Media." *Language Literacy: Journal of Linguistics, Literature, and Language Teaching* 7, no. 1 (2023): 115–24.

Nirwana A.N., Andri, Yeti Dahliana, Ainur Rhain, Kharis Nugroho, Ahmad Nurrahim, Alfiyatul Azizah, and Zainora Daud. "Mapping Quranic Exegesis Research: Trends, Contributions, And Future Directions." *Jurnal Ilmiah Peuradeun* 13 (2025): 319.

Nita, Barbara, and Andrzej Świątłowski. "Linguistic Pluralism and Interpretation of European Law in the Third Pillar, Discussed with Reference to the Example of Article 54 of the Convention Implementing the Schengen Agreement." In *Interpretation of Law in the Global World: From Particularism to a Universal Approach*. New York, 2010.

Nurhasanah, A. "The Linguistic Construction of Moderation in Contemporary Tafsir." *Jurnal Ilmu Ushuluddin* 41, no. 2 (2021): 89–105.

Permono, Ajar. "Kritik Metodologi Penafsiran Bucaillisme Atas Ayat-Ayat Sains." *Jurnal Studi Ilmu-Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Hadis* 19, no. 1 (2019): 1–20.

Rahmadi, R, S Habibah, and S Al-Fatih. "The Interpretation of Wasatiyyah Verses: From Classical to Contemporary." *Jurnal Ilmu Ushuluddin* 42, no. 1 (2024): 55–72.

Rahman, Fazlur. *Islam and Modernity; Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition*. The University of Chicago Press, 1982.

Rahmi, Syarifah, M Riyan Hidayat, Ahmad Hariyadi, and Helwani Syafi. "Acculturation of Arabic Language on Hijrah Muslim Communication Oriented The Articulation of Islamic Identity." *Retorika: Jurnal Ilmu Bahasa* 9, no. 1 (2023): 1–8.

Rismawati, Shinta Dewi, Siti Qomariyah, Happy Sista Devy, Nurul Maisyal, and Qurrota A'yun. "The Legal Politics of Religious Moderation in Indonesia: Responsive or Repressive?" *Journal of Legal, Ethical and Regulatory Issues* 24, no. 4 (2021): 1–8.

Constructing Religious Moderation through Language: A Comparative Study of Verses on Tawasut
Roqib, Moh, Wildan Humaidi, Eva Niswah, Muhammad Zain, and Sri Mulyani. "Cultural Harmonization through Islamic Education: Between Religious Moderation in Javanese Traditions in Penginyongan." *Journal of Ecohumanism* 4 (2025): 1848-1858.

Saeed, Abdullah. *Interpreting the Qur'an: Towards a Contemporary Approach*. Routledge, 2007.

Shihab, M. Q. *Wawasan Al-Qur'an: Tafsir Maudhui Atas Pelbagai Persoalan Umat*. 2013.

Shihab, M. Quraish. *Membumikan Al-Quran: Fungsi Dan Peran Wahyu Dalam Kehidupan Masyarakat*. Mizan. Mizan, 2002.

Shihab, M. Quraish. *Tafsir Al-Misbah: Pesan, Kesan, Dan Keserasian Al-Qur'an (Vols. 1–15)*. Jakarta: *Lentera Hati*. Lentera Hati, 2002.

Sire, James W. "Worldviews: Concepts or Narratives? An Integrative Definition to Assess Their Controlling Effect in the Biblical and Atheistic Evolutionary Models." *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 57, no. 2 (2020): 267–304.

Sya'rawi, Syekh Muhammad Mutawalli. *Tafsir Sya'rawi*. 15th ed. Duta Azhar, 2016.

Yunus, Zamzami Muhammad. "Quranic Moderation and Civilizational Ethics: A Study of Ummatan Wasatan." *Al-Tamaddun: Journal of Islamic Civilization* 18, no. 1 (2023): 65–82.

Zainab, MZ. "The Role of Language Communication with the Society and Culture." *Vernacular: Linguistics, Literature, Communication and Culture Journal* 1, no. 1 (2021): 1–15.

Zarkasyi, Hamid Fahmy. "Qur'anic Justice and Religious Moderation: A Structural-Semantic Analysis. Journal of Islamic Studies and Civilization." *Journal of Islamic Studies and Civilization* 10, no. 2 (2023): 98–114.

Zuo'an, Wang. "Religious Harmony: A Fresh Concept in the Age of Globalization." *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* 77 (2013): 210-213.

