

Mediating *Wasathiyah* Islamic with Da'wah in the Public Sphere

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Abstract

This article focuses on mediating da'wah content through YouTube, packaged in the Islamic concept of wasathiyah. The rampant phenomenon of da'wah content leads to radicals & fundamentals, and even terror on social media causes public unrest. The public space is a space for equality, the emergence of discussions of public issues, and turning public activities and points into inclusive cultural commodities. This study uses a qualitative research method through social semiotic analysis' Halliday of the object of research on the Jedanulis (based on specific content YouTube) and content analysis of the audience's comments to determine the behavior of users using Netlytic. This is done to determine the audience's response (as a social media user) to the communicator Husain Jafar Albadar. The representation of wasathiyah da'wah concludes with a point, which is a source. Ustaz is an actor who conveys divine teachings and promotes a positive image of Islam through inclusive practice in the public sphere. What they get as a message becomes a mirror for the listener. Ustaz is the message itself. Whether faith is good or bad is determined mainly by them. That Ustaz, including Ulama, is not mocking the ummah but inviting the ummah.

Keywords: *Communicator, Inclusive, Wasathiyah, Public sphere.*

INTRODUCTION

In this paper, we explore how to mediate the concept of religious moderation through da'wah on social media. Lately, social media has been filled with da'wah content. The pervasive occurrence of da'wah material leads to extremists and fundamentalists, and even terror on social media contributes to societal turmoil. The trend of propagating extreme content on social media is increasing; from 2017 to March 2019, 13,032 range contain radicals (BNPT, 2020). According to the Ministry of Communication and Information, there is 20,453 terrorist content blocked on social media (Kominfo, 2021). These materials are not compatible with Indonesian society's multicultural and multireligious nature. This circumstance will result in the separation and dissolution of the country, characterized by discussion conflicts and social media contacts. Therefore, many social media users curse one another to explain themselves and their respective factions.

Studies on rhetoric and da'wah have focused on preachers' use of language to pique the public's interest in what they preach (Bahroni, 2016; Zaini, 2017; Fauzi, 2018; Prasetyo, 2019; Yanuar, 2020). There has always been one-way communication through lengthy speeches and stories in the da'wah method. This is a classic method popularly used in face-to-face communications noted. But not in a dialogue or a series of questions and answers.

Second, most of the research on semiotics and da'wah messages focuses more on semiotic messages, such as the Mardiyah Study on Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic analysis of da'wah messages in films (Mardiyah, 2019). Darwis and friends in analyzing the Gus da'wah messages via Instagram (Darwis, 2020). These studies only examine the news of da'wah and do not review the context surrounding the semiotics. So, this research reviews the *wasathiyah da'wah* using the dialogue method, *bil-mujadalah*, analyzed using social semiotics, which does not only look at the text and visualization of the message, but contextually the semiotic appears.

Through this research, da'wah is seen using the perspective of *two-way communication* through dialogue. The conception of the da'wah method with dialog is called *da'wah bil-mujadalah* (Aziz, 2017). Two or more people engage in discourse or exchange ideas to spread the message non-adversarial without creating animosity. Using *bil-mujadalah* as a depiction of *wasathiyah* is acceptable. Thus, proselytizing religious moderation requires new variations and models in campaigning for Islam. Through this research, preaching rhetoric can be mediated by communicators who dialogue Islam *rahmatan lil 'alamin* through converting rhetoric. A da'wah strategy is needed to interpret Islam as teaching anti-violence, radicals, and terrorism. It was unearthed through social semiotics. From the perspective of social semiotics, language is understood as a conception of ideology (Halliday & Hasan, 1989). The discourse of religious moderation through social media is the object of study. Social media platforms make language through multimodality texts a tool of discourse mediation (Moschini, 2018). Accordingly, this transformation of communication media makes social media a semiotic technology (Djonov & Van Leeuwen, 2018). Thus, da'wah semiotics research can be viewed using a multimodality perspective.

This research aims to mediate *wasathiyah* Islamic with Da'wah on YouTube. This study uses a qualitative research method through social semiotic analysis' Halliday of the object of research on the *Jeda Nulis* (based on specific content YouTube) and the content analysis of the audience's comments to determine the behavior of users using *Nethytic*, methods of social networking analysis (Eriyanto, 2021). This is done to determine the audience's response (as a social media user) to the communicator Husain Jafar Alhadar. He has content on social media, YouTube, Jeda Nulis account created on May 4, 2018, which has been watched by 51.050.768 with 797,000 subscribers (JedaNulis, 2022). The range consists of 200 videos.

Interestingly, the audience includes people of different faiths and Muslims. The research item in the study is a video sample. The video's title is *Avengers Endgame*.

DISCUSSION

The Concept of the Public Sphere and Religion

Jurgen Habermas introduced the term public sphere to Habermas; the public sphere is where people meet, discuss, and exchange information about whatever is possible to produce general views or public opinion (Habermas, 1989).

For Habermas, three main things become the institutional category of the public sphere (Habermas, 1989): the tendency to prioritize what they have in common and the occurrence of a similar process that can turn general activities and issues into cultural commodities that contain inclusive principles. This assumption raises the central concept that the public sphere in civil society is social equality (Syahputra, 2013).

Social media is a new public space that openly presents interaction, communication, and socialization for everyone with the aim of equality and shared public services (Fuchs,

2014). The definition of social media popularized by Kaplan & Haenlein (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010) is an internet-based channel built on 2.0 technology, enabling the creation and exchange of user-generated content. More complex, what is called by Carr and Hayes say that social media is an internet-based channel that allows users to interact selectively, present alone, either in real-time or asynchronously, with a broad and narrow audience capable of creating user-generated.

Ustads are Islamic communicators who use YouTube as media of da'wah. Ustadz has a big following on many social media sites, including YouTube, because YouTube is a "cultural public sphere because of an encounter with cultural differences and the development of political 'listening' across belief systems and identities" (Burgess & Green, 2009).

Analysis of Social Semiotics on social media

Analysis of social semiotics is one variety of semiotics. M.A.K Halliday introduced Social Semiotics. Language as social semiotics (Halliday, 1978). Language is an information system in terminology because language is not seen only as a sentence but as context and discourse.

The semiotic concept implies the study of signs and social, referring to Ferdinand de Saussure, the science of symbols, sign systems, and meanings. For Halliday and Hasan, there are two layers of social semiotic analysis: text and contexts of the situation (Halliday & Hasan, 1989). First, Text is understood as meaning referring to words and sentences, commonly called semantic units. Second, the context of the situation relates to three interrelated elements; namely, *the field of discourse* refers to what the media discourse about something happening. And then, *the tenor of discourse* refers to who is involved in the address through their text, behaviours, position, and role. The last, *the mode of speech*, refers to the part of the actors involved, how the communicator uses language style to describe the situation of the object of discourse and the roles of the actors involved.

The study in this article starts with the texts on the video titled Avengers Endgame and then moves on to the situation's setting. Table 1 is shown below.

Tabel 1 Texts of Video

Text (Sound)	Meaning
" <i>Cintailah apa yang ada di bumi dengan segala ragamnya, maka kamu sudah mencintai Tuhan</i> "	The attitude and behavior of loving and respecting fellow human beings on earth.
" <i>Salah satu slogan, KH. Wahab Chasbullah menyatakan bahwa Hubbul wathon minal iman (Kecintaan terhadap Tanah air, bagian dari Keimanan)</i> "	Loving the State of the Faith describes that the younger generation and anyone should love the State.
" <i>Nabi Muhammad mencintai semua tanah airnya. Ketika di Mekkah dan harus hijrah ke Madinah. Beliau bersedih, menangis, bersyair indahnnya kota Makkah. Begitu juga ketika di Madinah harus kembali ke Makkah dalam proses fathul makkah, beliau bersedih karena meninggal Madinah.</i> "	Representation of the Prophet Muhammad SAW loved his homeland.
" <i>Dalam Islam itu, ada أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ</i>	The concept of obeying the

<p>وَأُولَى الْأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ Kita taat kepada Allah & Rasul, dan Pemerintah selama tidak melarang untuk beribadah”</p>	<p>Government as the state's and nation's authority.</p>
<p>“Dalam Islam, ada Ukhuwah wathoniah. Siapa yang berbeda dalam agama, tapi kamu harus bersaudara dalam nilai kebangsaan.”</p>	<p>The concept of brotherhood in Islam.</p>
<p>“Menjadikan Indonesia sebagai Rumah Bersama” bagi semua untuk saling menjaga dan bekerja sama untuk kebaikan. Berbeda dalam kebenaran, Bersama dalam kebaikan.”</p>	<p>The concept of pluralism</p>
<p>“Segala material ini kita harus menjaganya sebagai muslim. Toleransi di kita (agama Islam) menjadi sangat penting. Karena agama Islam turun sebagai rahmat bagi semesta alam”.</p>	<p>The Concept of Islam as <i>Rahmatan Lil 'Alamin</i></p>
<p>“Walaupun hidup Bersama (berbeda-beda agama), tapi dia bisa tetap dengan imannya. Dia berbaur tapi tidak tercampur”.</p>	<p>The concept of pluralism and inclusivism</p>

According to Halliday, the description of the text above is a way of understanding meaning through semantics. The findings above show that the concept of *wasathiyah*, where Ustadz Husain Jafar Alhadar represents Islam, conveys Islamic teachings, respects diversity, and continues to carry out the teachings of Aqedah according to the teachings of the Prophet. This is the implementation of *bil-mujadalah* da'wah, dialogue with adherents of other religions, on the topic through *bil-hikmah* techniques and designs, by Surah An-Nahl (16) verse 125. Then, the level contexts of the situation are as follows.

Tabel 2 The Contexts of Situation

Discourse	Meaning
Field of Discourse	1). The Young People in the Practice of Religion 2). Tolerance 3). The Commitments of Religion and State
Tenor of Discourse	Members, Authority of Religion <i>Islam, Katolik, Protestan, Budha, Hindu, Khonghucu, Penganut Kepercayaan</i>
Mode of Discourse	Dialog Topic: 1). Tolerance 2). Respect for Difference to maintain unity Rational Argument: Commitment to Religion through Tolerance, Mutual respect for Religious Differences & Beliefs, and Indonesia as The Home to All Religions & Beliefs.

Understanding the relationship between texts and the context of situations about *wasathiyah* and proselytizing through semiotic technology can be analyzed on social media texts and social practice, which refers to inseparable multimodal texts (Poulsen & Kvåle, 2018). Its analysis framework consists of 7 dimensions (Poulsen & Kvåle, 2018).

First, the multimodal dimension consists of messages in text, images, and sounds about young people practicing their religion according to belief values and respecting differences. The text describes the concept of *wasathiyah*, where there is a balance of two sides. However, at the same time, it is not an attitude of avoiding something difficult or running away from responsibility because Islam actively teaches partiality to the right but with wisdom (Shihab, 2019).

The concept of *Wasathiyah Da'wah* refers to the content of communications, which contains Islamic teachings that are gentle and friendly, in line with the conception of *Rahmatan Lil 'Alamin*. The word *Wasathiyah* in Indonesian means moderation. Moderation refers to the word moderate, which is always avoiding extreme behavior or disclosure, and towards the middle dimension or the middle way. *Wasathiyah* is defined as religious moderation.

According to scholars, Surah Al-Baqarah (2) verse 143 is the foundation for *Wasathiyah*. Quraish Shihab (Shihab, 2019), Moderation may start with the first line, *Wasathiyah*. More people used the phrase *Wasathiyah* than *As-Sadad*, *Al-Qashd*, and *Al-Istiqamah*. He believed that *Wasathiyah* was fundamental to Islam's teachings and that Muhammad's teachings were thus marked by it. Balance and responsibility are two sides of the same coin, yet *Wasathiyah* is not an attitude of detachment or avoidance since Islam teaches alignments actively but with knowledge.

The study of Irfan, Darojat, and Ali shows that Islamic moderation concerning religion and adherents of other religions is taught through hadith and delivered by teachers and students at Islamic boarding schools in Central Java Province (Helmy et al., 2021). Interacting with followers of other religions is very important for anyone to learn. Religious moderation is campaigned by socio-religious institutions such as NU to anticipate counter-terror culture through the documentary film *Rahmat Islam Nusantara* and the community of social media users who oppose radicalism in public spaces (Schmidt, 2021).

The second is the practical dimension. Implement values and beliefs based on the teachings of each religion. Preaching is a form of an invitation to other people, both Muslims and adherents of other religions. Especially in a new public space, where the characteristics of the community are very heterogeneous.

Third, the social dimension refers to people involved in affirming values & beliefs. In this video, the text clearly states that every religion has the right to practice it comfortably and peacefully. In this dimension, there are three things: first, semiotic messages that give rise to social narratives that Indonesia is a shared space for adherents of religions and beliefs to grow together despite their differences. Second, technological instruments, namely dialogue on differences, not to change beliefs but as literacy of different values and beliefs. Third, inclusive individuals' use of network technology will create and avoid radical and extreme characteristics.

Fourth is the media dimension. YouTube, as a technology medium, distributes religious teachings. The message becomes digital mediation as a religious expression that teaches peace, is designed logically, and is readily accepted by the community. This shows that the social media space is a place for public discussion services (Andung & Swan, 2021).

Fifth, social media's material dimension refers to the device Field's physical materiality (Poulsen & Kvåle, 2018). Material can be seen through comments from netizens. Based on the analysis of text data using *Nethytic* software, the number of words is 965, and there are 831 unique posters. On the other hand, visualize the word cloud of individual words consisting of powerful words: 18 words for religion, 11 for Indonesia, ten words for

the house, ten words for people, and eight words for tolerance. Meanwhile, the distribution of comments is a positive sentiment (feeling good).

Sixth is the historical dimension. After the 1998 reformation in Indonesia, communication and information channels were wide open, giving rise to a democratic medium of communication, including da'wah channels. Through social media content, Da'wah is implemented under a pluralistic Indonesian society and a democratic political system. Through the public space, the control function of civil society can function and run Field (Prasetyo, 2012) optimally.

Seventh, the critical dimension refers to the social values and ideology of the YouTube video content in the message design logic. The message design was based on the Islamic organization Nahdatul Ulama (NU) doctrine, *ablussunah wal Jamaah*, which represents the *Wasathiyah* concept in representing religion and the state. This is indicated by quoting the words of KH. Abdul Wahab Hasbullah stated that *Hubbul Wathan Minal Iman (kecintaan terhadap tanah air, bagian dari keimanan)* (KRJOGJA, 2021). This implementation can be seen through 4 indicators of religious moderation: National commitment, tolerance, non-violence, and accommodation of local culture (Kemenag, 2019).

Multimodality is a term used to describe people who communicate using different modes at the same time (Kress & Leeuwen, 2001). The conception is based on using semiotic methods in the design of communication, semiotic events, and specific techniques. The theoretical basis of multimodal refers to the social semiotics research developed by Halliday and Hasan. They linked it with System Functional Linguistics (SFL) (Unsworth, 2008). For Hasan, SFL is an interconnection between linguistics and language.

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Multimodality is used to see audience or netizen messages' responses through the comment column provided by the template on YouTube. This becomes information indicating that verbal texts and images are semiotic materials that are socially responded to and widely discussed. Dialogue between text, images, and audio-visual becomes multimodal in social semiotics on social media technology. Jovanovic and Leeuwen explore social media, namely first as a functional structure, drawing on the theory of form and genre of exchange, and second as realizing evaluative (emotive) correspondence (Jovanovic & Van Leeuwen, 2018). A study of multimodal dialogue seen through social media as a semiotic technology and social communication. Jovanovic cautioned that the design of social media templates, such as chat fields and the use of social media, became an instrument of message transmission. This multimodal aims to show the process of meaning; humans use a variety of semiotics (Iedema, 2003).

The seven dimensions of multimodality of social semiotics explain the modes of social semiotics, where da'wah *wasathiyah* is a sign and a message. *Wasathiyah* da'wah created by creators' content has a vision of da'wah that *rahmatan lil alamin* becomes verbal and sound content, and all the signs in it become a form of mediation to convey a model of da'wah that is *rahmatan lil alamin* seen from the perspective of social semiotics.

The texts and contexts above describe the concept of *Wasathiyah* through da'wah. Finally, the implementation of *wasathiyah* on social media inclusively through three related elements; first, the Source (communicator) has a background, knowledge, and understanding of religious moderation. Second, Content, what is conveyed must contain soothing content that is not radical, fundamental, or liberal. This refers to the message design logic. Third, *Bil-hikmah* technique uses language that is readily accepted by all circles. This technique is delivered gently to raise an invitation instead of anger. As a result, Ustadz invites the ummah, not insults the ummah.

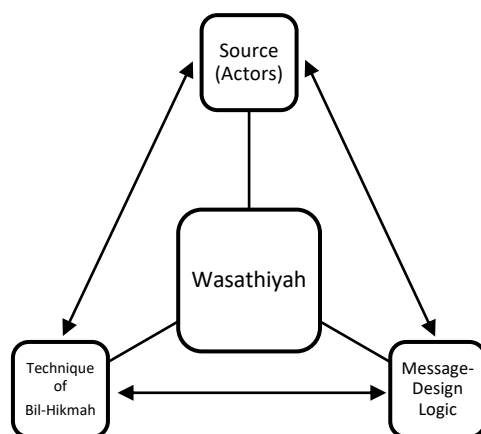


Figure 1 Elements of Mediating *Wasathiyah* with Da'wah in Social Media

The context of content production is also where the condition of Indonesia, rampant with radical da'wah. Mode of *wasathiyah* da'wah is the solution to radicalism and extremism in the pluralism of society. On the other hand, the necessary da'wah approach is dialogue and symmetrical communication, but not symmetrical belief or monotheism. Because the concept for you is your religion, my religion is mine. And a *tabligh* with *bil-hikmah* methods and a persuasive approach to young people about religious differences.

The context of *wasathiyah* da'wah was liked and received a positive response from the internet community, as evidenced by comments on the available columns. These comments not only came from the Muslim community, but the non-Muslim community also appreciated the da'wah content through this dialogue. This suggests that proselytizing content is produced by looking at the evolving context. The confluence of signs and social contexts makes *wasathiyah* proselytizing mediated by both. Social semiotics has a hand in creating content. That is, content creators understand the context in response to the social conditions that occur. It is not merely peace-loving as a social conception.

Thus, the semiotic effect of Husain Jafar Husain's da'wah can be identified through 2 levels: the media and message dissemination. First, through YouTube as a social media channel, the media level becomes a public space where anyone can express opinions and criticisms. As a public space, YouTube is a means of preaching, a meeting place for everyone, with various characters of different religions. This intersection becomes a land to be praised and criticized. Through the @jedanulis account, communicators using the *bil-mujadalah* da'wah method and running with *bil-hikmah* elicit positive responses from netizens. Second, the level of message dissemination. The multimodal in it shows the content of da'wah that runs two-way communication da'wah, which comes out of the

mainstream of preaching, namely monologue, only one direction from the da'i to the congregation. The combination of sound, image, and visual expression is a sign of da'wah in conveying the message of Islam as a peaceful Islamic communication discourse.

In the modern era, people as social media users must have a moderate understanding of religion, and content creators, through their channels and social media accounts, realize moderate content. Not creating content that makes the audience go the wrong way causes anxiety or does not follow the spirit of *tabligh*. So, media users and content producers, to make this happen, are involved in the process of mediating *wasathiyah* in the public sphere. On the other hand, the role of religion as a traditional institution must be able to respond to social changes caused by rapid technological transformation.

CONCLUSION

The article's conclusions include mediating *wasathiyah* with da'wah through three essential elements: source, content (message-design logic), and *bil-hikmah* technique. Second, understanding semiotic technology in social media needs to involve a situation where netizens' sentiments and comments are in dialogue about tolerance in a pluralistic society. Third, the new public space becomes a place for preaching and a bridge for the image of Islam in conveying inclusive Islamic teachings. Good or bad is determined by Islamic communicators and how to deliver content.

The drawback of this article is that the video used as analysis material is only 1 video. It is better to use several videos to map the contextual scope. The research will be even better if it touches in detail on the responses from content creators by extracting interview data. It is necessary to look at social semiotics holistically, not just contextually, without looking at the constructionist perspective of the video creator.

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