

# Da'wah communication strategy for strengthening *wasathiyah* Islam in Surabaya: A case study of NU, Muhammadiyah, and Al-Irsyad

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## Article

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## Abstract

**Purpose** - This study aims to describe the communication strategies used by Islamic social organizations, NU, Muhammadiyah, and Al-Irsyad, in strengthening Islam wasathiyah in the city of Surabaya.

**Method** - Employing a qualitative phenomenological approach and using in-depth interviews with Islamic organizational figures.

**Result** - The research identifies five key strategies of da'wah communication: an integrated cultural strategy, a curriculum-based educational strategy, a social synergy strategy, a media-based strategy, and a collaborative strategy.

**Implication** - This study could encourage the activists of da'wah within Islamic organizations in Indonesia to synergize their approach in disseminating wasathiyah Islam teachings as well as inclusive religious understanding.

**Originality/Value** - The novelty of this study lies in the up-to-date description of the dynamics of Islamic organizations' da'wah communication strategies in Surabaya, particularly to strengthen Islam wasathiyah. Moreover, this study led to the discovery of "a synergistic moderate da'wah communication strategy", which proposes that harmony between Islamic social organizations' approach to disseminating moderate da'wah messages will create an inclusive religious understanding, thereby strengthening wasathiyah Islam in society.

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**Kata kunci:**

Strategi komunikasi, dakwah, organisasi islam, islam wasathiyah.

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**Abstrak**

**Tujuan** - Studi ini bertujuan untuk menguraikan strategi komunikasi dakwah organisasi sosial keislaman dalam memperkuat Islam wasathiyah di Kota Surabaya.

**Metode** - Peneliti menggunakan metode penelitian kualitatif, pendekatan fenomenologi, dan wawancara mendalam dilakukan kepada para tokoh dari ketiga organisasi keagamaan.

**Hasil** - Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa strategi komunikasi dakwah organisasi sosial keislaman dalam memperkuat Islam wasathiyah di kota Surabaya mencakup beberapa strategi yaitu; strategi kultural terintegrasi, strategi pendidikan berbasis kurikulum, strategi sinergi sosial, strategi melalui media, dan strategi kolaborasi.

**Implikasi**– Penelitian ini dapat mendorong para pegiat dakwah antar organisasi sosial keagamaan di Indonesia untuk melakukan pendekatan komunikasi dakwah yang sinergis dalam upaya menyebarluaskan ajaran Islam wasathiyah sekaligus pemahaman keagamaan yang inklusif.

**Orisinalitis/Nilai** – Kebaruan studi ini terletak pada deskripsi terkini tentang dinamika strategi komunikasi dakwah organisasi sosial keagamaan di Surabaya, khususnya dalam memperkuat Islam wasathiyah. Lebih lanjut, studi ini menghasilkan temuan "strategi komunikasi dakwah moderat bersinergi", dengan proposisi bahwa keselarasan antara pendekatan Ormas Islam dalam menyebarkan pesan dakwah moderat akan menciptakan pemahaman keagamaan yang inklusif, sehingga memperkuat Islam wasathiyah di masyarakat.

## **Introduction**

Moderate Islam is a concrete manifestation of Islamic teachings that prioritizes tolerance, inclusivity, and interfaith dialogue. This principle is crucial because it can minimize the potential for violence, radicalization, and intolerance that arise from narrow and exclusive understandings of religion. Moderate Islam ensures that all aspects of Islamic teachings, universal and rahmatan lil'alam (blessing for all nature), are realized in social, political, and cultural life. Islamic social organizations play a crucial role in achieving this goal. The teaching of moderation is one of the characteristics and essence of religious teachings. Moderation has at least three meanings: first, meaning the middle ground; second, meaning justice; and third, meaning the best. These three meanings do not stand alone or are unrelated, as the attitude is in the middle (Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019).

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More specifically, moderate Islam means something good and occupies a position between two extremes. Therefore, when the concept of wasathiyah is practiced daily, people will not have extreme attitudes (Syam, 2023). The position of wasathiyah Islam referred to here relates to the understanding and practice of religion. Institutionally, Wasathiyah Islamic organizations must work together to create harmony, safety, and peace for individuals and society. Equally important is developing joint programs to build wasathiyah Islam for the better. Peace and tranquility in society must be a priority in collaboration between Islamic social organizations to strengthen wasathiyah Islam. Therefore, to understand the essence of wasathiyah in its various fields and aspects, it is necessary to achieve justice and goodness, which are absolute requirements for giving birth to the essence of wasathiyah (Shihab, 2020).

Wasathiyah Islam, described as the value of moderation in Islam, emphasizes justice, balance, and tolerance. The Quran and al-Hadith contain these values but are often misunderstood and misapplied (Helmy et al., 2021). Based on various studies, moderate Islam is also understood to reflect the principles of moderation (tawassuth), tolerance (tasamuh), balance (tawazun), and justice (i'tidal). Thus, the term "ummatah wasathan" is often referred to as "a just people" or "a just community," meaning a just society or community (Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019). Moderate Islam can help religious people avoid extreme and excessive attitudes in practicing religious teachings (Karim et al., 2021). The Quran expressly prohibits excessive or extreme attitudes in religion. This normative basis can be understood as a command for people to adopt a middle position (Biyanto, 2013).

The characteristics of moderate Islam include: a clear national stance or firm nationalism, tolerance of other individuals or groups, respect for national culture, and anti-violent. Moderate Islam is an Islam that promotes love, tolerance, and interfaith dialogue (Gülen, 2009). However, there are certainly differences in interpretation, for example, regarding what constitutes wasathiyah Islam, moderate Islam, or moderate Muslims. The position of Wasathiyah Islam is related to the understanding and practice of religion. Moderate Islam, of course, is an adjective. Similarly, wasathiyah Islam is a characteristic that pervades Islam. Therefore, Wasathiyah Islam and moderate Muslims are essentially the same (Syam, 2023).

Therefore, wasathiyah Islam is a central concept in Islamic teachings that prioritizes the principles of balance and justice. Wasathiyah Islam offers a middle path that balances tradition and modernity, faith and rationality, local identity and openness to global civilization. Wasathiyah Islam

is becoming increasingly relevant in the era of globalization, where societies worldwide are becoming increasingly diverse and connected. It faces the challenges of extremism and radicalism, whether in the form of overly conservative or liberal attitudes. This principle teaches that Islam is a religion that brings blessings to all of nature (*rahmatan lil 'alamin*), meaning Muslims are responsible for maintaining peace and building good relations with various groups in society, regardless of differences in belief.

In Indonesia, Wasathiyah Islam has received significant attention, particularly as a foundation for maintaining unity amidst cultural, religious, and ethnic diversity. Muslim figures in Indonesia and around the world, both religious scholars and intellectuals, have emphasized the importance of Wasathiyah as a core value that must be instilled in the lives of the community. By implementing Wasathiyah Islam, Muslims can play a constructive role in creating a harmonious social environment and preventing conflict caused by differences in understanding or interpretation of religion, particularly from radical movements.

Radical right-wing and radical left-wing groups pose challenges to the development of Wasathiyah Islam, as both groups share a common desire to implement their ideological formality in national life (Syam, 2024). Amidst this reality, moderate Islam has emerged, embracing the themes of Islam Nusantara and Progressive Islam. The concept of Progressive Islam Nusantara is projected to be a permanent solution to address radical Islam in Indonesia (Syam & Nawawi, 2019). Muslims must develop the concept of moderate Islam centrally to maximize internal Islamic resources as a starting point for developing a blueprint for moderate Islam. This model relies on Islam as an internal modality for developing a more established blueprint for moderate Islam, relevant to local Indonesian conditions (Hilmy, 2013).

The major Islamic organizations in Indonesia, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah, are crucial in disseminating moderate Islamic messages through their websites (Choirunissa & Nurdin, 2020). Muhammadiyah's emergence as a moderate Islamic ideology, organization, and movement is inseparable from the strong moderate character of Muhammadiyah leaders (Arifin et al., 2025). Meanwhile, the NU movement operates through traditional Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) that implement a traditional Islamic curriculum-based education system with material derived from research on the traditions of the Islamic tradition. This model, combined with the strong credibility of the *kiai* (Islamic scholars), is an effective medium for instilling moderate attitudes in students and the community (Nurdin & Naqqiyah, 2019).

A fundamental need for Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah in confronting radicalism is access to and the ability to effectively utilize social media (Hamdi, Shofwan & Agus, 2019). The mainstream strategy of religious moderation implemented by moderate groups has had a significant impact on society by filtering out news content or ideas that do not reflect the values of Islam, which is *rahmatan lil-'alamin* (blessing for all the worlds) (Zamzami et al., 2023). To counter both right-wing and left-wing radicalism, as part of the collective responsibility of Muslims, the concept of Wasathiyah Islam serves as a strong foundation for building a just, inclusive, and peaceful civilization (Maksum et al., 2020; Mudhofi et al, 2024). Thus, Wasathiyah Islam is not merely a theological concept but also a practical guide for Muslims living according to justice, compassion, and humanity. By practicing these moderate Islamic teachings, Muslims are expected to contribute to creating a better, more peaceful, and more compassionate world.

The Surabaya City Government (Pemkot) affirmed its commitment to continuing to collaborate with religious leaders and community elements to improve education, supervision, and guidance to prevent and address the potential for radicalism in Surabaya. The city government held a gathering with representatives of 85 Islamic boarding school (Ponpes) administrators in Surabaya as an effort to strengthen radicalism prevention in the city. (Surabaya.go.id [2022](#)).

In this context, radicalism prevention in Surabaya was carried out to prevent bomb terror. The remainder of the Surabaya area that experienced a terrorist attack by members of the Jamaah Ansharut Daulah (JAD) network, which is connected to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) (BBC News Indonesia, [2018](#)). In addition to this incident, the National Counterterrorism Agency (BNPT) noted that Surabaya is included in the red zone for radicalization on the island of Java, along with Jakarta and Bandung (NU Online, [2020](#)). JID | 403

The National Counterterrorism Agency (BNPT) also conducts training to improve early detection skills among government officials and the public. The increasingly widespread methods of spreading radical ideology, particularly through social media, require vigilance and active involvement from all elements of society (BNPT, [2024](#)). The Surabaya City Government through the National Unity and Politics Agency (Bakesbangpol), has taken preventive measures to prevent the spread of radical ideology (InfoPublik, [2025](#)).

The Surabaya government collaborates with Islamic social organizations, including Nahdlatul Ulama, Muhammadiyah, and the Al-Irsyad Association. The selection of three Islamic social organizations, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), Muhammadiyah, and Perhimpunan Al-Irsyad, is based on the fact that each has different historical, theological, and practical characteristics of da'wah (proselytizing), but all play a strategic role in strengthening Wasathiyah Islam in the city of Surabaya. NU, as the organization with the largest traditional base, has an extensive cultural and institutional network that serves as a means of spreading the values of religious moderation. Muhammadiyah, with its modernist approach and emphasis on purifying teachings, is known for its charitable work in the fields of education, health, and systematic, knowledge-based structural da'wah movements. Meanwhile, the Al-Irsyad Association, although smaller in size, carries a reformist character with a focus on purifying faith and developing urban communities, especially Arab communities, which have their own unique dynamics.

When examined together, these three organizations provide a spectrum of representation of moderate Islamic movements in Surabaya, a multicultural city and center of socio-religious growth. The interactions and communication strategies of these three organizations are highly relevant to research in order to understand how Wasathiyah Islamic values are articulated, disseminated, and internalized in the context of urban society. Despite facing various challenges, NU, Muhammadiyah, and Al-Irsyad continue to strive to strengthen moderate Islam in Surabaya through various approaches. All three are active in providing education and training to introduce moderate Islam to the younger generation, prioritizing the values of togetherness, tolerance, and social justice. Furthermore, they also promote interfaith dialogue to strengthen social relations and prevent potential conflict.

Realizing moderate Islam requires a comprehensive da'wah communication strategy so that the messages conveyed are well-received by the public. A communication strategy is a series of plans to convey messages to the target audience effectively. Communication strategy is the art of using



messages, channels, and techniques in a planned manner to achieve the desired communication objectives (Effendy, 2009). Communication strategies must adapt to technological developments, so utilizing new media such as social media and digital platforms is key to successfully reaching the target audience (Botan, 2021).

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The purpose of this study is to describe the communication strategies used by Islamic social organizations NU (Nahdlatul Ulama), Muhammadiyah, and Perhimpunan Al-Irsyad in strengthening Islam wasathiyah in the city of Surabaya. Meanwhile, da'wah communication is a plan containing activities designed to achieve specific da'wah objectives (Aziz, 2019). Da'wah communication requires an appropriate strategy that considers the audience's psychology, including their needs, motivations, and level of understanding of Islam. This ensures that da'wah is acceptable and can bring about positive changes in audience behavior. Thus, a da'wah communication strategy is a systematic and planned effort to convey Islamic religious messages to the public to influence, change, or strengthen their understanding and behavior per Islamic teachings.

The da'wah communication strategy focuses on conveying Islamic teachings using methods appropriate to the socio-cultural conditions of the target community. Da'wah must be carried out in a way that touches on psychological and social aspects, uses appropriate media, and builds ongoing relationships with the audience. This strategy also includes various communication techniques such as lectures, social media, discussions, and dialogues that focus on an effective and efficient approach according to the target audience's characteristics. Thus, the da'wah communication strategy is key to spreading religious values more widely and reaching various levels of society to strengthen moderate Islam.

## Research Methods

This study aims to describe the da'wah communication strategies employed by the Islamic social organizations Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), Muhammadiyah, and the Al-Irsyad Association in promoting moderate Islam in the city of Surabaya. This study uses qualitative research with a phenomenological approach. This method is used to explore how the communication strategies of Islamic social organizations NU (Nahdlatul Ulama), Muhammadiyah, and Perhimpunan Al-Irsyad strengthen Islam wasathiyah in the city of Surabaya. The phenomenological approach was chosen because it seeks to identify the essence of subjective experiences through a method called epoche or bracketing, which arises in consciousness and phenomena (Husserl, 2001). This study aims to describe the communication strategies used by Islamic social organizations NU (Nahdlatul Ulama), Muhammadiyah, and Perhimpunan Al-Irsyad in strengthening Islam wasathiyah in the city of Surabaya.

Meanwhile, the informant determination technique used purposive sampling, namely the deliberate selection of informants based on their relevance and involvement in da'wah activities and the policies of Islamic social organizations, namely NU, Muhammadiyah, and Al-Irsyad. The informants consisted of 11 people, comprising four from NU, four from Muhammadiyah, and three from Al-Irsyad. The subjective role is very central in qualitative research, and the researcher must be the main instrument in data collection and interpretation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

Data was obtained through in-depth interviews, document analysis, and participatory observation (Norman K. Denzin, 2009). Thus, researchers were directly involved in the data collection process and interacted with the research subjects. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with informants, and the researchers observed the process of preaching in the community carried out by the informants through scheduled religious lectures. The researchers then analyzed documents obtained from NU, Muhammadiyah, and Al-Irsyad, which were conducted in 2024 (Creswell, 2014). The research was conducted from January 2024 to December 2024.

Data validation was conducted based on four criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Moleong, 2019). To achieve these four criteria, this study employed Denzin's triangulation model (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). To achieve this triangulation, when researchers obtained different data in the field, they cross-checked the data to find the truth. This is crucial for realizing a phenomenological approach that emphasizes awareness, or the process of understanding an object or event by consciously experiencing it (Littlejohn, 2011).

The data analysis techniques were employed through data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion (Moleong, 2019). The steps taken in this study were to describe the phenomena experienced by the research subjects. Then, the researcher found statements based on the results of interviews on predetermined topics. Each statement had a balanced value, then was detailed and developed through repetition. These questions were then grouped based on predetermined classifications until the research.

## **Results and Analysis**

### *Integrated Cultural Strategy*

This study utilizes qualitative research, a method that seeks to understand how individuals or groups make meaning from their experiences. An integrated cultural strategy for Islamic missionary communication is an approach that adapts the Islamic message to local culture, social values, and societal structures. This strategy is crucial for effectively receiving the Islamic message and avoiding resistance in strengthening moderate, tolerant, and balanced Islam. This approach emphasizes the importance of understanding the social system and cultural environment in designing social interactions and delivering messages (Middleton, 1985). Middleton emphasized that every society has a value system, social structure, and cultural symbols that shape its worldview. Islamic missionaries seeking to strengthen moderate Islam must understand these systems holistically. For example, in an agrarian society that values social harmony, Islamic missionaries should emphasize Islamic values that support togetherness, cooperation, and tolerance.

Preachers must adapt their methods and narratives to align with local cultural symbols, such as art, music, or oral traditions. Nahdlatul Ulama, as an organization based on tradition and Islamic boarding school culture, often employs approaches that prioritize local culture, such as reciting prayers (shalawat), tahlil (recitation of the Koran), and religious activities deeply rooted in community life. In this regard, NU's da'wah tends to utilize existing traditions, making its moderate Islamic approach more readily accepted by the community, as it is not far from their customs. Muhammadiyah also applies cultural strategies to the principles of moderate Islam to strengthen moderate Islam by prioritizing more contextual and rational interpretations and da'wah activities

oriented toward social renewal. Muhammadiyah often focuses on a more universal understanding of Islamic teachings, without neglecting the cultural diversity of the surrounding community. This approach aims to strengthen national integration through strengthening the Pancasila ideology, intergroup dialogue, social justice, and culture-based education (Sa'dih & Nelwati, 2024).

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The integrated cultural strategy used as a means of da'wah communication to strengthen moderate Islam in Surabaya demonstrates that each organization has a different approach, but with a common goal: creating a harmonious and moderate atmosphere of religious diversity. Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), Muhammadiyah, and Al-Irsyad all possess unique characteristics that convey da'wah. However, they still prioritize values of moderation to address the challenges of a pluralistic, large city like Surabaya. This cultural approach, which internalizes Islamic teachings into local culture, has successfully created an inclusive and subtly transformed Muslim society through acculturation strategies (Suparjo, 2025).

The framework for designing and implementing this strategy effectively involves a planning approach. Actions must be well-planned, considering relevant cultural content and the desired objectives (Middleton, 1985). The first step in any communication strategy or planning is selecting an appropriate approach to the situation, conditions, and desired objectives. In this regard, the cultural strategies employed by Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), Muhammadiyah, and Al-Irsyad (Al-Irsyad) to strengthen Wasathiyah Islam are based on the principle of respecting local wisdom and understanding the culture of the Surabaya community, ensuring that their da'wah communication is well-received.

This integrated cultural strategy understands the socio-cultural environment, avoids value clashes, and strengthens Islamic values that align with local wisdom. Wasathiyah Islam is not imposed but communicated persuasively and relevantly. It creates da'wah that is normative and transformative, touching on the community's spiritual and socio-cultural aspects. This approach emphasizes that the success of da'wah is determined not only by the content of the message but also by a deep understanding of the system and environment in which it is delivered. Thus, Wasathiyah Islam can take root in society peacefully and sustainably. An integrated cultural strategy plays a crucial role in incorporating local cultural values to convey the message of moderate and inclusive Islam. The Islamic social organizations NU, Muhammadiyah, and Al-Irsyad have a significant role in introducing and strengthening Wasathiyah Islam by utilizing the strength of culture and traditions already existing in society.

#### *Curriculum-Based Education Strategy*

A curriculum-based educational strategy is a da'wah communication strategy for strengthening moderate Islam in Surabaya. In the context of da'wah, education is not merely a process of transferring knowledge but also fostering awareness of moderate Islamic values through dialogue and reflection. Thorough learning planning is key to creating effective da'wah communication and strengthening the understanding of moderate Islamic values. Planning principles that can be adopted to design educational strategies for da'wah must be based on continuous, participatory, and contextual learning (Middleton, 1985).

Effective da'wah education requires a design that aligns with community needs, actively involves students, and encourages a critical understanding of Islamic teachings that balances text and



context. It reflects the principles of moderate Islam, which prioritize balance, tolerance, and justice. Through an inclusive curriculum and interactive learning methods, this strategy can instill the values of Islam, which is a blessing for the whole world. Education becomes a strategic da'wah tool for developing moderate Muslims capable of living harmoniously in a pluralistic society. Moderation, as a moderate Islamic movement in education, aims to reject radicalism, with recommended preventive strategies based on the values of inclusion and balance (Muhammad et al., 2023).

Curriculum-based educational strategies in da'wah (Islamic outreach) can be adapted to the traditions and customs of Surabaya society by using a local culture-based educational approach, such as religious study groups with moderated content and interfaith dialogue adapted to local culture. Religious moderation is prevalent in formal and non-formal education (Jamaludin, 2022). It can identify key strategies in multicultural education, such as curriculum revision, teacher training, inclusive schools, and community involvement to build a tolerant society (Idrus et al., 2024).

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Society and community are crucial in da'wah education, as flexibility in implementing learning requires understanding the community's situation and conditions. This flexibility is also crucial for responding to social and cultural changes in da'wah. For example, if people increasingly access information through social media, da'wah activities can be adapted by online platforms. Planning flexibility also means adapting strategies if challenges or obstacles arise in implementing Islamic da'wah education programs.

The implementation of curriculum-based educational strategies by the Islamic social organizations Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), Muhammadiyah, and Al-Irsyad (Al-Irsyad) to strengthen moderate Islam in Surabaya involves systematic planning with clear objectives, selecting appropriate strategies, adapting to the local context, and conducting ongoing evaluation. Choosing a planning approach also needs to be tailored to the target community's needs, social conditions, and characteristics (Middleton, 1985). With these planning principles, NU, Muhammadiyah, and Al-Irsyad can create effective da'wah education programs that introduce and strengthen moderate Islamic values in the Surabaya community. It demonstrates the successful curriculum integration and a historical-philosophical approach to moderation in Islamic education (Yusron, 2025).

Evidence that NU has social capital is the Ma'arif Educational Institution, formal schools ranging from RA, MI, MTs, and MA/SMK. Muhammadiyah manages education ranging from kindergarten to senior high school (SMK) and universities in Surabaya City, demonstrating significant structural social capital. Meanwhile, Al-Irsyad has superior schools in Surabaya, which has become a structural capital. Al-Irsyad's superior educational institution, Al-Irsyad, spans from kindergarten to senior high school (SMK).

According to James S. Coleman, Robert D. Putnam, and Pierre Bourdieu, social capital consists of three main components (structural, relational, and cognitive). Structural forms a space for coordination and productive information exchange (James S. Coleman, 1990). Relational includes norms, trust, solidarity, and reciprocal obligations that bind the community (Robert D. Putnam, 2000). Cognitive is related to the values, beliefs, and frameworks of thinking shared within a group (Pierre Bourdieu, 1986). Meanwhile, Al-Irsyad has leading schools in Surabaya that constitute

structural capital. Al-Irsyad's leading educational institutions start from kindergarten, junior high school, and senior high school/vocational high school.

JID | 408 Education as a means of da'wah cannot rely on a single approach. Choosing a flexible and contextual approach is crucial. By selecting the right educational approach, moderate Islamic da'wah can be delivered inclusively and adaptively. This development strategy includes methodological training and da'wah mentoring within Islamic educational institutions (Azka, 2024). It allows moderate Islamic values to be firmly embedded in the minds and behaviors of the community, and creates a generation that is both religious and open to differences. Education plays a crucial role in creating inclusive pluralism by implementing multicultural values in education so that graduates are tolerant and understand differences.

Applying this concept in educational strategies for moderate Islamic preaching means that the Islamic social organizations Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), Muhammadiyah, and Al-Irsyad in Surabaya make educational decisions through a thorough planning process before selecting an approach to strengthen moderate Islam. The process of deciding on an educational planning approach has gone through several stages. It is carefully decided based on an educational strategy based on a deep understanding of the local context. The implementation of these values through the curriculum contributes to the formation of moderate character.

The curriculum-based educational strategy as a means of da'wah communication to strengthen Wasathiyah Islam by the Islamic organizations NU, Muhammadiyah, and Al-Irsyad in Surabaya is a decision based on a careful analysis of the local context, the desired goals, and existing alternative educational approaches. The planning process involves steps such as situation assessment, goal setting, evaluation of alternative approaches, risk analysis, and ongoing evaluation. By adhering to these principles, the Islamic organization can optimize the educational strategy to introduce and strengthen Wasathiyah Islamic values for the people of Surabaya.

### *Social Synergy Strategy*

As a communication strategy for moderate Islamic da'wah (Islamic wasathiyah), the social harmony strategy strengthens moderate Islam in the Islamic organizations NU (Nahdlatul Ulama), Muhammadiyah, and Al-Irsyad in Surabaya. Through their social harmony approach to da'wah, they interact with Surabaya's social systems and environments, which have diverse social dynamics. The social harmony strategy as a means of da'wah communication prioritizes active involvement in community life through social activities, public services, and community empowerment. The goal is to convey Islamic values, such as exceptionally moderate Islam—an Islam that is moderate, balanced, and upholds tolerance—through concrete actions in community life. It aligns with understanding the system and the environment as a crucial foundation in developing this strategy (Middleton, 1985).

Every society has a complex and unique social system and cultural environment. This system comprises interacting norms, values, customs, and social structures. In the context of social da'wah, understanding this system is crucial to prevent the da'wah approach from being rigid or generating resistance. Da'wah (Islamic outreach) through social activities, such as community service, zakat management, economic empowerment, and responses to social crises, must be tailored to the needs and characteristics of the local community.

Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) has a powerful, community-based social system. In the context of da'wah communication to strengthen moderate Islam, NU utilizes existing social structures within traditional communities, such as the long-standing network of Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), madrasas (madrasas), and social institutions in Surabaya. Through social activities and public religious studies, NU instills moderate Islamic teachings by prioritizing the values of tolerance, togetherness, and diversity. One of NU's social strategies is through social programs that reach various levels of society, such as assisting people experiencing poverty, providing religious education to the community, and providing cooperative activities to maintain social harmony.

Muhammadiyah, with its strong educational base, frequently engages in social programs based on education and health services. Muhammadiyah operates hospitals, clinics, and educational institutions, providing a social harmony approach to spreading moderate Islamic da'wah and strengthening moderate Islam through community outreach activities. Muhammadiyah prioritizes humanitarian values and moderation in all its social activities. For example, in implementing social programs such as health education or education for marginalized groups, Muhammadiyah emphasizes the principles of tolerance and respect for differences, and encourages the community to avoid radical and extreme thinking.

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Al-Irsyad, as an Islamic social organization, also engages in social harmony, focusing on intellectually-based social programs and interfaith dialogue. Al-Irsyad engages in interfaith dialogue activities and discussion forums that bring together religious leaders and the community to raise awareness of the importance of moderate Islam in strengthening moderate Islam. In the social context, Al-Irsyad frequently organizes activities that encourage critical and rational learning about religion and encourage the community to think openly when addressing social issues.

NU, Muhammadiyah, and Al-Irsyad each have approaches tailored to the characteristics of a diverse and dynamic urban society. These three organizations leverage the strength of their social harmony and social activities to spread the message of moderate Islam. Messages based on religious moderation can strengthen tolerance and harmony between religious communities in strengthening moderate Islam. Concrete actions in the social harmony strategy as a communication of da'wah in strengthening moderate Islam by the Islamic organizations NU, Muhammadiyah, and Al-Irsyad in Surabaya emphasize that the planning approach is applied practically and adaptively (Middleton, 1985). In efforts to strengthen moderate Islam through da'wah communication, the inter-organizational strategy for social harmony is a very effective channel.

Surabaya boasts a high level of social and cultural diversity. The formulated missionary plan must be implemented concretely, considering social dynamics and the community's real needs. The social harmony strategy in missionary work aims to realize Wasathiyah Islamic values such as balance, tolerance, and justice through concrete actions within the community. In the context of social missionary work, this can be economic empowerment programs, health services, social conflict resolution, and interfaith cooperation activities. These actions help the community and serve as a medium for conveying the message of moderate and solution-oriented Islam.

Harmony arises from positive and synchronous feedback between actors who exchange information, energy, and materials. Harmony enhances the usefulness and order of the system in a non-linear manner (greater than the sum of its parts). Harmony is divided into seven fundamental elements of synergy: open stable systems, cohesion, diversity and assortment,

complementarity, communication and synchrony, freedom and self-organization, and dynamics with decreasing entropy and growing free energy (Jaffe, 2021)

JID | 410 The Islamic organizations Nahdlatul Ulama, Muhammadiyah, and Al-Irsyad are crucial in conveying the message of moderate, tolerant Islam and emphasizing the principles of wasathiyah (moderation). To achieve this goal, they need to employ a planned, systematic approach based on the social and community values present in Surabaya. These action planning steps will ensure that social activities undertaken to strengthen Wasathiyah Islam are effective and positively impact the community.

The social harmony strategy in da'wah communication to strengthen Wasathiyah Islam by the Islamic organizations NU, Muhammadiyah, and Al-Irsyad has been carefully planned and implemented through structured actions. Periodic evaluations and adjustments are conducted to ensure that this strategy remains relevant and positively impacts the community. Through collaboration between the Islamic organizations NU, Muhammadiyah, and Al-Irsyad and active community participation, Wasathiyah Islam can be strengthened by the ummah and widely accepted in Surabaya, creating a more harmonious, tolerant, and inclusive environment. By implementing a targeted social harmony strategy, da'wah becomes more down-to-earth and has a direct impact. The values of moderate Islam can be truly felt, strengthening brotherhood and harmony in community life.

### *Strategy Through Media*

Communication strategies for da'wah through the media play a very strategic role, especially in spreading the message of Islam wasathiyah, which is a message of tolerance and inclusiveness to a wider community. The process of planning communication strategies involves actions taken through a structured and systematic approach. In this context, NU, Muhammadiyah, and Al-Irsyad refer to planned actions to optimally design the use of media in strengthening da'wah communication to reinforce moderate Islam in the city of Surabaya.

This media strategy is divided into two parts: mass media and social media, which play a vital role in spreading the values of Wasathiyah Islam widely and quickly. Every da'wah strategy that has been designed must be realized through concrete and measurable actions, taking into account the dynamics of the media and the characteristics of the audience (Middleton, 1985). The importance of actively applying a planning approach in social systems. In the context of media, this means packaging da'wah in an attractive and contextual manner. Effective digital da'wah avoids polarization, rejects exclusive rhetoric, and utilizes visualization effectively, with support for the need for digital literacy and communication training for moderate preachers.

The use of mass media as a strategy for strengthening moderate Islam, the NU (<https://tvnu.id>, <https://jatim.nu.or.id/>, <https://nusurabaya.or.id>), Muhammadiyah (<https://tvmu.tv>, <https://pwmjatim.org>), and Al-Irsyad (<https://perhimpunanalirsyad.com/>). NU, Muhammadiyah, and Al-Irsyad organizations follow a planned approach with clear steps, from evaluating the situation to adjusting actions. With careful planning and effective implementation, mass media can be a very powerful tool for spreading moderate Islamic messages, countering extremism, and strengthening interfaith harmony in Surabaya. Therefore, to overcome the challenges of Islamic da'wah in the mass media, digital literacy is needed as the main foundation for empowering the

community in dealing with fluctuations in religious information in realizing Islam wasathiyah through the media (Pardianto & A'la, 2023). Through concrete actions via the media, moderate Islamic preaching becomes more accessible, understandable, and accepted by various groups. This strategy enables the effective dissemination of moderate values, builds public awareness, and prevents the spread of extremist ideologies in the digital space.

Islamic social organizations such as Nahdlatul Ulama, Muhammadiyah, and Al-Irsyad in Surabaya strategically utilize mass media as a channel for preaching that can reach a wider audience. Good planning requires a thorough decision-making process regarding the selection of approaches to achieve established goals. Planning decisions depend on clear objectives and situational analysis and on selecting alternative approaches that will yield the best results. A moderate approach is a strategy and a core value of Islamic teachings, emphasizing the importance of dialogue and respect for diversity in preaching (Kholis, 2020).

Surabaya's mass media encompasses various media, including print, electronic, and digital. Understanding popular local media outlets favored by the Surabaya community is key to selecting the most effective medium for moderate Islamic preaching. These include local television, radio, social media, and online media. Middleton emphasized that a thorough understanding of this context is a crucial first step in selecting the right approach. Without an understanding of the local situation, planning will be less effective. Mass media is crucial for disseminating reliable information, raising public awareness about moderate Islamic preaching, and encouraging people to use digital media for preaching (Munawara et al., 2020). Media-based preaching programs, such as talk shows, discussions, or lectures featuring religious figures from Nahdlatul Ulama, Muhammadiyah, or Al-Irsyad, speak about moderate Islamic values.

These programs can reach a wider audience, especially those not readily accessible to digital media. In addition to mass media, social media platforms such as YouTube (NU: <https://youtube.com/@pcnusurabaya?si=9BgoywO512H7dcVo>, Muhammadiyah: <https://youtube.com/@pdm.surabaya>, Al-Irsyad: <https://www.youtube.com/@ypassurabaya>), Instagram (NU: <https://www.instagram.com/pcnu.surabaya?igsh=>, Muhammadiyah: <https://www.instagram.com/pdm.surabaya?igsh=a3FnBXB2a3Y3aXpo>, Al-Irsyad: <https://www.instagram.com/alirsyadsurabaya?igsh=>), Facebook (Al-Irsyad: <https://web.facebook.com/muhammadiyahkotasurabaya/>), TikTok (NU: <https://web.facebook.com/watch/?v=1367850833578857>, Muhammadiyah: <https://www.tiktok.com/@pcnu.surabaya/video/7446685605297163537>, Al-Irsyad: <https://www.tiktok.com/tag/pdmsurabaya>, Al-Irsyad: <https://www.tiktok.com/discover/al-irsyad-surabaya?lang=en>).

Social media platforms are also being utilized to produce content emphasizing moderate Islamic values, such as da'wah videos, infographics, or articles explaining a tolerant and balanced Islam. Social media is also highly effective in reaching the younger generation, who are active on these platforms. Digital communication fosters a critical and wise society using social media (Sakdiah et al., 2025; Karim & Riyadi, 2024). Podcasts and online radio are an alternative way to reach a younger or more dynamic audience. Podcasts are chosen because they are practical, effective, can



be listened to anytime, and can even be done in collaboration with several other online media platforms (Firdaus & Afidah, 2024).

JID | 412 These steps include analyzing the media situation, establishing clear da'wah objectives, evaluating various alternative mass media approaches, and analyzing potential impacts and risks. The final decision must consider the social media most appropriate for the intended audience and available resources. Regular evaluation and adjustments must be made to ensure the strategy remains effective and relevant. For example, through educational videos, digital campaigns, da'wah podcasts, or interactive content on social media that aligns with the communication styles of modern society. The messages of moderate Islam through social media approaches are inclusive and dialogical, and have successfully captured audiences' sympathy across religious and ideological backgrounds (Zaid, 2022). Content disseminated through social media is also participatory, meaning it involves the audience in creating or disseminating the message. Content that discusses moderate Islamic topics or casual discussions about moderate Islam can be practical for da'wah communication—for example, holding a short video contest about people's experiences practicing moderate Islam or a social media campaign encouraging the younger generation to share stories about peace and tolerance between religions. These communication strategies include interactive da'wah through social media (Ramadhani, 2025). The mass media and/or social media approach serves as a channel for information and a tool for value transformation. Moderate Islamic da'wah can be packaged creatively, persuasively, and inclusively, making it readily accepted and fostering awareness among the community about the importance of a moderate and tolerant lifestyle in a pluralistic society.

### *Collaboration Strategy*

The Islamic social organizations Nahdlatul Ulama, Muhammadiyah, and Al-Irsyad in Surabaya employ collaborative strategies of Islamic da'wah communication to strengthen moderate Islam. These three organizations collaborate with other institutions to disseminate the message of moderate Islam and the challenges and potential within the existing social and environmental contexts in Surabaya. The inter-institutional collaboration strategy is a form of da'wah communication that emphasizes cooperation between institutions, such as educational institutions, religious organizations, government, and other institutions, to disseminate moderate Islamic values more broadly and systematically. This collaboration is effective if it is based on a deep understanding of the social system and cultural environment in which these institutions operate (Middleton, 1985).

Each institution is part of a social system with a specific structure, function, and role within society. Moderate Islam is a concrete realization of a deeply rooted socio-political structure, not a new term used to describe the mindset of a particular group (Kasdi, 2019). Nahdlatul Ulama, Muhammadiyah, and Al-Irsyad are Islamic social organizations in Surabaya that collaborate to strengthen moderate Islam in the city. The collaboration between these three institutions leverages each organization's strengths in education, social affairs, and intellectual endeavors. This collaboration can create a broader da'wah message to introduce moderate Islamic values to the Surabaya community.

Islamic organizations can continue championing peace and tolerance in Indonesia by utilizing collaborative strategies, including social media and moderate religious education (Jubba et al.,

2021). Collaboration between Islamic social organizations and other religious institutions (Islamic and non-Islamic), as gathered under the FKUB (Forum for Interfaith Harmony), helps maintain interfaith harmony in Surabaya. Through interfaith dialogue, community forums, and joint social activities, this collaboration will promote moderate Islam as a religion that prioritizes tolerance and cooperation.

Collaboration between Islamic social organizations in Surabaya in communicating moderate Islamic da'wah (Islamic propagation) is a good strategy for introducing and instilling the values of moderation in religious life in this pluralistic city. Through collaboration between Islamic institutions, government agencies, educational institutions, and interfaith organizations, the message of da'wah that prioritizes tolerance, harmony, and social welfare can be more easily disseminated to the broader community. This collaboration will certainly run smoothly with the da'wah management of each Islamic social organization.

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Collaboration with the Surabaya Government, which is active in social management and community welfare, can expand the reach of Islamic da'wah—Wasathiyah and strengthen Wasathiyah Islam. For example, the Islamic social organizations Nahdlatul Ulama, Muhammadiyah, and Al-Irsyad collaborate with the Surabaya City Education Office to hold school training and seminars on wasathiyah Islam. Furthermore, collaboration with healthcare institutions, such as hospitals, can improve healthcare services for the poor and underprivileged, while simultaneously introducing moderate Islamic values prioritizing humanity and peace.

This collaboration also enables the creation of joint programs focused on community empowerment, poverty alleviation, and maintaining social harmony in Surabaya. By understanding Surabaya's social and cultural dynamics, this inter-institutional collaboration strategy will further strengthen the communication of wasathiyah Islamic da'wah (Islamic da'wah) and strengthen wasathiyah Islam among the Surabaya community. Collaboration between institutions can synergize and complement each other, resulting in the dissemination of wasathiyah Islamic da'wah more widely, being well-received by various groups, and strengthening harmony in national and religious life, as a manifestation of wasathiyah Islam.

The strategy of inter-institutional collaboration as a means of da'wah communication aims to combine the strengths of various institutions, such as Islamic organizations, educational institutions, the government, and the media, to disseminate the values of moderate Islam more widely and effectively. This goal requires careful planning, considering social conditions, shared goals, and the potential of each institution (Middleton, 1985). Middleton emphasized the importance of selecting an approach appropriate to the existing social structure. In the context of da'wah, this means selecting a collaboration model that is flexible, contextual, and mutually beneficial. The diverse Islamic social organizations Nahdlatul Ulama, Muhammadiyah, and Al-Irsyad each have distinct characteristics, visions, and missions, although they are all committed to strengthening moderate Islam. Understanding the differences and similarities between these institutions is a crucial step in designing collaborations. One such collaboration is through creative content and modern communication technology (Ramadhani, 2025).

Implementing this collaborative strategy requires continuous adjustments to ensure optimal collaboration between Islamic social institutions. Surabaya's religious diversity faces social challenges, such as tensions between religious groups, poverty, and radicalization. Therefore,

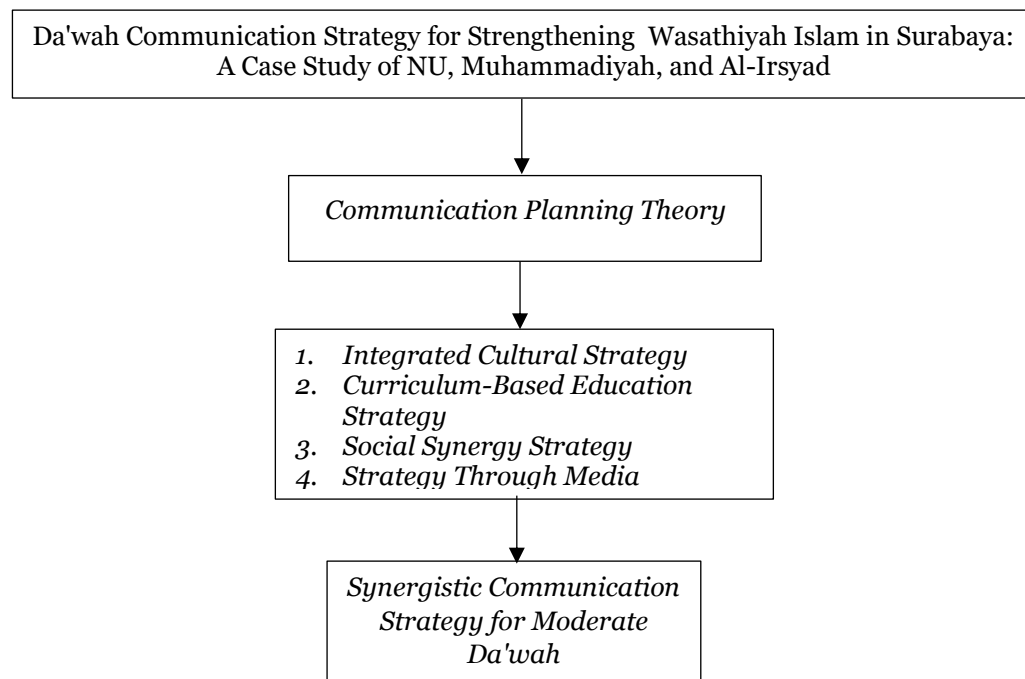
collaboration between institutions is necessary to address these issues in an integrated and synergistic manner. Collaborative da'wah is considered more capable of reaching all levels of society. This collaborative da'wah approach is expected to be an alternative option for optimizing da'wah output (Bachtiar, 2013). The potential for collaboration between Islamic social organizations, Nahdlatul Ulama, Muhammadiyah, and Al-Irsyad, each of which has extensive networks within the community. Collaboration between institutions allows for utilizing shared resources, such as educational networks, media, and social activities, to strengthen the da'wah of Wasathiyah Islam.

The steps taken in this collaborative strategy include situational analysis, setting clear objectives, evaluating collaboration alternatives, assessing impacts and risks, and planned implementation. The harmony established between religion and culture implements the principle of "Unity of Indonesia." Therefore, in religious moderation, getting to know each other and collaborating for good is crucial to realizing Wasathiyah Islam (Haidar et al., 2023). With a well-planned and targeted collaborative approach, Islamic moderate preaching can reach various segments of society and create a harmonious, inclusive, and tolerant social ecosystem. Selecting the right approach to the collaboration between Nahdlatul Ulama, Muhammadiyah, and Al-Irsyad can significantly strengthen moderate Islamic preaching in Surabaya. Furthermore, as it develops in the Indonesian archipelago, Islam has unique characteristics that prioritize the principles of moderation, tolerance, and harmony between religious communities (Umar, 2019).

The inter-institutional collaborative strategy for communicating Islamic moderate preaching to strengthen Islamic moderate preaching is employed by NU, Muhammadiyah, and Al-Irsyad. With a structured and deliberate planning and approach, along with steps to evaluate the strength of the collaboration, establish common goals, and ensure sound implementation and evaluation, this collaborative strategy will strengthen relationships between institutions and the broader community in strengthening Islamic moderate preaching in Surabaya.

The novelty of this study lies in the up-to-date description of the dynamics of Islamic organizations' *da'wah* communication strategies in Surabaya, particularly to strengthen Islam wasathiyah. Moreover, this study led to the discovery of "a synergistic moderate da'wah communication strategy", which proposes that harmony between Islamic social organizations' approach to disseminating moderate *da'wah* messages will create an inclusive religious understanding, thereby strengthening *wasathiyah* Islam in society.

Based on the results and analysis above, the researcher will then briefly explain the implications of the research results as follows:



The novelty of this study lies in the up-to-date description of the dynamics of Islamic organizations' *da'wah* communication strategies in Surabaya, particularly to strengthen Islam wasathiyah. Moreover, this study led to the discovery of "a synergistic moderate *da'wah* communication strategy", which proposes that harmony between Islamic social organizations' approach to disseminating moderate *da'wah* messages will create an inclusive religious understanding, thereby strengthening *wasathiyah* Islam in society.

## Conclusion

The Islamic social organizations Nahdlatul Ulama, Muhammadiyah, and the Al-Irsyad Association (Perhimpunan Al-Irsyad) employ several strategies to promote moderate Islam in Surabaya: First, an integrated cultural strategy. This strategy focuses on strengthening inclusive, tolerant Islamic values and respect for cultural differences. Second, a curriculum-based education strategy. Curriculum development in education is implemented to instill the importance of moderate Islam.

Third, a social synergy strategy. Islamic social organizations actively implement social programs to help the community work together to realize moderate Islam. Fourth, a media strategy. This media strategy is used to disseminate messages of moderate Islam through media owned by Islamic social organizations, making it easier for the public to access the message of moderate Islam. Fifth, a collaboration strategy. This strategy is implemented to strengthen inter-organizational collaboration with all parties to realize moderate Islam, as a step towards building a tolerant society.

Based on the five strategies above, this research produces a new concept in *da'wah* strategy: a synergistic moderate *da'wah* communication strategy. This concept synergizes the strategies of

Islamic social organizations to spread moderate da'wah messages. The primary focus is encouraging people to live tolerantly, respect each other, and maintain peace by conveying moderate da'wah messages through a relevant approach. The proposition of a synergistic moderate da'wah communication strategy states that harmony between Islamic social organizations and a relevant approach to disseminating moderate da'wah messages will create a tolerant and inclusive religious understanding, thereby strengthening wasathiyah Islam in society.

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