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Thematic Exegesis Analysis of Religious Polarization on Social Media

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ABSTRACT

Background: Religious polarisation on social media has become a serious challenge in plural societies, marked by the proliferation of hate speech, misinformation, and exclusive religious interpretations that intensify social fragmentation. **Objective:** This study aims to analyse Qur'anic values as a foundation for religious communication ethics in responding to the dynamics of religious polarisation in digital spaces. **Method:** The research employs a qualitative approach using thematic exegesis (maudhu'i). The data are derived from Qur'anic verses related to the principles of moderation (wasathiyah), freedom of religion, human pluralism, tabayyun (information verification), ethics of dialogue, and peaceful relations with non-Muslims. The analysis is conducted through a comparative examination of classical and contemporary exegeses to identify their contextual relevance within the social media ecosystem. **Result:** The findings indicate that these Qur'anic values establish a normative framework that promotes moderate, inclusive, and verification-based communication while preventing the escalation of digital conflict. **Conclusion:** The Qur'an serves as a comprehensive ethical guide to reducing religious polarisation in digital spaces by fostering dialogue, tolerance, and responsibility. **Contribution:** This study enriches contextual exegesis in the digital era and offers a Qur'an-based framework for the ethics of religious communication to address religious polarisation on social media.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Qur'an 2:143 positions Muslims as *ummatan wasatan*, a middle community that follows a balanced path and serves as a witness to humanity through harmony between faith and social practice. Scholarly exegesis explains that this verse serves as the foundation of religious moderation, rejecting both extremism on one hand and excessive leniency on the other. Within the framework of thematic exegesis, religious moderation is understood as a just, inclusive, and balanced attitude that respects differences of opinion in plural societies (Mz & Syahpurta, 2021).

However, this value of moderation faces serious challenges in the era of social media. Digital spaces often reinforce "us versus them" polarisation, which directly affects interreligious relations. Social media algorithms tend to present content aligned with users' preferences through filter-bubble mechanisms, causing certain groups' views to become increasingly rigid and self-righteous while marginalising alternative perspectives. Studies in digital communication indicate that such conditions create virtual realities in which religious interpretations and perceptions become increasingly fragmented. As a result, polarising narratives tend to dominate over moderate and inclusive religious discourse (Rusmiati et al., 2025).

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On the other hand, Qur'an 2:256 affirms the principle that "there is no compulsion in religion," establishing a Qur'anic foundation for freedom of belief and prohibiting the imposition of faith upon others. Exegetical and Islamic education studies interpret this verse as a basis for tolerance in plural social life and as a crucial prerequisite for the creation of peaceful and harmonious societies. This principle becomes increasingly relevant when social media is frequently used as a tool for pressure, delegitimation, and even symbolic coercion against other religious groups.

This reality is reflected in the rise of religion-based hate speech on social media, which significantly damages the quality of social relations. Hate speech, whether in the form of insults, provocation, or harassment based on religion, increasingly dominates communication in digital spaces. Research on social media comment sections shows that content attacking or blaspheming particular religions often serves as a primary trigger, leading to open hostility toward other religious groups or beliefs (Ningrum et al., 2018).

Further studies confirm that this phenomenon does not arise solely from users' momentary emotions but is also associated with low moral intelligence, which encourages the production and dissemination of hateful content. In many cases, hate speech in digital spaces intersects with political provocation and identity-related issues, demonstrating the close relationship between social media and the intensification of religion-based social conflict (Cahyono et al., 2023).

Meanwhile, Qur'an 49:13 emphasises that humanity was created in diverse nations, tribes, and groups so that people may know one another rather than be hostile toward one another. Numerous scholarly studies regard this verse as a foundation for tolerance and pluralism in Qur'anic exegesis, encouraging inclusive dialogue and recognition of diverse identities (Anggrarini, 2025). In practice, however, the effects of echo chambers and filter bubbles on social media create homogeneous digital experiences. Users are more likely to interact with information that reinforces their own religious biases, while encounters with differing perspectives become increasingly limited. This condition fosters exclusivist religious attitudes and narrows the space for interfaith dialogue (Rusmiati et al., 2025).

Other research indicates that such polarisation may hinder the freedom and sense of security of minority groups in expressing themselves, as provocative content is often associated with negative stereotypes toward particular religious communities (Laudya et al., 2025). The widespread circulation of hoaxes and misinformation further exacerbates polarisation. Qur'an 49:6 explicitly commands believers to practice *tabayyun*, that is, to verify information before accepting or disseminating it. Thematic exegetical studies highlight the relevance of this verse to the challenges of the digital era, particularly in addressing misinformation on social media that frequently triggers horizontal conflict and identity tensions (Bahri & Sassi, 2025). In the context of this study, hoaxes are viewed as one of the primary sources of religious polarisation, making the value of *tabayyun* central to strengthening digital literacy and reducing the spread of hate speech online.

Beyond information verification, the Qur'an also emphasises communication ethics. Qur'an 16:125 teaches that invitations and dialogue should be conducted with wisdom and good counsel, without harshness or hostility (al-Zajjaj, 1988). This value contrasts sharply with the current reality of social media, which is often marked by harsh comments, empathy-free debates, and destructive exchanges. The verse serves as a reference for ethical dialogue that rejects insults against other religious identities and directs debate toward shared human values. In digital contexts, this principle can serve as a foundation for developing moderate and constructive communication ethics, particularly in interfaith dialogue.

This principle is consistent with Qur'an 60:8, which permits kind and just relations with non-Muslims as long as there is no hostility. Such an attitude is regarded as obedience to God, since God loves those who act justly and reject wrongdoing (al-Zuhayli, 1991). This verse serves as a foundation for peaceful interreligious coexistence. Amid widespread polarisation and hate speech on social media, the peaceful value contained in this verse provides a Qur'anic basis for building cross-faith relations in digital spaces and rejecting narratives of hostility that continue to be reproduced.

Overall, the growth of intolerance narratives on social media has weakened interfaith dialogue, even though digital platforms inherently possess significant potential as spaces for encounter and peaceful communication. The rapid and distorted flow of information often sidelines narratives of tolerance, while emotional and manipulative messages more easily capture public attention. Social media tends to prioritise content that provokes emotional reactions, often in the form of exclusion and symbolic conflict rather than calm, moderate discussion. Because such narratives spread quickly and easily, they elicit responses and, over time, erode the quality of interaction and dialogue among religious communities in digital spaces (Cahyaningtyas & Wardani, 2025).

This study aims to examine how Qur'anic verses on moderation, tolerance, information verification, and dialogue ethics can be thematically interpreted to explain the phenomenon of religious polarisation on social media. The study is grounded in the view that Qur'anic teachings are not only normative but also relevant as ethical guidance

in addressing the dynamics of digital communication characterised by identity conflicts. The proposed hypothesis states that the intensification of religious polarisation on social media, as reflected in hate speech, exclusivist attitudes, and the weakening of interfaith dialogue, results from the insufficient internalisation of Qur'anic values such as *wasathiyah*, freedom of religion, *tabayyun*, and courteous dialogue in social media practices. Through a thematic exegesis, this study seeks to demonstrate that the Qur'an provides a relevant value framework for reducing polarisation and promoting more moderate, inclusive interreligious relations in digital spaces.

Previous research on religious polarisation and social media includes the study titled "Addressing Digital Religious Polarisation" (Zaimina, 2025), which analyses the Indonesian government's social media narrative of religious moderation and emphasises the effectiveness of state policy communication in responding to digital religious polarisation. The study, Public Opinion Analysis for Moderate Religious (Mudhofi et al., 2023), focuses on mapping public opinion and online sentiment regarding religious moderation values through text mining and sentiment analysis, framing polarisation as an emotional tendency and a public perception. The study The Role of social media in Spreading Religious Moderation Values (Safitri, 2025) and Paradigma Dakwah Moderasi Beragama di Media Sosial (Mubarok, 2023) emphasise the role of social media as a platform for religious outreach and the dissemination of moderation values to counter extremism and intolerance.

Furthermore, the studies The Dynamics of Mainstreaming Religious Moderation in the Development of Digital Society (Mahyudin et al., 2022) and Virtual Reality and Religious Polarisation (Suryadi & Anwar, 2024) examine religious polarisation as a sociocultural consequence of digital society, the fragmentation of religious identity, and virtual realities that influence religious practices. Although these studies have explored religious polarisation from policy, communication, religious outreach, and sociocultural perspectives, no research has specifically analysed it from the perspective of interpreting religious texts circulating on social media platforms. Therefore, the study entitled Thematic Exegesis Analysis of Religious Polarisation on social media addresses this gap by investigating exegetical themes, patterns of religious interpretation, and constructions of religious meaning that shape, reinforce, or mitigate religious polarisation in digital spaces.

2. METHOD

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a qualitative approach, combining a library research design with thematic exegesis (*maudhu'i*) analysis (Syahrial, 2019). A qualitative approach was chosen because the study aims to understand meanings, interpretative patterns, and constructions of religious discourse related to religious polarisation on social media. The thematic exegesis design was used to identify, classify, and analyse Qur'anic verses directly related to issues of religious polarisation, such as religious moderation, tolerance, freedom of religion, communication ethics, *tabayyun* (information verification), and interfaith relations, and to contextualise them within the dynamics of social media.

2.2 Research Object

This study was not conducted in a specific physical location, as it relied on a literature review. The objects of analysis were religious texts and digital discourses relevant to religious polarisation on social media. The research was conducted in 2026. The subjects of this study were texts rather than human participants. The research population comprised all Qur'anic verses related to religious polarisation and its derivative values. The sample was selected purposively, consisting of verses substantively relevant to issues of religious moderation, tolerance, freedom of religion, information verification, and dialogical ethics, such as Qur'an 2:143; 2:256; 49:6; 49:13; 16:125; and 60:8. Additional data sources included classical and contemporary exegetical works as well as national and international journal articles addressing religious polarization and social media.

2.3 Data Collection

The primary research instrument was the researcher, who systematically selected, categorised, and interpreted the data. Supporting instruments included thematic exegesis analysis guidelines in the form of a verse-theme matrix, issue categorisation tables on polarisation, and indicators of religious polarisation on social media (such as exclusivism, hate speech, delegitimation of other groups, and weakening dialogue). Data were collected through a documentation study that involved compiling Qur'anic verses, exegetical works, academic books, and journal articles relevant to the research topic (Hanifah et al., 2024).

2.4 Data Analysis

The analysis began by identifying Qur’anic verses relevant to religious polarisation, then grouping them into major thematic categories. The interpretations of these verses were then examined through exegetical works and supporting literature to obtain a comprehensive understanding of their meanings. The final stage involved contextualising the exegetical findings within the phenomenon of religious polarisation on social media, resulting in a mapping of the relationship between Qur’anic values and the dynamics of religious conflict in digital spaces.

2.5 Research Procedure

First, the researcher formulated the research focus and themes related to religious polarisation on social media. Second, the researcher collected data in the form of Qur’anic verses and their *Asbāb al-Nuzūl* (occasions of revelation). Third, interpretations from both classical and contemporary scholars were presented, involving two exegetes from each period. For classical exegesis, the primary references were *Jāmi’ al-Bayān* by al-Ṭabarī and *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-‘Azīm* by Ibn Kathīr. For contemporary exegesis, the analysis was based on *al-Tahrīr wa al-Tanwīr* by Ibn ‘Ashūr and *al-Tafsīr al-Munīr* by Wahbah al-Zuhaylī. Fourth, the exegetical analysis was contextualised within the realities of social media to explain the forms, factors, and impacts of religious polarisation, which are presented in the findings section. Finally, conclusions were formulated to describe the contribution of Qur’anic values in mitigating religious polarisation in digital spaces.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Result

The findings indicate that a thematic exegesis of Qur’anic values provides an ethical framework for understanding and responding to religious polarisation on social media. The analysis confirms that differences in belief do not solely drive digital polarisation but are also influenced by weak communication ethics, inadequate information verification, and a lack of respect for pluralism. Values such as moderation, freedom of religion, recognition of diversity, *tabayyun*, and dialogical ethics emerge as normative principles that balance religious expression with social responsibility. These findings demonstrate that Qur’anic teachings are applicable in fostering inclusive, rational digital communication oriented toward social cohesion.

Table 1. Results of Thematic Exegesis: Qur’anic Values as a Framework for Reducing Religious Polarization on Social Media

No.	Theme of Qur’anic Value	Key Verse	Form of Polarization Addressed	Main Research Findings	Ethical Implications for Social Media
1	Moderation (<i>Wasathiyah</i>)	Qur’an 2:143	Extremism, exclusivism	The principle of religious balance functions as a framework to counter excessive attitudes and identity-based polarization	Encourages moderate communication and respect for differences
2	Freedom of Religion	Qur’an 2:256	Coercion of belief, delegitimization of other groups	The Qur’an affirms that faith is a personal choice and must not be imposed	Strengthens tolerance and freedom of religious expression
3	Human Pluralism	Qur’an 49:13	“Us vs. them” polarization	Diversity is positioned as a basis for mutual understanding rather than conflict	Expands cross-identity dialogue and inclusivity
4	<i>Tabayyun</i> (Information Verification)	Qur’an 49:6	Hoaxes, religious misinformation	Verification of information is a Qur’anic principle to prevent digital conflict	Promotes responsible digital literacy
5	Ethics of Dialogue	Qur’an 16:125	Hate speech, aggressive debate	Religious outreach is directed toward wisdom and respectful communication	Fosters rational and civil discussion
6	Peaceful Interreligious Relations	Qur’an 60:8	Stereotyping and symbolic hostility	Islam recognizes social cooperation with non-Muslims who are not hostile	Strengthens social cohesion and intergroup justice

The table demonstrates that each Qur’anic value serves a strategic role in reducing religious polarisation in digital spaces. Moderation and the recognition of pluralism act as social foundations for preventing identity fragmen-

tation, while *tabayyun* (information verification) and dialogical ethics provide practical mechanisms for responsible communication. Overall, integrating these values forms an ethical framework that supports inclusive, peaceful digital interaction oriented toward social cohesion.

a) The Principle of Moderation (*Wasathiyah*) and Inclusive Communication

In the context of social media, the principle of *wasathiyah* (moderation) encourages Muslims to maintain balance and avoid extremism. Research by [Suhantoro et al. \(2025\)](#) indicates that articulating Islamic values such as *ukhuwah* (brotherhood), *adab* (ethical conduct), and *tawasuth* (temperance) in digital communication functions as a counter-discursive mechanism that mitigates polarisation narratives. In other words, presenting religious perspectives in a calm and tolerant manner can replace rhetoric driven by narrow identity claims.

In Indonesia, campaigns promoting religious moderation have increasingly appeared on online platforms, including hashtag movements such as #ReligiousModeration, as public discussion of religion on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube continues to expand. However, [Mubarok \(2023\)](#) notes that digital transformation presents both opportunities and challenges, as social media accelerates the dissemination of both moderate and extremist religious messages. For example, searching the keyword “Religious Moderation” on Google generates millions of results, indicating high public interest. However, the study also highlights that users do not uniformly understand moderate online content.

b) Freedom of Religion and Pluralism in the Qur’an

The Qur’an firmly affirms freedom of religion in the well-known verse “There is no compulsion in religion” (Qur’an 2:256), which is understood as a declaration that individuals cannot be forced to change their beliefs. Exegetical analysis in *Tafsir Al-Misbah* concludes that this verse guarantees freedom of belief, emphasising that embracing Islam or any other religion must not occur under coercion (Kuswantoro & Alfi, 2022). This aligns with the principle of pluralism reflected in Qur’an 5:48, which acknowledges that each community has its own prescribed law, indicating that religious diversity is part of divine decree ([Mamun, 2013](#)).

In contemporary digital practice, freedom and pluralism are frequently contested. [Hanipah et al. \(2025\)](#) observe that religious freedom and pluralism remain significant challenges in Indonesia. Although the Qur’an promotes coexistence, pluralistic narratives are often debated in online spaces. Moderate communities attempt to employ these Qur’anic principles as counter-narratives to extremism by disseminating verses of tolerance and stories of the Prophet’s inclusive conduct through platforms such as Instagram and Facebook.

c) Information Verification (*Tabayyun*) and Digital Literacy

The Qur’anic principle of *tabayyun* (verification of information) is highly relevant in addressing misinformation on social media. The historical incident of *Al-Ijk* during the Prophet’s time illustrates the dangers of unverified rumours. [Rais \(2024\)](#) emphasises that Qur’anic communication principles such as verification, honesty, and responsibility are highly relevant in the modern context for combating the spread of misinformation. This underscores the obligation for Muslims to adopt a critical attitude when consuming online information.

In practice, moderate religious outreach on social media often encourages users to verify news sources and to reflect before sharing content. Conversely, digital disinformation, including religious defamation, exacerbates polarisation. Integrating Qur’anic values of truthful communication into digital literacy initiatives, therefore, becomes a crucial strategy, enabling users to practice *tabayyun* and avoid becoming instruments of hate propaganda.

d) Ethics of Religious Outreach and the Prohibition of Insult

The Qur’an teaches respectful dialogue in religious discussions. Surah An-Nahl (16:125), for example, instructs believers to invite others “with wisdom and good instruction and to argue with them in the best manner.” [Aisyah \(2025\)](#) identifies three pillars in this verse that form a comprehensive ethical framework for digital religious communication. In contrast, provocative preaching on social media deviates from Qur’anic principles and violates values of patience (*al-hilm*) and compassion (*ar-rahmah*) ([Bm, 2025](#)).

Furthermore, the Qur’an explicitly prohibits insulting others’ religious symbols. Qur’an 6:108 instructs believers not to insult what others worship besides God, in order to prevent reciprocal hostility. Islamic legal studies show that this principle is reflected in anti-blasphemy regulations in several countries ([Yaakob & Rajuddin, 2017](#)). In the digital era, this guidance encourages users to avoid content that provokes hostility, as posts mocking religious symbols are often criticised by moderate online communities.

e) Peaceful Coexistence with Non-Muslims

Qur’anic principles also promote kindness and justice toward non-Muslims who coexist peacefully. Qur’an 60:8-9 commands Muslims to act justly and kindly toward those who do not fight them. Contemporary interpretations emphasise that one of the fundamental principles of Islam is to treat non-Muslims with fairness and benevolence when they do not threaten the Muslim community (Aththahirah et al., 2025). This includes vulnerable groups such as women, the elderly, and the socially disadvantaged.

Accordingly, social interaction in digital spaces should be grounded in mutual respect. Muslims are encouraged to build bridges of dialogue and cooperation with other communities. International studies note that Qur’an 49:13, which highlights human diversity, calls people to engage constructively with various groups (Hussain, 2015), promoting acceptance of religious differences with compassion. However, digital challenges arise through echo chambers and algorithmic filtering that narrow perspectives and discourage dialogue. Applying these Qur’anic principles, therefore, entails actively promoting peaceful, cooperative content on social media, such as interfaith literacy campaigns and virtual discussions centred on shared human values.

3.2. Discussion

a) Verses Related to Religious Polarisation and Their *Asbāb al-Nuzūl*

Religious polarisation on social media can, in principle, be mitigated when religious interactions are grounded in firmly established Qur’anic principles. Among these is the teaching of moderation (*wasathiyah*) as affirmed in Qur’an 2:143 (Ferdino et al., 2024), respect for freedom of religion in Qur’an 2:256 (Armayanto et al., 2023), and recognition of human pluralism as expressed in Qur’an 49:13 (Sayaka et al., 2025).

In addition, the Qur’an emphasises the importance of verifying information before reacting, as instructed in Qur’an 49:6 (Faldiansyah, 2022). It also promotes ethical, respectful, and persuasive dialogue in Qur’an 16:125 (Lasmana, 2024), prohibits insulting other religions in Qur’an 6:108, and encourages the establishment of peaceful and just relations with non-Muslims, as stated in Qur’an 60:8 (Lasmana, 2024).

Collectively, these verses provide a normative foundation for fostering a healthier, more civilised digital space, where religious engagement is guided by ethical responsibility, mutual respect, and social harmony rather than hostility and division.

Table 2. Compilation of Thematic Qur’anic Verses

No.	Qur’anic Principle	Verse
1	Moderation (<i>Wasathiyah</i>)	Qur’an 2:143
2	Freedom of Religion	Qur’an 2:256
3	Human Pluralism	Qur’an 49:13
4	Information Verification (<i>Tabayyun</i>)	Qur’an 49:6
5	Ethics of Dialogue	Qur’an 16:125
6	Prohibition of Insulting Other Religions	Qur’an 6:108
7	Peaceful Relations with Non-Muslims	Qur’an 60:8

To understand the social conditions surrounding the revelation of these verses, it is necessary to explain their respective *asbāb al-nuzūl* (occasions of revelation). Based on the verses listed in the table above, it can be affirmed that not all of them possess a specific historical cause of revelation. Some verses were revealed as universal normative principles. In contrast, others are directly connected to particular social contexts and historical events during the time of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).

Qur’an 2:143, which addresses moderation (*wasatiyyah*), was revealed in the context of the change of the qiblah from Bayt al-Maqdis to the Ka’bah in Makkah after approximately 16–17 months of the Muslims residing in Madinah. This shift provoked mockery and confusion, particularly among certain Jewish groups and hypocrites, who questioned the consistency of the Muslim community. The verse affirms that the east and west belong entirely to God, and that the change of direction served as a test of faith and a reaffirmation of the Muslim community’s identity as a just and balanced nation (*ummatah wasatan*) (Mastū, 1998).

Qur’an 2:256, which establishes the principle of religious freedom, has a clear occasion of revelation. It relates to some children of the Anṣār who had grown up in Jewish environments due to vows made by their parents before the advent of Islam. After Islam spread and the Banū Naḍīr were expelled from Madinah, there was an inclination to compel these children to embrace Islam. The verse was revealed to affirm that faith is invalid if born of coercion;

truth has been made clear, and belief must arise from conscious choice (al-Ṭabarī, 1431). Thus, this verse represents a concrete response to a socio-religious issue rather than merely a normative declaration (al-Ṭabarī, 1431).

Qur'an 49:6, concerning verification of information (*tabayyun*), was revealed in connection with the incident involving al-Walīd ibn 'Uqbah, who was sent by the Prophet (peace be upon him) to collect zakat from Banū al-Muṣṭaliq. Due to prior hostilities from the pre-Islamic period, he misinterpreted their reception and reported that they had refused to pay zakat and intended rebellion. The Prophet nearly took military action before seeking clarification from Khalid ibn al-Walīd, who found them faithful and compliant. The verse was revealed to establish the obligation to verify information to prevent injustice and grave error (al-Shāfi'ī, 1420).

Qur'an 6:108, which prohibits insulting other religions, was revealed in Makkah when some Muslims criticised the idols of the polytheists as an expression of monotheistic conviction. However, such actions provoked retaliatory insults against God. The verse serves as an ethical regulator of religious outreach, emphasising that safeguarding faith must not be pursued through means that generate greater harm (al-Kirmānī, 1429).

Qur'an 60:8 clarifies Islam's stance toward non-Muslims who neither show hostility nor engage in warfare against Muslims. One of the contextual backgrounds involves the story of Asmā' bint Abū Bakr, whose mother—still a polytheist—visited her bearing gifts. After seeking guidance from the Prophet, the verse was revealed, and he instructed Asmā' to maintain family ties, accept the gift, and act kindly. The verse affirms that religious difference does not automatically entail enmity; instead, justice, kindness, and humanity are upheld so long as there is no aggression or expulsion (al-Shāfi'ī, 1420).

Meanwhile, verses such as Qur'an 49:13 concerning human plurality and Qur'an 16:125 regarding the ethics of dialogue do not have specific occasions of revelation. Classical exegetes generally understand these verses as universal guidelines intended to establish Islamic value frameworks for social relations and religious outreach across time and space.

b) Interpretation of Verses Related to Religious Polarisation

In explaining the verses related to religious polarisation, this study integrates both classical and contemporary interpretations to emphasise key principles, including moderation (*wasatiyyah*), freedom of religion, human equality, verification of information, ethical religious outreach, and just treatment of non-Muslims. The data presented represent a synthesis of various exegetical perspectives, reduced and organised into tabular form to maintain analytical focus and avoid unnecessary expansion. The comparative results of these interpretations are presented as follows.

The table above demonstrates that the analysed Qur'anic values do not function merely as abstract normative principles; instead, they operate as an applied framework for responding to the dynamics of religious polarisation on social media. Each value theme reveals a direct relationship between religious ethical teachings and digital communication challenges, ranging from extremism and misinformation to identity-based conflict. The emerging pattern shows that moderation, information verification, and dialogical ethics function as preventive mechanisms against conflict. At the same time, recognising pluralism and freedom of religion strengthens the social foundation for inclusive interaction. Overall, the table affirms that integrating Qur'anic values into digital communication practices has the potential to foster a more rational, just, and cohesive public sphere, preventing polarisation from escalating into destructive social fragmentation.

4. IMPLICATIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

4.1 Research Implications

This study demonstrates that thematic Qur'anic exegesis has strong theoretical relevance for explaining religious polarisation on social media. Verses addressing moderation, freedom of religion, pluralism, *tabayyun*, and dialogical ethics can be interpreted in context in relation to contemporary challenges in digital religious communication.

In practice, the findings offer ethical guidance for religious preachers, educators, and social media users on promoting moderate, inclusive, and responsible religious communication, particularly in confronting misinformation, hate speech, and exclusivist tendencies. At the managerial level, the results contribute a conceptual foundation for policymakers and educational institutions in designing digital literacy programs and strengthening religious moderation initiatives within digital environments.

Methodologically, this study affirms that thematic exegesis contextualised within social media dynamics is a practical approach for examining contemporary religious issues, while also opening avenues for future interdisciplinary research integrating Islamic studies and digital communication.

4.2 Research Contributions

This study contributes academically by presenting a conceptual framework grounded in thematic Qur'anic exegesis to understand and address religious polarisation on social media. Its primary contribution lies in integrating Qur'anic values with contemporary phenomena of digital communication, thereby enriching both exegetical scholarship and the study of religious communication.

Furthermore, this research complements previous studies that have primarily focused on policy, religious outreach strategies, or media analysis by positioning Qur'anic interpretation as the central analytical foundation. Accordingly, this study is expected to serve as an academic reference for the development of text-based theories of religious moderation and as a foundation for further research in Islamic studies and digital media discourse.

5. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

4.1 Research Limitation

This study is limited to a library-based design and does not incorporate empirical data from social media platforms. The analysis focuses exclusively on selected Qur'anic verses and does not directly examine real-time manifestations of religious polarisation across various digital platforms.

4.2 Recommendation for Future Research Directions

Future studies are encouraged to combine thematic exegesis with empirical methods, such as content analysis of social media posts or surveys of users of digital platforms. Expanding the scope to include other religious texts and cross-religious contexts would also provide a more comprehensive understanding of religious polarisation in pluralistic digital societies.

6. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that religious polarisation on social media is a complex, multidimensional phenomenon closely connected to how religious teachings are understood, interpreted, and communicated in digital environments. In online spaces characterised by algorithmic amplification, rapid information exchange, and identity-based interactions, religious messages are often detached from their broader ethical and theological contexts. Through a thematic exegetical approach, this research demonstrates that the Qur'an articulates a coherent set of foundational values, including moderation (*wasathiyah*), freedom of religion, recognition of human plurality, the obligation of *tabayyun* (verification), dialogical ethics, the prohibition of insulting other religions, and principles governing peaceful relations with non-Muslims. These values, whether revealed in specific historical contexts or expressed as universal moral principles, collectively establish a normative framework that explicitly rejects extremism, hate speech, coercion, and religious exclusivism.

The findings further indicate that religious polarisation in digital spaces is exacerbated by the selective and decontextualised use of scriptural references, often mobilised to legitimise partisan narratives or reinforce in-group solidarity. When Qur'anic teachings are reduced to fragmentary citations without attention to their ethical objectives, the potential for misinterpretation increases significantly. Conversely, a comprehensive and context-sensitive engagement with Qur'anic exegesis reveals a consistent emphasis on justice, balance, verification of information, and respectful dialogue. These principles directly challenge the communicative patterns that dominate polarised online interactions, such as stereotyping, delegitimisation, and symbolic hostility.

Accordingly, strengthening the internalisation of Qur'anic ethical values within digital religious discourse is crucial for fostering moderate, inclusive, and responsible engagement. The Qur'an thus functions not merely as a normative theological source, but as an applied ethical guide capable of informing digital communication practices. By offering a structured moral vision grounded in moderation, pluralism, and dialogical engagement, it provides a conceptual and ethical foundation for mitigating polarisation and reinforcing social cohesion in religiously diverse societies, navigating the dynamics of social media.

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Author Contribution Statement

All authors discussed the results, contributed to the final manuscript, and approved the final version for publication. Ahmad Mahfud: Conceptualization and Design, Methodology, Writing - Original Draft, Zulfatul Wasilah; Writing - Review & Editing, Performed data collection and Analysis, Interpretation of the results.

Declaration of Generative AI (GenAI) Usage in Scientific Writing

The author acknowledges the use of artificial intelligence technology, specifically ChatGPT (<https://chat.openai.com/>), during the preparation of this manuscript. The tool was used in a limited capacity to assist with academic language refinement, clarity of expression, and structural organisation, without generating new scientific substance. All outputs were carefully reviewed, revised, and aligned with the author's analytical framework and arguments. The author assumes full responsibility for the content, data accuracy, interpretations, and conclusions presented in this article. All instances of Generative AI usage in this article were conducted by the authors in accordance with the [JISMB GenAI Tool Usage Policy](#), with the authors assuming full responsibility for the originality, accuracy, and integrity of the work."

Conflict of Interest Statement

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