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INSTITUTIONAL MODELS OF *WASATHIYAH* IN DA'WAH AND ISLAMIC EDUCATION: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF INDONESIA AND TURKEY

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Abstract

This study examines how *wasathiyah* (Islamic moderation) is institutionalized through da'wah (Islamic preaching) and Islamic education in Indonesia and Turkey. It addresses the need to understand moderation not only as a normative or theological concept, but also as an institutional practice shaped by organizational structures, educational processes, religious authority, and differing state–religion contexts. The study employed a qualitative comparative design and was conducted in

Indonesia and Turkey between January and December 2025. Four institutions were purposively selected as analytically contrasting cases representing different organizational configurations of da'wah and Islamic education: Nahdlatul Ulama and Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor in Indonesia, and the Hayrat Foundation and the Istanbul Foundation for Science and Culture in Turkey. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, field observations, and documentary analysis. The study identifies two distinct institutional configurations of *wasathiyah*. In the selected Indonesian cases, moderation is primarily sustained through communal religious authority, *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school) education, preacher training, organizational networks, and engagement with Pancasila (Indonesia's state philosophy). In the selected Turkish cases, moderation is articulated through civil society foundations, the *Risale-i Nur* (Epistles of Light) study tradition, rational-spiritual education, dialogue, non-formal learning, and intellectual engagement within a secular public order. The comparison suggests that different combinations of regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive mechanisms shape how *wasathiyah* is institutionally expressed across the selected cases. This study contributes to the literature by developing an institutional perspective on *wasathiyah* and by comparing distinct institutional patterns observed across four selected cases in Indonesia and Turkey. It shifts the analysis from normative definitions of Islamic moderation toward the organizational and pedagogical mechanisms through which moderation is articulated and sustained. The study does not claim to represent the full diversity of da'wah and Islamic education in either country, nor does it measure participant-level outcomes. Rather, it shows that *wasathiyah* is institutionally sustained when mediated by organizational practices, educational processes, and da'wah activities within specific sociopolitical contexts.

Keywords: *civil society; da'wah; Indonesia and Turkey; Islamic education; wasathiyah*

A. Introduction

Contemporary Muslim societies are increasingly confronted with complex social and religious challenges, including pluralism, secularization, globalization, radicalization, and religious polarization. Globalization and migration have intensified religious and cultural diversity, requiring Muslim communities to develop new frameworks for coexistence and interreligious

harmony (Elguédri & Ferjani, 2017; Jamal, 2022; Rijal et al., 2025). At the same time, secularization has created debates over the compatibility of Islamic traditions with modern public life, while global ideological flows have contributed to identity crises, fragmentation, and competing claims of religious authority (Gadzhimuradova, 2020; Kersten & Olsson, 2013). These dynamics are further complicated by the rise of radical and puritan religious narratives, especially among younger generations exposed to transnational religious discourses and socio-political instability (Fazliev & Nafikov, 2015; Safi, 2023).

Recent empirical evidence indicates that religious contestation remains significant in both Indonesia and Turkey, although it takes different forms. In Indonesia, the SETARA Institute (2025) documented 221 incidents involving 331 acts that violated freedom of religion or belief throughout 2025, showing that restrictions, intolerance, and inadequate protection of religious minorities remain persistent concerns despite a numerical decline from 260 incidents and 402 acts in 2024. In Turkey, recent evidence points less to directly comparable violations than to continuing contestation over the relationship between religion, national identity, and public life: Pew Research Center (2025) survey found that about three-quarters of ideologically right-leaning respondents considered being Muslim very important to being truly Turkish, compared with roughly one-third of those on the ideological left, indicating a substantial ideological divide over the place of Islam in national identity. Although these indicators measure different dimensions and should not be treated as equivalent measures of intolerance or polarization, together they demonstrate that religious freedom, identity, authority, and the public role of religion remain consequential issues in both societies. This provides a contemporary empirical rationale for examining *wasathiyah* (Islamic moderation) not merely as a normative theological concept, but as an institutionally mediated response to differing configurations of religious diversity, authority, and state–religion relations in Indonesia and Turkey.

Indonesia and Turkey were selected using a broadly most-similar comparative rationale rather than a strict most-similar-systems design. Both are Muslim-majority countries that do not formally define themselves as Islamic states, possess long-established traditions of institutionalized da'wah (Islamic preaching) and Islamic education, and have produced influential non-state religious institutions with national and transnational reach. In Indonesia, Islamic moderation has been shaped through cultural Islam, *pesantren* networks, Islamic civil society organizations, and the national framework of Pancasila, which enables Islam to coexist with democracy, pluralism, and national identity (Azra, 2006; Hefner, 2000; Lapidus, 2014). In Turkey, Islamic moderation has developed within a distinct institutional and political setting shaped by Ottoman religious-political legacies, republican secularism, civil society-based Islamic education, and intellectual-spiritual traditions such as the Risale-i Nur (İnalcık, 1994; Vahide, 2005; Yavuz, 2003; Zürcher, 2017). These shared characteristics, combined with important differences in state–religion arrangements and institutional histories, provide analytical leverage for examining how models of *wasathiyah* converge or diverge across the two contexts. Accordingly, the study examines Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor (hereafter referred to as Gontor) in Indonesia, and the Hayrat Foundation and the Istanbul Foundation for Science and Culture (IFSC) in Turkey, as analytically contrasting cases through which the institutional practice of *wasathiyah* in da'wah and Islamic education can be compared.

In the Turkish context, forms of Islamic religious education comparable in some respects to *pesantren* are commonly found in *Kur'an kursu* (Qur'anic courses), *dersane* (religious study houses), and *madrasa* (Islamic schools). As described by the Turkish informant, these activities may operate through officially recognized *vakıf* (charitable foundations), including Hayrat and the Istanbul Foundation for Science and Culture (IFSC), and function as voluntary civil-society educational services. They can

serve different groups, including younger and older learners, women and men, and people with different levels of formal education. This non-formal educational infrastructure is relevant to understanding how da'wah, Islamic education, civil society, and *wasathiyah* interact in Turkey.

Previous literature on this topic can be grouped into three main categories: first, studies on *wasathiyah*, Islamic moderation, and religious moderation; second, studies on da'wah and Islamic education as institutional arenas for transmitting moderation; and third, comparative studies on Islam, civil society, and state-religion relations in Indonesia and Turkey. The first category generally conceptualizes *wasathiyah* as a balanced, just, tolerant, and inclusive orientation in Islamic thought and practice. Arif (2020) explains Islamic moderation as a conceptual framework rooted in balance and avoidance of extremism, while Ichsan et al. (2024) emphasize that the *wasathiyah* paradigm is grounded in Qur'anic values and can guide Islamic education toward tolerance and anti-radicalism. Other studies highlight the core principles of *tawassuth* (moderation), *tawazun* (balance), and *i'tidal* (justice and fairness) as ethical foundations for strengthening peace, national commitment, and respect for diversity (Akil et al., 2024; Anwar et al., 2024). Marjani (2023) further shows that religious moderation entails a theological and philosophical negotiation between faith and rationality, suggesting that moderation cannot be reduced to behavioral tolerance alone but also involves the ways religious commitment is intellectually interpreted and reconciled with plural social realities.

In the Indonesian context, religious moderation has also been discussed as a response to identity conflict, radicalism, and cultural plurality, particularly through the integration of Islamic values with local culture, *pesantren* education, and national frameworks of tolerance (Fuadi et al., 2024; Inayatillah et al., 2022; Zaluchu et al., 2025). These studies are valuable because they clarify the normative and conceptual foundations of *wasathiyah*; however, they tend to focus on definitions, values, or policy discourse rather than explaining how *wasathiyah* is

institutionally practiced through concrete da'wah and educational institutions across different Muslim-majority contexts.

The second category focuses on studies of Islamic preaching and education as practical arenas for cultivating religious moderation. Previous research shows that *pesantren*, madrasas, schools, universities, and da'wah movements play an important role in translating *wasathiyah* values into educational practice, curriculum design, teacher role-modeling, and community engagement. In the Indonesian context, *pesantren* have been widely discussed as institutions that cultivate moderation by integrating tolerance, anti-violence, cultural accommodation, interreligious respect, and balanced religious understanding into curricula, extracurricular activities, and institutional governance (Helmy et al., 2021; Iwan Setiawan et al., 2026; Syabuddin et al., 2026). Other studies examine how Islamic higher education and religious education curricula incorporate moderation through counter-radicalism strategies, interfaith dialogue, public lectures, problem-solving methods, inquiry-based learning, and curriculum modules in subjects such as *aqidah* (Islamic creed), *akhlaq* (Islamic ethics and moral character), *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), and Qur'anic studies (Arifin et al., 2025; Hanif et al., 2024; Kosim et al., 2024; Ma`arif et al., 2022; Muis, 2026). In the field of da'wah, scholars have shown that moderate preaching can empower Muslim communities, reinterpret contested concepts such as *jihad* (religious striving) in more humanistic and intellectual ways, and reduce radicalism, intolerance, and social fragmentation (Alam, 2020; Saleh, 2025; Hermanto et al., 2026; Syukur et al., 2024). These studies demonstrate that da'wah and Islamic education are crucial spaces for practicing moderation; however, most of them remain centered on Indonesian cases and have not sufficiently compared how *wasathiyah* is institutionalized through both da'wah and education across different Muslim-majority contexts, such as Indonesia and Turkey.

The third category comprises comparative studies of Islam, civil society, and state-religion relations in Indonesia and Turkey. Previous research shows that although both countries are Muslim-

majority societies, they differ significantly in the way religion is positioned within the state and public life. In Indonesia, state-religion relations are often described as symbiotic, in which religion and the state remain distinct but mutually influential through the framework of Pancasila, religious pluralism, and democratic governance (Safa'at, 2022; Salim, 2008). However, this model also faces challenges related to the politicization of religion, radical Islamist influence, and legal disputes over religious pluralism (Crouch, 2013). In Turkey, by contrast, state-religion relations are shaped by republican secularism and centralized religious bureaucracy, particularly through the Directorate of Religious Affairs, which has historically regulated the public role of Islam and shaped Sunni-oriented religious life (Burak, 2021; Doğan & Akdemir, 2025; Ulusoy, 2011). Comparative studies also show that Islamic bureaucracies in Indonesia and Turkey operate within different political and religious histories, with Indonesia reflecting a more pluralistic religious landscape and Turkey reflecting a more centralized model of state-managed Islam (Senay et al., 2025). Meanwhile, civil society plays an important role in both contexts: Islamic groups in Indonesia contribute to debates on democracy, pluralism, and religious freedom, while Muslim civil society organizations in Turkey negotiate religious freedom and challenge the limits of state secularism (Salim, 2008; Walton, 2017). These studies are useful for understanding the broader relationship between Islam, state, and civil society, but they have not sufficiently explained how *wasathiyah* is institutionally practiced through da'wah and Islamic education by specific religious institutions in Indonesia and Turkey.

Building on these three bodies of literature, several gaps emerge. First, *wasathiyah* has predominantly been discussed as a normative, theological, or policy concept, with comparatively less attention to its institutional practice in concrete religious and educational settings. Second, most existing studies examine Indonesia or Turkey separately rather than comparing the two as Muslim-majority societies with contrasting state-religion trajectories. Third, relatively few studies have examined the

institutionalization of *wasathiyah* across two interconnected arenas, namely da'wah and Islamic education, within a single comparative framework. Fourth, limited research has drawn on primary data from specific institutions, such as Nahdlatul Ulama, Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor, the Hayrat Foundation, and the Istanbul Foundation for Science and Culture (IFSC), using a comparative design. In light of these gaps, this study addresses the following research question: How *wasathiyah* was institutionalized through *da'wah* and Islamic education in Indonesia and Turkey, and what institutional models emerge from a comparison of Nahdlatul Ulama, Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor, the Hayrat Foundation, and the Istanbul Foundation for Science and Culture? This question is further specified into two sub-questions: (1) what institutional mechanisms, actors, and pedagogical practices mediate *wasathiyah* within each institution; and (2) how these mechanisms converge or diverge across the Indonesian and Turkish contexts.

This article argues that *wasathiyah* is not a fixed or uniform doctrine, but a context-dependent institutional practice shaped by religious organizations, educational institutions, civil society actors, norms, cultural traditions, and socio-political settings. Drawing on Scott's institutional theory, institutions are understood not merely as formal organizations, but as regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive structures that translate values into stable social practices (Scott, 2014). From this perspective, *wasathiyah* is institutionally sustained when mediated through concrete organizations and practices, such as da'wah organizations, *pesantren*, educational foundations, intellectual networks, and civil society platforms. This argument is also strengthened by civil society perspectives on Islam in Indonesia and Turkey, particularly Hefner's analysis of civil Islam in Indonesia and Yavuz's study of Islamic civil society in Turkey, which show that Islamic moderation is not produced only by the state, but also by social and religious actors operating within public life (Hefner, 2000; Yavuz, 2003). Building on this theoretical framework, the article examines how the institutional

mediation of *wasathiyah* takes shape across the two national contexts, with the specific institutional configurations identified in each country presented and elaborated in the findings section.

B. Method

This study focuses on the institutionalization of *wasathiyah* in da'wah and Islamic education in Indonesia and Turkey, with institutional practice as the unit of analysis. The study was conducted from January to December 2025 using a qualitative comparative design. Four purposively selected cases were examined: Nahdlatul Ulama and Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor in Indonesia, and the Hayrat Foundation and the Istanbul Foundation for Science and Culture (IFSC) in Turkey. They represent different institutional configurations of *wasathiyah*: a mass-based Islamic organization, modern *pesantren* education, civil society-based spiritual education, and intellectual-dialogical Islamic engagement. The cases were selected analytically rather than statistically to examine how *wasathiyah* is shaped, transmitted, and practiced across different historical, cultural, political, and state-religion contexts.

The study adopted a qualitative comparative design to examine institutional meanings, processes, religious practices, and socio-cultural interpretations rather than statistically measured variables. The approach explores how institutional actors interpret *wasathiyah* and embed it in da'wah, education, organizational culture, and civil society initiatives (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Comparisons were conducted both within and across cases to identify distinctive institutional pathways and convergent and divergent patterns. This design moves beyond institutional description while recognizing that the selected cases are not statistically representative of the broader diversity of Islamic organizations and educational institutions in Indonesia and Turkey.

Primary data were obtained through semi-structured interviews with institutional actors who had direct knowledge of

or responsibility for da'wah, Islamic education, institutional management, and moderate Islamic values. The Indonesian informants represented NU and Gontor, while Turkish informants represented the Hayrat Foundation and IFSC. The informants included Jamil Abdul Latif and members of the Lembaga Dakwah Nahdlatul Ulama (LDNU, Nahdlatul Ulama Da'wah Institute) leadership from NU; Husnan Bey Fananie for Gontor; Celalettin Günaydın, Ridwan Abud, and Yusuf Irmak for Hayrat; and İsmail Latif Hacınebioğlu, Hasbi Sen, and Afifuddin for IFSC. Informants were purposively selected based on institutional authority, direct involvement, and capacity to provide substantive information on wasathiyah-related programs and practices. Data adequacy was assessed by the relevance and information richness of informants rather than by statistical representativeness. Secondary sources included institutional documents, official websites, publications, program materials, books, journal articles, and research reports, which were used to contextualize and cross-check interview accounts.

To capture institutional perspectives and their contexts, data were collected through semi-structured interviews, field observation, and documentation during the research period. Interviews explored institutional understandings of *wasathiyah*, its promotion mechanisms, implementation in da'wah and Islamic education, and its broader social and political context. Field observations in relevant institutional and educational settings in Indonesia and Turkey covered *pesantren* life, da'wah activities, study forums, training programs, and civil society-based educational initiatives. Observation served as complementary contextual evidence rather than a measure of *wasathiyah* effectiveness. Documentary analysis covered institutional profiles, program materials, publications, educational materials, and other relevant sources. These sources were combined to strengthen contextual understanding and triangulate institutional narratives, observations, documentary evidence, and relevant literature.

For the analytical procedure, the study employed thematic analysis supported by the interactive model of Miles et al. (2014),

comprising data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification. Interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents were organized around themes including institutional pathways, da'wah, Islamic education, civil society engagement, and comparative patterns of *wasathiyah*. Within-case analysis identified distinctive institutional mechanisms, while cross-case comparison examined similarities and differences between Indonesia and Turkey. Triangulation across interviews, observations, and institutional documents strengthened the trustworthiness of the analysis, while relevant literature was used to contextualize the findings. Because the study focuses primarily on institutional perspectives, its findings are not statistically representative of institutional members, students, participants, or wider communities, but describe how *wasathiyah* is articulated, designed, and institutionally practiced by actors with direct institutional knowledge and responsibility.

C. Results

1. Institutional Pathways of *Wasathiyah* in Indonesia and Turkey

The findings indicate that *wasathiyah* in Indonesia and Turkey did not develop along a single, uniform trajectory but rather through distinct historical and institutional pathways. Historically, Islam in Indonesia expanded through trade networks, cultural accommodation, *pesantren*-based religious transmission, and the later development of Islamic civil society organizations, while Islam in Turkey was shaped by political institutionalization under the Seljuk and Ottoman traditions and later transformed by the secular framework of the modern republic (Azra, 2006; İnalcık, 1994; Lapidus, 2014; Zürcher, 2017). These different trajectories shaped the way Islamic moderation was institutionalized in each country. In Indonesia, *wasathiyah* is closely connected to cultural Islam, *pesantren* networks, Islamic organizations, and the national

consensus embodied in Pancasila. In Turkey, it is articulated through Ottoman legacies, republican secularism, civil society institutions, intellectual networks, and spiritually oriented education. Thus, Indonesia demonstrates a communal-national pathway of Islamic moderation, whereas Turkey reflects an intellectual-spiritual pathway in which moderation is negotiated within a secular public order.

In the Indonesian context, *wasathiyah* is not merely presented as an abstract theological concept, but is institutionalized through socio-religious organizations, *pesantren* networks, and national religious culture. Nahdlatul Ulama represents this pathway by grounding Islamic moderation in the tradition of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah* (people of the prophetic tradition and the community), cultural da'wah, respect for local wisdom, and commitment to the Indonesian nation-state. This pattern is consistent with the broader historical formation of Indonesian Islam, in which *pesantren*, *ulama* (Islamic religious scholars) networks, and Islamic organizations have played a central role in shaping a moderate and socially embedded religious tradition (Hefner, 2000; Johns, 1993; Ricklefs, 2001). Field data show that NU's da'wah institutions operate through the LDNU, *pesantren* networks, religious study groups, and grassroots religious authorities, thereby translating values such as *tasamuh* (tolerance), *tawazun* (balance), and respect for the scholarly authority of the ulama into everyday religious practice. One concrete example is the *Madrasah Du'at* (School for Preachers) program organized by LDNU of Pengurus Wilayah Nahdlatul Ulama (PWNU, Nahdlatul Ulama Provincial Executive Board) of West Java, which drew approximately 150 participants and was designed to strengthen the da'wah corps of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah an-Nahdliyyah* (adhered to by the members and scholars of NU). As Jamil Abdul Latif stated, "Madrasah Du'at is not merely a training

activity, but a strategic step to build NU's sustainable da'wah strength" (Abdul Latif, personal communication, 2025). This finding suggests that, from the perspective of NU's leadership, its pathway of *wasathiyah* is built through preacher training and formation, *pesantren*-based religious authority, and national commitment, rather than through formal doctrinal discourse alone.

Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor complements this Indonesian pathway by demonstrating how *wasathiyah* is cultivated through modern Islamic education. Gontor integrates religious sciences, modern knowledge, Arabic and English language training, discipline, leadership, independence, and communal life among students from diverse backgrounds. Interview data indicate that Gontor's educational system is designed to form Muslims who are intellectually capable, morally disciplined, socially responsible, and open to dialogue. This orientation is reflected in the statement of Husnan Bey Fananie: "At Gontor, we do not educate students to become fanatical toward a particular group, but to become mature Muslims who are tolerant and ready to engage in dialogue with anyone" (Fananie, personal communication, 2025). This statement shows that *wasathiyah* at Gontor is embedded not only in curriculum content, but also in institutional culture, daily discipline, leadership training, and students' experience of living with difference. Taken together, the NU and Gontor cases show that Indonesian *wasathiyah* is sustained through two mutually reinforcing institutional arenas: communal religious authority and modern *pesantren*-based character formation.

In the Turkish case, the institutional pathway of *wasathiyah* is shaped by the historical tension between Islamic tradition and the secular framework of the modern republic. The Ottoman experience had previously situated Islam within a strong imperial, legal, and educational framework, while the republican period introduced a

secular state model that redefined the public role of religion (İnalcık, 1994; Lewis, 2002; Zürcher, 2017). Unlike Indonesia, where moderation is strongly rooted in mass-based Islamic organizations and *pesantren* networks, Islamic moderation in Turkey is more visibly articulated through civil society institutions, intellectual forums, and non-formal religious education. The Hayrat Foundation represents this pathway by promoting Islamic education through Risale-i Nur study circles, Qur'an teacher training, socio-religious activities, and youth development programs. These programs indicate that *wasathiyah* in Turkey is not primarily institutionalized through mass religious organization, but through civil society initiatives that connect faith, reason, ethics, and social responsibility. Celalettin Günaydın explained this orientation by stating that Islamic education is not merely the transfer of knowledge, but the formation of "both the heart and the mind" (Günaydın, personal communication, 2025). This statement demonstrates that the Hayrat Foundation's leadership understands *wasathiyah* as a rational-spiritual formation intended to enable Muslims to maintain religious commitment while developing tolerance, empathy, and social peace.

This contextualization is consistent with Mardin's (1989) interpretation of the Nursian approach as a modern Muslim response to modernity and contemporary social problems within the Ottoman lineage and modern Turkish setting. In this reading, Nursi's approach does not simply reproduce inherited forms of Islamic practice; it seeks to translate Islamic principles into an intellectually and socially responsive engagement with modern conditions (Mardin, 1989).

The Turkish terminology also requires contextual clarification. The Arabic-derived term *wasatiyye* (moderation) is not necessarily used in everyday Turkish religious discourse with exactly the same scope as

wasathiyah in Indonesian academic and policy discussions. Terms such as *mütedil* (moderate or balanced) and *müstakim* (upright or steadfast) are more commonly used in Turkish religious discourse to describe related ethical and religious orientations. In the institutional account examined here, such moderation should not be interpreted as passivism or submission to conditions considered contrary to Islamic principles. Nor does it negate the right to self-defense or to protect freedom and social peace. Rather, the emphasis is on principled, non-confrontational action and on preserving justice and peace in society (Hacınebioğlu, personal communication, 2025).

The Istanbul Foundation for Science and Culture (IFSC) further illustrates how Turkish *wasathiyah* is developed through intellectual engagement, dialogue, and openness to modern knowledge. This model is closely related to the broader Turkish context, where Islamic identity continues to be negotiated between secular governance, religious expression, and the renewal of Islamic intellectual traditions in civil society (Yavuz, 2003; Zürcher, 2017). Field data describe IFSC as an institution that advances moderate Islamic education through international seminars, scholarly publications, workshops, and study forums that connect the Islamic intellectual tradition with contemporary thought. Its model is not indoctrinative, but dialogical and reflective, encouraging participants to read religious texts rationally, historically, and critically. In an interview, İsmail Latif Hacınebioğlu explained that da'wah should educate both the heart and the mind, and that Islam should guide people toward peace rather than division (Hacınebioğlu, personal communication, 2025). This shows that IFSC contributes to the institutionalization of *wasathiyah* by positioning Islamic knowledge as a source of moral guidance, intellectual openness, and peaceful social engagement within a secular public order.

Within this Turkish understanding, the pursuit of moderation is also associated with *Cihad-i Manavi* (spiritual or non-military struggle), pursued through education, character formation, faith, knowledge, and the practice of Islamic values. The emphasis is therefore not on passivity, but on constructive action that seeks justice and peace through intellectual and moral formation. This distinction is important for interpreting *wasathiyye* in Turkey: moderation is presented as an active religious engagement that rejects both violent confrontation and indifference to social injustice (Hacınebioğlu, personal communication, 2025).

The comparative findings reveal two distinct but convergent models of *wasathiyah* institutionalization. Indonesia represents a communal-national model, in which Islamic moderation is rooted in community life, *pesantren* traditions, mass-based Islamic organizations, and the national framework of Pancasila. In this model, *wasathiyah* is sustained through the everyday religious authority of ulama, the social role of *pesantren*, preacher regeneration, and the organizational capacity of Islamic civil society, such as NU. Turkey, by contrast, represents an intellectual-spiritual civil society model, in which moderation is cultivated through the Risale-i Nur tradition, non-formal education, scholarly dialogue, civil society foundations, and rational spirituality. This model reflects the Turkish context, where Islamic moderation develops within a secular public order and is articulated through educational and intellectual institutions rather than mass-based religious organizations.

These two models indicate that *wasathiyah* cannot be understood merely as a normative religious discourse. It requires institutional mediation that enables moderation to become a lived social and educational practice. In Indonesia, this mediation occurs through *pesantren*, NU networks, preacher training, and national religious culture. In Turkey, it occurs through Hayrat Foundation, IFSC, Risale-i Nur

study circles, seminars, dialogue forums, and intellectual-spiritual education. Therefore, the comparison shows that *wasathiyah* is historically constructed, socially embedded, and institutionally mediated. Although Indonesia and Turkey follow different pathways, both cases demonstrate that Islamic moderation becomes effective only when it is embodied in institutions, transmitted through education, and practiced within concrete social contexts.

2. *Wasathiyah* in Da'wah Practices

The study found that *wasathiyah*-based da'wah in Indonesia and Turkey is described by institutional leaders as providing religious guidance, moral education, and social engagement aimed at cultivating peaceful and balanced Muslim communities, rather than as confrontation, ideological contestation, or political mobilization. This finding is consistent with the broader understanding that Islamic moderation is not only a theological concept, but also a social practice shaped by institutional frameworks, methodological approaches, and socio-religious aims (Azra, 2006; Yavuz, 2003); the data available for this study speak primarily to those institutional frameworks and stated aims, not to their measured social impact. The institutional form of da'wah differs in each country. In Indonesia, da'wah is organized through mass-based Islamic organizations, *pesantren* networks, grassroots religious authorities, and national religious culture, particularly through the role of Nahdlatul Ulama and its da'wah institutions. In Turkey, da'wah is more visibly developed through civil society foundations, intellectual-spiritual study circles, non-formal education, and dialogical engagement, as reflected in the activities of IFSC and the Hayrat Foundation. This comparison indicates that *wasathiyah*-based da'wah, as designed by its institutional architects, is adapted to the social and political space available in each country:

community-national in Indonesia and intellectual-spiritual in Turkey.

In Indonesia, NU's leadership describes its *wasathiyah*-based da'wah as grounded in the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah* tradition, cultural da'wah, *pesantren* authority, tolerance, and national commitment. This pattern reflects the broader character of Indonesian Islam, where da'wah has long been embedded in civil society, local wisdom, and communal religious life (Azra, 2006; Fealy & Barton, 1997). Field data show that NU's da'wah is institutionalized through the LDNU, *pesantren* networks, *majelis taklim* (Islamic study gatherings), and grassroots religious authorities, thereby translating moderate Islamic values such as *tasamuh*, *tawazun*, and respect for the ulama into everyday religious practice. A concrete example is the Madrasah Du'at program organized by LDNU PWNU West Java, whose third cohort was held at Pondok Pesantren Syah Maulana in Cirebon and attended by approximately 150 participants. Jamil Abdul Latif described the program as "not merely a training activity, but a strategic step to build NU's sustainable da'wah strength" (Abdul Latif, personal communication, 2025). This indicates that NU's moderate da'wah is not limited to spontaneous preaching or rhetorical religious messages, but is institutionally organized through preacher training, public communication capacity, *pesantren*-based religious authority, and commitment to serving society and the nation.

This pattern shows that NU's da'wah operates through institutional training, cultural authority, and national commitment. The field data indicate that preacher regeneration within NU is intended not only to produce speakers who can deliver religious messages but also to form preachers with a comprehensive understanding of religion, public communication skills, and sensitivity to contemporary socio-religious dynamics. Through the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah* tradition, *pesantren*-based authority,

tolerance, and commitment to Indonesian nationhood, NU translates *wasathiyah* into practical da'wah competencies: the ability to communicate religion persuasively, respect local traditions, strengthen social harmony, and respond to puritan, extremist, and polarizing religious narratives. Institutional leaders describe this moderate da'wah as also functioning as a form of social resilience, reinforcing inclusive Islamic identity in the face of radicalization and transnational religious contestation, a framing consistent with the broader literature on NU's role (Fealy & White, 2008; Hefner, 2000; Van Bruinessen, 1995). However, this study's design — reliant on interviews with organizational leadership rather than on measures of preacher performance, congregant attitudes, or community-level outcomes — does not permit a direct assessment of whether or to what extent these resilience effects are actually achieved. In this sense, NU's moderate da'wah is presented by its architects as directed toward forming agents of social transformation who present Islam as *rahmatan lil 'alamin* (a mercy to all creation) and reinforce community resilience against religious radicalization.

In Turkey, IFSC practices *wasathiyah*-based da'wah as a process of intellectual enlightenment, spiritual formation, and dialogical engagement. This model is shaped by Turkey's secular political context, where Islamic da'wah is more often articulated through civil society institutions and non-formal educational networks rather than through mass-based religious organizations. The IFSC approach is also closely connected to the Risale-i Nur tradition of Said Nursi, which emphasizes the integration of faith, reason, ethics, and modern knowledge (Vahide, 2005; Yavuz, 2003). The field data show that IFSC conducts da'wah through Risale-i Nur study forums, academic publications, international seminars, research networks, and informal educational activities for students, academics, and the wider public. In an interview, İsmail Latif Hacınebioğlu explained, "It needs

to be understood that da'wah as a process of educating both the heart and the mind. Islam should appear as a light that guides people toward peace, not as a tool for division" (Hacınebioğlu, personal communication, 2025). This statement indicates that IFSC's model of da'wah is grounded in humanization and intellectual enlightenment. Through dialogue, knowledge, and spirituality, IFSC positions Islamic da'wah not as propaganda but as a civil society practice that guides people toward peace, moral responsibility, and a balanced understanding of religion.

This orientation is captured in a frequently cited Nursian formulation: "We are the people of love and respect; no time for any conflict and fight." Mehmet Güleç (Firinci Abi) used this principle to remind people that religious commitment should be expressed through love, respect, peaceful practice, and the rejection of unnecessary conflict. In this sense, the principle of *muhabbet* (love) over *husumet* (hostility) provides a practical ethical vocabulary for *wasathiyah*-based da'wah and positive action (Hacınebioğlu, personal communication, 2025; Nursi, n.d.-a, n.d.-b).

The Nursian orientation is also expressed through the principle of *müsbet hareket* (positive action). In the institutional interpretation presented in this study, Hayrat and IFSC combine informal faith education with humanitarian and civic activities, treating service to people as a practical expression of religious commitment. Positive action is distinguished from conflict, violence, and coercive confrontation, as well as from compromising basic religious principles. This provides a practical dimension to *wasathiyah*: faith is expected to generate constructive action, social responsibility, and peaceful engagement rather than hostility (Hacınebioğlu, personal communication, 2025).

Similarly, the Hayrat Foundation's leadership describes an ethical, social, and non-confrontational model of *wasathiyah*-based da'wah in Turkey. Its representatives argue that moderate da'wah does not mean weakening Islamic teachings but rather presenting them with compassion, social responsibility, and respect for human dignity. In a research interview, Ridwan Abud explained, "Moderate da'wah is not about diluting Islamic teachings, but about presenting them in a way that nurtures the heart, respects human dignity, and builds harmony in society" (Abud, personal communication, 2025). This perspective indicates that Hayrat understands da'wah as a process of translating Islamic knowledge into lived ethical practice. The interview and documentary data indicate that this approach is implemented through Qur'anic study circles, youth mentoring, community outreach initiatives, and international dialogue activities to strengthen cross-cultural understanding. Through these programs, the Hayrat Foundation promotes empathy, cooperation, service to humanity, and peaceful coexistence in a plural society. Thus, its model of da'wah affirms that Islamic moderation is not a compromise of religious principles, but a principled way of conveying Islam while preserving human dignity and social harmony.

The comparison suggests that *wasathiyah*-based da'wah adapts to the social space available in each country. In Indonesia, moderate da'wah is socially embedded, community-driven, and closely linked to national identity. It operates through mass religious organizations, *pesantren* networks, preacher regeneration, grassroots religious authority, and national religious culture. Through NU and LDNU, da'wah is institutionally oriented toward strengthening social harmony, national commitment, and community resilience against extremist narratives. In Turkey, moderate da'wah is intellectually oriented, institutionally mediated, and adapted to a secular political

environment. It is articulated through civil society foundations, spiritual education, intellectual dialogue, textual study, and non-confrontational engagement, particularly through IFSC and the Hayrat Foundation. These institutions interpret da'wah as spiritual and intellectual enlightenment rather than political mobilization. Both models show that moderate da'wah is not merely about transmitting religious doctrine, but about forming ethical subjects, cultivating peaceful Muslim communities, and sustaining social relations in plural societies (Azra, 2006; Yavuz, 2003).

Thus, the application of *wasathiyah* in da'wah is not a fixed or uniform practice, but a dynamic process shaped by historical, cultural, and political conditions. Indonesia represents a community-national da'wah model, in which moderation is transmitted through *pesantren*, Islamic mass organizations, cultural authority, and national commitment. Turkey represents an intellectual-spiritual civil society da'wah model, in which moderation is cultivated through Risale-i Nur study traditions, dialogue, rational spirituality, and non-formal education. Despite these differences, both contexts share a common objective: to present Islam as a balanced, peaceful, and inclusive religious tradition capable of responding to contemporary challenges. This comparative insight underscores the relevance of *wasathiyah* as a flexible yet principled framework for contemporary Islamic da'wah in plural societies.

3. *Wasathiyah* in Islamic Education

The findings show that Islamic education in Indonesia and Turkey serves as a key arena for the internalization of *wasathiyah* values. In both countries, moderation is not taught merely as a concept but is cultivated through curriculum, institutional culture, moral discipline, intellectual formation, and social practice. This finding confirms that *wasathiyah*-based education functions not

only as the transmission of religious knowledge, but also as the formation of balanced individuals who integrate faith, intellect, ethics, and social responsibility (Azra, 2014; Yavuz, 2003). However, the pedagogical form of this internalization differs. In Indonesia, particularly through Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor, *wasathiyah* is developed through *pesantren*-based character formation, the integration of religious and modern knowledge, discipline, leadership training, language competence, and communal life among students from diverse backgrounds. In Turkey, particularly through the Hayrat Foundation and IFSC, *wasathiyah* is internalized through rational-spiritual education, Risale-i Nur study traditions, intellectual dialogue, non-formal learning, and civil society-based educational programs. This comparison indicates that moderate Islamic education in both contexts is not limited to curriculum reform, but is embodied in institutional culture, ethical formation, and sustained pedagogical practice.

Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor represents the Indonesian model of *wasathiyah*-based Islamic education through its integration of religious sciences, modern knowledge, Arabic and English language training, discipline, independence, leadership, and communal student life. This model reflects the broader trajectory of Indonesian Islamic education, especially the *pesantren* tradition, which has historically combined religious learning, moral formation, and social engagement (Azra, 2014; Steenbrink, 1994). Field data indicate that Gontor's educational system is designed not only to transmit knowledge, but also to form students who are intellectually mature, morally disciplined, socially responsible, and capable of living with diversity. The curriculum combines classical Islamic sciences with modern social sciences and the humanities, while daily *pesantren* life instills in students' independence, organizational responsibility, and intercultural interaction. In a research interview, Husnan Bey Fananie explained:

> At Gontor, we do not educate students to become fanatical toward a particular group, but to become mature Muslims who are tolerant and ready to engage in dialogue with anyone. Moderation is not a compromise of creed, but a balance between conviction, common sense, and humanity (Fananie, personal communication, 2025).

This statement shows that moderation at Gontor is not merely delivered as formal instruction but is embodied in institutional culture, daily discipline, leadership formation, and the formation of students' religious habitus.

The Gontor model indicates that *wasathiyah* is internalized through daily educational discipline and lived institutional experience. Students are not only taught religious knowledge but also trained to integrate classical Islamic sciences with modern knowledge, develop independence, manage organizations, communicate across cultures, and exercise leadership responsibilities. The use of Arabic and English as instructional and communicative languages further supports students' intellectual openness and intercultural competence. Field data also show that communal life at Gontor habituates students to live with peers from diverse social and regional backgrounds, respect differences, and remain firm in religious principles without becoming exclusive. Therefore, *wasathiyah* at Gontor is shaped by four interconnected educational patterns: the integration of religious and general knowledge, the habituation to discipline and leadership, multicultural student life, and the formation of Muslims who are principled yet open to dialogue. This makes Gontor's educational model not only a curriculum-based project, but also a moral and social formation process intended to cultivate moderate religious orientations among students.

In the Turkish context, the Hayrat Foundation represents a model of *wasathiyah*-based Islamic education

developed through civil society, non-formal learning, and the Risale-i Nur tradition. This model reflects the distinctive Turkish context, where Islamic education operates within a secular state framework but remains active through civil society institutions and intellectual-spiritual networks. The Risale-i Nur tradition of Said Nursi emphasizes the rationality of faith, spirituality, and social ethics, making it an important foundation for contemporary moderate Islamic education in Turkey (Vahide, 2005; Yavuz, 2003). The Hayrat Foundation's educational programs include Risale-i Nur study circles, Qur'an teacher training, socio-religious activities, and youth development programs. Through these activities, the foundation promotes the internalization of *wasathiyah* as a balance between spirituality, rationality, and social responsibility. In a research interview, Celalettin Günaydın explained, "For us, Islamic education is not merely the transfer of knowledge, but the process of shaping both the heart and the mind. Moderation emerges when religious knowledge is understood with sound reason and practiced with noble character" (Günaydın, personal communication, 2025). This statement indicates that Islamic education in the Hayrat model is not limited to cognitive instruction but is directed toward the holistic formation of the personality, in which faith, reason, and moral conduct are cultivated together.

A related Nursian principle is expressed in the statement, "Islamiyet insaniyetli Kübradır (Islam is the highest form of humanity)." Read in the context of this study, the formulation emphasizes that Islamic commitment is directed toward the moral and human development of the person. The movement from personal formation to social responsibility is therefore central: better faith should contribute to better conduct, stronger concern for humanity, and more peaceful social relations. Individual formation is consequently not separate from communal life but a starting point for it (Nursi, 1996, 2007; Turner, 2013).

The Risale-i Nur tradition provides a further conceptual bridge between faith, reason, knowledge, and social peace. Turner (2013) shows that Nursi's writings engage themes including divine unity, love, spirituality, civilization, and politics, making the Risale-i Nur relevant to the study of religious responses to modernity. In the institutional account examined here, "Risale-i Nur students are the guardians of peace and tranquility in society." The statement connects faith and action: religious knowledge is expected to generate moderation, peaceful conduct, and resistance to extremism and harmful radicalism rather than religious conflict. It also helps explain why the Turkish model links religious education with dialogue, social responsibility, and peace.

This rational-spiritual orientation is also reflected in the way the Hayrat Foundation's leadership describes its use of the Risale-i Nur as a medium to foster inclusive religious consciousness among young people. Yusuf Irmak emphasized that "The Risale-i Nur provides a foundation for young people to love their religion without hating others. This is where Islamic education functions as a path to building social peace" (Irmak, personal communication, 2025). This statement shows that love for religion is not directed toward exclusivism or hostility toward others, but toward the formation of social ethics, empathy, and peaceful coexistence. Through the study of the Risale-i Nur, participants are educated to understand that firm faith should encourage tolerance, cooperation, and responsibility in public life. Therefore, the Hayrat Foundation's model demonstrates that *wasathiyah* in Islamic education is built through rational faith, spirituality, and social ethics, allowing religious commitment to become a source of social peace rather than ideological separation. In this sense, Islamic education serves as a bridge between spirituality and public life, enabling moderation to take concrete form as social ethics within a plural society.

The Istanbul Foundation for Science and Culture (IFSC) further expands the Turkish model of *wasathiyah*-based Islamic education through academic, intellectual, and cultural engagement. IFSC develops Islamic education through international seminars, scholarly publications, workshops, research networks, and study forums that connect the Islamic intellectual tradition with modern knowledge. Its educational model emphasizes dialogue and reflection rather than doctrinal inculcation, encouraging participants to approach religious texts rationally, historically, and critically. In this framework, Islamic education is not positioned as a defensive barrier against social change, but as an ethical and intellectual instrument for understanding and guiding modern life. As Hasbi Sen explained, "We want to show that Islamic teachings encourage knowledge, freedom of thought, and moral responsibility. Moderation is the way Islam helps human beings live in balance in the modern world" (Sen, personal communication, 2025). This statement indicates that IFSC understands *wasathiyah* as an ethical framework that enables Muslims to engage positively with science, modernity, and social responsibility.

Afifuddin further emphasized that "Islamic education must build a bridge between tradition and contemporary civilization. Therefore, dialogue, research, and openness are integral parts of our method" (Afifuddin, personal communication, 2025). This statement clarifies that IFSC views Islamic education as an intellectual and cultural project grounded in *wasathiyah*. Moderation is not understood as a neutral position without principles, but as the ability to balance religious commitment, openness to knowledge, cross-cultural dialogue, and moral responsibility. Through this model, IFSC contributes to the development of an Islamic scholarly tradition that is rational, tolerant, and responsive to contemporary challenges. Therefore, *wasathiyah* in the IFSC model is

internalized through reflective learning, research-based engagement, and dialogical encounters between Islamic tradition and modern civilization. This model shows that Islamic education can function as a constructive force in modern society by linking religious texts, social realities, scientific inquiry, and ethical responsibility.

The IFSC account also places science and religion within a contemporary framework of knowledge and productivity. In this perspective, basic education in faith and Islamic values provides a foundation for *wasathiyah*, while ignorance, poverty, and conflict are treated as interconnected social problems that require wise knowledge, productivity, and unity. The underlying principle is that belief should be grounded in Qur'anic principles and action should follow from that grounding. This faith-action relationship is consistent with Nursi's emphasis on knowledge, unity, constructive action, and the integration of *iman* (faith) and *amal* (righteous action) (Nursi, 1996, 2007; Turner, 2013)

The comparison shows that *wasathiyah* in Islamic education is institutionalized through different pedagogical cultures. In Indonesia, Gontor represents a modern *pesantren*-based model in which moderation is internalized through the integration of religious and modern knowledge, daily discipline, character formation, leadership training, independence, and communal life among students from diverse backgrounds. In Turkey, the Hayrat Foundation and IFSC represent a civil society-based model in which moderation is cultivated through the Risale-i Nur tradition, rational-spiritual literacy, intellectual dialogue, research, moral responsibility, and social engagement. Indonesia, therefore, emphasizes a community-based and character-oriented educational model, while Turkey prioritizes an intellectual-spiritual model adapted to a secular political environment. Despite these different institutional pathways, both models share the same educational orientation:

forming Muslims who are religiously grounded, intellectually open, ethically responsible, and capable of living peacefully in plural societies.

Thus, the application of *wasathiyah* in Islamic education is best understood as a dynamic and context-dependent process. In both Indonesia and Turkey, educational institutions function as key arenas for shaping moderate Islamic identities that are inclusive, rational, and socially responsible. Gontor demonstrates how moderation can be cultivated through *pesantren* discipline, leadership, and communal life, while the Hayrat Foundation and IFSC demonstrate how moderation can be developed through rational faith, spiritual refinement, dialogue, research, and engagement with civil society. These experiences show that *wasathiyah* is not merely a theological concept, but a lived educational practice that contributes to social harmony and the development of peaceful Muslim communities in plural societies. Moderate Islamic education, therefore, requires not only curriculum reform, but also institutional culture, ethical practice, sustained moral formation, and pedagogical environments that embody a balance between faith, knowledge, and humanity.

4. Comparative Patterns of *Wasathiyah* Institutionalization

The findings across the three previous sections indicate that wasathiyah in Indonesia and Turkey is not institutionalized through a single model. Rather, it is shaped by different historical trajectories, socio-political contexts, institutional actors, and pedagogical cultures. In Indonesia, *wasathiyah* is embedded in communal religious life, *pesantren* networks, mass-based Islamic organizations, and the national framework of Pancasila. In Turkey, it is articulated through civil society foundations, intellectual-spiritual study traditions, non-formal education, and the negotiation of Islamic identity within a secular public order. These patterns indicate that Islamic moderation becomes

institutionally embedded when mediated by organizational, educational, and religious practices.

Table 1. Comparative Patterns of *Wasathiyah* Institutionalization in Indonesia and Turkey

Aspect	Indonesia	Turkey	Main Finding
Historical pathway	Cultural Islam, *pesantren*, NU, Pancasila	Ottoman legacy, secular republic, Risale-i Nur, civil society	*Wasathiyah* is shaped by different historical and political contexts
Da'wah practice	NU, LDNU, Madrasah Du'at, cultural da'wah	IFSC, Hayrat Foundation, dialogue, spiritual-intellectual da'wah	Da'wah becomes a medium of moral guidance and social harmony
Islamic education	Gontor, integration of religious and modern knowledge, discipline, leadership	Hayrat, IFSC, Risale-i Nur, rational-spiritual education	Education is the main arena for internalizing moderation
Institutional actor	Mass Islamic organization and *pesantren*	Civil society foundation and intellectual network	Moderation depends on institutional mediation
Orientation	National commitment, tolerance, community harmony	Rational faith, moral responsibility, dialogue with modernity	Both promote peaceful and adaptive Islamic identity

Table 1 shows that the Indonesian model of *wasathiyah* is primarily communal-national. It is sustained through the authority of *pesantren*, the organizational capacity of NU, the regeneration of preachers through LDNU, and the national consensus embodied in Pancasila. In this model, moderation is closely linked to community life, religious nationalism, tolerance, and the preservation of social harmony. By contrast, the Turkish model is intellectual-spiritual and civil society-based. Through Hayrat Foundation and IFSC, *wasathiyah* is cultivated through Risale-i Nur study traditions, rational spirituality, dialogue, research, non-formal education, and moral responsibility within a secular public order.

These comparative patterns demonstrate that *wasathiyah* is not merely a theological doctrine or an abstract discourse of moderation. It becomes institutionally sustained when it is organizationally mediated, pedagogically transmitted, and socially practiced. In Indonesia, this mediation occurs through *pesantren*, Islamic mass organizations, preacher training, and national religious culture. In Turkey, it occurs through civil society foundations, intellectual networks, textual study, spiritual education, and dialogical engagement. Thus, the institutionalization of *wasathiyah* depends on the ability of religious actors to adapt Islamic moderation to their respective historical, political, and social contexts.

The overall comparison suggests that Indonesia and Turkey offer two different but complementary models of Islamic moderation. Indonesia demonstrates how *wasathiyah* can be rooted in community-based religious authority and national identity, while Turkey demonstrates how it can be developed through intellectual-spiritual renewal and civil society engagement within a secular framework. Both cases show that moderate Islam is not a passive middle position, but an active process of forming

ethical subjects, strengthening social harmony, and enabling Muslims to engage constructively with plural and modern societies.

D. Discussion

The findings indicate that *wasathiyah* in Indonesia and Turkey is institutionalized through two distinct configurations: a communal-national model and an intellectual-spiritual civil society model. These configurations are broadly consistent with earlier studies that conceptualize *wasathiyah* as an orientation toward balance, tolerance, justice, and the avoidance of extremism (Akil et al., 2024; Anwar et al., 2024; Arif, 2020; Ichsan et al., 2024). However, much of this literature remains primarily normative or definitional. The comparative evidence presented in this study allows the discussion to move beyond the question of what *wasathiyah* means toward a more analytical question: why do broadly similar values of balance, justice, and tolerance take different institutional forms, and what do these differences reveal about the conditions, limits, and risks of institutionalizing Islamic moderation?

Scott's (2014) institutional framework distinguishes regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive pillars, but does not require them to operate with equal strength across contexts. The comparison in this study suggests that the relative weight of these pillars differs between the Indonesian and Turkish cases. In Indonesia, the selected institutions appear to rely strongly on normative and cultural-cognitive mechanisms. Religious authority, *pesantren* traditions, organizational norms, educational routines, and shared understandings of national belonging provide important channels through which moderation is reproduced. Importantly, religious authority should not be understood here as a fixed resource possessed automatically by religious elites. Research on Islamic study groups in Indonesia shows that authority is continuously produced, legitimized, and contested within religious communities (Noviandy et al., 2023). Pancasila, in this configuration, functions not only as a formal

political framework but also as a normative and symbolic reference through which Islamic organizations articulate compatibility between religious commitment and national identity. This interpretation is consistent with Hefner's (2000) account of civil Islam as rooted in societal organizations and with studies emphasizing the role of *pesantren* and local Islamic institutions in sustaining moderate religious orientations (Fuadi et al., 2024; Inayatillah et al., 2022; Zaluchu et al., 2025).

The Turkish cases reveal a different institutional configuration. Here, the regulative environment created by republican secularism and the centralized governance of religion plays a more visible role in shaping the space within which civil society-based Islamic education and religious engagement develop (Burak, 2021; Ulusoy, 2011; Doğan & Akdemir, 2025). Within this environment, foundations, Risale-i Nur study circles, non-formal education, and intellectual dialogue become important institutional channels through which religious values are articulated. This does not mean that the intellectual-spiritual orientation of the Turkish cases is solely the product of state regulation. Rather, the findings suggest that religious traditions and regulatory conditions interact in shaping which institutional forms become viable and sustainable. This interpretation is compatible with Yavuz's (2003) and Vahide's (2005) accounts of Islamic civil society and Nursian intellectual traditions negotiating the secular public sphere.

This comparison, therefore, refines the concept of institutionalized *wasathiyah*. It suggests that Islamic moderation is not produced by the neutral accumulation of three equivalent institutional pillars. Instead, different configurations of regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive mechanisms may shape how moderation is organized, transmitted, and sustained in particular contexts. In the Indonesian cases, normative and cultural-cognitive mechanisms appear especially prominent, whereas in the Turkish cases, the regulatory environment interacts more visibly with civil society and intellectual-spiritual mechanisms.

A related implication is that the state should not be treated merely as a fixed background against which religious civil society operates independently. The interaction between regulative and normative authority is particularly visible when state policy reshapes established religious practices. Syamsurrijal et al. (2022), for example, show how government policies and interventions by religious leaders during the COVID-19 pandemic altered established patterns of communal Islamic ritual and religious authority in Indonesia. In Indonesia, a relatively broad space for Islamic organizations and *pesantren* has enabled religious institutions to develop substantial organizational and pedagogical autonomy. The symbiotic character of state–religion relations, as described in previous scholarship, has enabled Islamic organizations to participate in public life while maintaining distinct forms of religious authority (Safa'at, 2022; Salim, 2008). At the same time, this institutional space remains politically contingent. As Crouch (2013) demonstrates, debates over religious pluralism, legal regulation, and the politicization of religion show that the relationship between religious organizations and the state is neither static nor entirely harmonious.

The Turkish cases illustrate a different relationship between regulation and religious institutionalization. Republican secularism has historically placed stronger formal boundaries around religious organization and public religious expression. Yet these boundaries have not eliminated Islamic institutional activity. Instead, they have contributed to the development of educational, intellectual, charitable, and civil society forms through which religious actors engage public life. This dynamic is consistent with comparative work on Islamic bureaucracies and studies of Muslim civil society negotiating the limits of secular governance (Senay et al., 2025; Walton, 2017). The findings, therefore, suggest that state regulation may constrain some forms of religious organization while simultaneously shaping the institutional spaces in which other forms develop. This point is important because it prevents the Indonesian and Turkish models

from being interpreted solely as cultural products. The communal-national and intellectual-spiritual configurations are better understood as outcomes of interaction among religious traditions, organizational histories, civil society structures, and different state–religion arrangements.

In addition, the findings also raise an interpretive tension between endogenous religious continuity and institutional adaptation. One possible reading is that *wasathiyah* in both settings emerges primarily from internal doctrinal and pedagogical traditions. In Indonesia, the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah* tradition, *pesantren* authority, and established practices of cultural da'wah provide an internal normative basis for moderation. In Turkey, the Risale-i Nur tradition provides a religious-intellectual vocabulary emphasizing faith, reason, moral formation, and constructive social engagement (Vahide, 2005). Ziaulhaq and Sen (2021) further interpret Nursi's thought through a nonviolent ethical orientation in which hatred is transformed through compassion, forgiveness, and constructive responses to conflict. This is particularly relevant to the present findings because it provides an intellectual basis for the emphasis on dialogue, peaceful engagement, and positive action articulated by Hayrat and IFSC.

A second reading emphasizes adaptation. From this perspective, the specific organizational forms through which moderation is expressed are partly shaped by political and institutional constraints. Mass-based religious organizations are more viable in the Indonesian context, whereas foundations, non-formal education, and intellectual networks assume greater importance in the Turkish cases. These two interpretations are not mutually exclusive. The available evidence is more consistent with a hybrid explanation in which religiously grounded values are articulated through institutionally and politically conditioned forms.

The present study cannot fully disentangle these mechanisms because its design is comparative and cross-sectional

rather than historical-processual. A stronger assessment of whether particular institutional arrangements are primarily products of theological continuity, political adaptation, or their interaction would require process-tracing, longitudinal analysis, or historical institutionalist research. Recognizing this limitation strengthens rather than weakens the comparative argument because it clarifies the level at which the present findings can be sustained.

The institutionalization of moderation may also generate tensions and unintended consequences. Previous research has tended to emphasize the educational and social benefits of institutionalized moderation (Muis, 2026; Mukhibat et al., 2024; Nasir & Rijal, 2021). The present comparison suggests that institutional strength may also create particular vulnerabilities. In the communal-national configuration, dense organizational networks and established religious authority provide substantial capacity for transmitting values across generations. At the same time, a strong concentration of interpretive authority may potentially narrow the space for internal disagreement or minority interpretations. Because this model is also closely connected to national identity and Pancasila, another possible risk is the instrumentalization of moderation as a political or administrative category rather than as an internally grounded religious ethic. Previous studies have similarly warned that religious communication can become polarizing when moderation is transformed into an ideological boundary between legitimate and illegitimate religious actors (Alvian, 2023; Arifianto, 2019). These possibilities should be understood as analytical risks rather than as outcomes directly demonstrated by the present data.

The intellectual-spiritual civil society configuration presents a different set of potential limitations. Educational foundations, reading circles, and dialogue-oriented intellectual networks may provide intensive forms of religious formation, but they may have more limited reach than mass organizations or large *pesantren* networks. Their sustainability may also depend on the ability of these institutions to reproduce interpretive traditions across

generations and maintain organizational space amid changing political conditions. The Turkish cases, therefore, raise questions about reach, institutional continuity, and the reproduction of religious authority that deserve further empirical investigation.

These differences suggest that the two configurations should not be treated as universally transferable models. Research emphasizing grassroots participation in religious moderation often assumes the presence of sufficiently dense local and organizational networks through which religious values can be reproduced (Jati et al., 2024; Mukhibat et al., 2024; Nasir & Rijal, 2021; Tahir et al., 2025). The communal-national configuration observed in the Indonesian cases appears to depend on several enabling conditions: historically established religious organizations, socially recognized religious authority, dense educational and da'wah networks, and sufficient organizational autonomy to translate religious values into local practice.

Where these conditions are absent, an equivalent model may not develop in the same way. Its transferability is therefore likely to depend less on the formal adoption of moderation programs than on the presence of institutional infrastructures capable of reproducing them. This helps explain why organizational density, religious legitimacy, and sustained pedagogical practices matter as much as policy design.

The intellectual-spiritual civil society configuration observed in the Turkish cases appears to depend on a different set of conditions. Its institutional carriers require sufficient space for civil society to engage in non-formal religious education, intellectual engagement, charitable activity, and religiously informed social participation. Where such space becomes more restricted, the capacity of these institutions to sustain their activities may likewise be constrained. The model, therefore, cannot be understood independently of the regulatory and political environment in which civil society organizations operate.

Taken together, these boundary conditions suggest that institutionalized *wasathiyah* is better understood not as a portable

institutional design but as a context-dependent configuration of religious authority, organizational practice, education, civil society, and state regulation. The comparative value of the Indonesian and Turkish cases lies less in identifying a universally replicable model than in demonstrating that similar Islamic ethical commitments can be sustained through different institutional arrangements. Theoretically, this comparison extends the study of *wasathiyah* from a predominantly normative discussion toward a mechanism-oriented account in which the relative configuration of regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive forces helps explain how Islamic moderation assumes different institutional forms across Muslim societies.

E. Conclusion

This study shows that *wasathiyah* is not institutionalized through a single or uniform model, but through context-dependent configurations shaped by religious authority, educational practice, civil society, and state–religion relations. Across the selected Indonesian cases, *wasathiyah* is sustained primarily through communal religious authority, pesantren-based education, preacher formation, organizational networks, and normative alignment with Pancasila. In the selected Turkish cases, it is articulated through civil society foundations, *Risale-i Nur* study traditions, non-formal education, intellectual dialogue, and religious engagement within a more strongly regulated secular environment. The comparison, therefore, indicates that similar ethical commitments to balance, tolerance, moral responsibility, and peaceful engagement may take different institutional forms because the regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive pillars operate with different relative weight across contexts. Rather than treating Indonesia and Turkey as nationally homogeneous models, the findings identify two analytically distinct institutional configurations emerging from the four cases examined.

The study contributes to the literature by advancing an institutional perspective on *wasathiyah*. Its main conceptual contribution lies in showing that Islamic moderation should be

examined not only as a theological principle, normative discourse, or state policy, but also as a process of institutional reproduction through organizational structures, religious authority, educational routines, shared meanings, and civil society practices. Building on Scott's institutional framework, the findings suggest that the character of institutionalized *wasathiyah* is shaped by the particular configuration of regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive mechanisms rather than by the presence of moderation discourse alone. Empirically, the study also contributes comparative evidence from four Islamic institutions operating in two contrasting state–religion contexts and demonstrates how da'wah and Islamic education function as interconnected arenas through which moderate religious orientations are articulated and sustained. The comparison further suggests that institutional models of moderation are not readily transferable across contexts because their viability depends on historically formed organizational infrastructures, religious legitimacy, civil society space, and regulatory conditions.

These conclusions are subject to several limitations. The study is based on four purposively selected institutions and therefore does not represent the full diversity of Islamic organizations, educational institutions, or moderation practices in either Indonesia or Turkey. Its qualitative and primarily institutional focus also means that it does not measure the effects of these practices on participants' attitudes, behavior, or long-term social outcomes, nor does it fully capture the perspectives of ordinary students, congregants, audiences, or communities who may interpret or contest institutional narratives differently. In addition, the comparative design identifies institutional patterns but cannot fully determine whether these configurations are primarily the result of theological continuity, political adaptation, or their interaction over time. Future research should therefore extend the comparison to a wider range of institutions, incorporate participant-level perspectives, and employ longitudinal, mixed-method, or process-tracing approaches to examine how *wasathiyah* is reproduced, negotiated, transformed,

and contested across different Muslim-majority and Muslim-minority contexts.

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