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Wasathiyyah in Practice: Sharia Council Fatwas and the Construction of Moderate Islamic Legal Reasoning in Wahdah Islamiyah

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Abstract: This article investigates the role of fatwa as a medium for institutionalizing wasathiyyah within Wahdah Islamiyah, one of Indonesia's emerging Islamic movements. While wasathiyyah has been widely discussed in normative and political discourse, its embodiment in organizational fatwas remains underexplored. This study adopts a qualitative case study approach by analyzing fatwas issued by Wahdah Islamiyah's Sharia Council (*Dewan Syariah Wahdah Islamiyah*), supported by interviews with council members and document analysis of official publications. The findings reveal that the Council's fatwas consistently reflect a framework of moderation by balancing three principles: doctrinal orthodoxy (*tahqiq al-'aqidah*), social responsibility (*maslahah al-'ammah*), and contextual adaptability (*murā'āt al-waqi'*). Fatwas concerning interfaith relations, political engagement, and contemporary socio-economic issues demonstrate a deliberate attempt to avoid both rigid literalism and excessive liberalism. However, tensions also emerge as fatwas navigate between internal expectations of ideological purity and external pressures from a pluralistic society. This study argues that fatwas serve not only as instruments of normative regulation but also as vehicles for embedding wasathiyyah in organizational governance.

Keywords: Wasathiyyah, fatwa, Sharia Council, Wahdah Islamiyah

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Abstrak: *Artikel ini mengkaji peran fatwa sebagai medium untuk menginstitusionalisasikan wasathiyyah di lingkungan Wahdah Islamiyah, salah satu gerakan Islam yang berkembang pesat di Indonesia. Meskipun konsep wasathiyyah telah banyak dibahas dalam wacana normatif dan politik, manifestasinya dalam bentuk fatwa kelembagaan masih jarang dikaji. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan studi kasus kualitatif dengan menganalisis fatwa-fatwa yang dikeluarkan oleh Dewan Syariah Wahdah Islamiyah (DSWI), dilengkapi dengan wawancara terhadap para pimpinan Dewan serta analisis terhadap dokumen publikasi resmi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa fatwa-fatwa Dewan Syariah secara konsisten mencerminkan kerangka wasathiyyah melalui upaya menyeimbangkan tiga prinsip utama: ortodoksi akidah (taḥqīq al-ʻaqīdah), tanggung jawab sosial (maṣlaḥah al-ʻāmmah), dan adaptabilitas kontekstual (murāʻāt al-wāqiʻ). Fatwa-fatwa yang terkait dengan hubungan antaragama, keterlibatan politik, dan isu-isu sosial-ekonomi kontemporer memperlihatkan adanya upaya sadar untuk menghindari dua kutub ekstrem, yaitu literalitas yang kaku dan liberalisme yang berlebihan. Namun demikian, muncul pula ketegangan ketika fatwa-fatwa tersebut harus menavigasi antara ekspektasi internal terhadap kemurnian ideologis dan tekanan eksternal dari masyarakat yang pluralistik. Penelitian ini berargumen bahwa fatwa tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai instrumen regulasi normatif, tetapi juga sebagai sarana untuk menanamkan nilai-nilai wasathiyyah dalam tata kelola organisasi.*
Kata Kunci: *Wasathiyyah, Fatwa, Dewan Syariah, Wahdah Islamiyah*

Introduction

In the last twenty years, *wasathiyyah* or Islamic moderation has become a central theme in both academic scholarship and policy initiatives within the Muslim world.[1] The revival of this concept reflects an intellectual and sociopolitical response to the pressing challenges posed by extremism, liberalism, and secularism in modern Muslim contexts.[2] Extremism is born from a rigid literal interpretation of religious texts, accompanied by a rejection of differences and the authority of classical scholarship.[3] Groups such as ISIS and

[1]Muhamadul Bakir and Khatijah Othman, "Wasatiyyah (Islamic Moderation), p. A Conceptual Analysis from Islamic Knowledge Management Perspective," *Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization* 7, no. 1 (2017), p. 30–31. Mohammad Hashim Kamali, "A Lifestyle of Moderation , or Wasaṭiyyah: The Islamic Perspective," *Islam and Civilisational Renewal* 5, no. 1 (2014). Ahmad Darojat Jumadil Kubro and Muhamad Ali, "The Understanding of Islamic Moderation (Wasatiyyah Al-Islam) and the Hadiths on Inter-Religious Relations in the Javanese Pesantrens," *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 11, no. 2 (2021), p. 377–401.

[2]Abdullah Sahin, "Critical Issues in Islamic Education Studies: Rethinking Islamic and Western Liberal Secular Values of Education," *Religions* 9, no. 11 (2018), p. 335.

[3]Umar Sheikh Tahir, "The Concept of Jihad in Islamic Texts: An Analytical Study of Violence between Mainstream Scholars and Extremists," *Al-Bayan: Journal of Qur'an and*

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other radical networks have become symbols of the deviation in understanding Islam that prioritize violence in the name of monotheism.[4]

Liberalism emerged as the opposite reaction, namely the tendency to interpret Islam freely without the limits of the authority of scholars and the discipline of Sharia science.[5] Secularism attempts to remove religion from the public sphere and confine it to the private domain, causing the principles of Islam to lose their social relevance. In this situation, wasathiyyah appears as a corrective paradigm that offers a middle way between these two extreme poles.[6] *Wa kadzālika ja'alnākum ummatan wasaṭan li takūnū syuhadā'a 'ala an-nās wa yakūna ar-rasūlu 'alaikum shahīdā* (QS. al-Baqarah [2]:143). This verse emphasizes the function of Muslims as a wasaṭan community-a community that is just, balanced, and serves as a moral witness for the rest of humanity.[7] Various leading Islamic institutions have mainstreamed wasathiyah as a paradigm of modern Islamic civilization.[8]

The ulama emphasize that Islam rejects exaggeration (*ghuluw*) and deviation (*inhiraf*), and demands a balance between revealed texts and human rationality.[9] Therefore, they initiated the agenda of al-wasathiyyah in various international conferences to reaffirm Islam as a religion of justice, compassion, and progress. At the global policy level, the United Nations (UN) through its resolution on Promoting Tolerance and Religious Moderation recognized the contribution of religious teachings in strengthening peace and countering extremism.[10]

Thus, wasathiyyah is no longer seen as merely a theological value, but also as a global agenda for the development of civilization and religious

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Hadith Studies 15, no. 1 (2017), p. 48–72.

[4]Roger Chase Hagans, "Re-Thinking Conceptual Approaches to Modern Islamic Terrorism: A Genealogy of ISIS and the Dynamism of Salafi-Jihadism" (Glasgow: University of Glasgow, 2021), p. 2.

[5]Bismillah Za'bah and Ahmad Yunus Mohd Noor, "A Critical Epistemological Review of The Liberal Islamic Network's Interpretation of The Qur'an," *BITARA International Journal of Civilizational Studies and Human Sciences* 8, no. 2 (2025), p. 151–62.

[6]Muhammad Mumtaz Ali and Muneer Muhammed Rafeeque, "Wasatiyya [Moderation]: The Principle and Objective of the Shariah," *Islamic Perspective* 20 (2018), p. 81.

[7]Kubro and Ali, "The Understanding of Islamic Moderation (Wasatiyyah Al-Islam) and the Hadiths on Inter-Religious Relations in the Javanese Pesantrens."

[8]Sutomo Sutomo and Abdul Syukur, "The Identity of The Nusantara Islamic Community (Wasatiyah Islam and Progressive Islam)," *EDUCATIO: Journal of Education* 8, no. 1 (2023), p. 418–30.

[9]Mohammad Yusri Yubhi Bin Md Yusoff, Thameem Ushama, and Adibah Abdul Rahim, "The Concept of Ghulūw in Islam: An Analysis on Its Manifestations and Causes in The Modern World," *Intellectual Discourse* 28, no. 2 (2020), p. 433–57.

[10]Sus Eko Zuhri Ernada, "Moderating Religion for Global Security: Constructivist Insights," *Jisiera: The Journal of Islamic Studies and International Relations* 8, no. 1 (2025), p. 1–46.

governance. In the national context, Indonesia is one of the Muslim countries that is most active in institutionalizing the concept of religious moderation in state policy.[11] The Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia launched the National Religious Moderation Program (2019–2025).[12] which emphasizes four main indicators: national commitment, tolerance for diversity, anti-violence, and acceptance of local culture.[13] This program marks the country's serious effort to make Islamic moderation not just a discourse, but an operational value in education, preaching, and socio-religious life.[14]

In addition, the Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI) also has a significant contribution in formulating Islamic wasathiyyah within the framework of legal institutions.[15] Through the official document of the Guidelines for Wasathiyyah Islam in Indonesia, MUI defines wasathiyyah as "an understanding and practice of Islam that emphasizes a balance between correct creed, proper worship, and just social dealings. This document formulates ten main principles of wasathiyyah, namely: Tawassut (moderation), Tawazun (balance), I'tidal (justice), Tasāmuh (tolerance), Musāwah (egalitarianism), Syūrā (consultation), Iṣlāḥ (constructive reform), Aulawiyyāt (priorities), Tathawwur (positive dynamics), and Taḥadldhur (civilization).[16]

These ten principles are not only normative in nature but also serve as the theological and epistemological basis for MUI fatwas on various contemporary issues, such as vaccination, religious pluralism, and the digital economy.[17] Thus, MUI presents wasathiyyah as a framework of institutional legal and moral principles, not merely a moderation slogan. Nevertheless, there is an important research gap that needs to be addressed. Most studies on wasathiyyah in Indonesia are still focused on the conceptual and normative

[11]Moh Ashif Fuadi et al., "Religious Moderation in the Context of Integration between Religion and Local Culture in Indonesia," *Journal of Al-Tamaddun* 19, no. 1 (2024), p. 47–59.

[12]Yevi Yasmini et al., "Religious Moderation Policy: Concept, Implementation, and Challenges in Indonesia," *International Journal of Education and Literature* 4, no. 1 (2025), p. 257–66.

[13]Darmaiza Darmaiza and Randi Isdendi, "The Role of Religious Moderation and Tolerance in Achieving a Harmonious and Inclusive Society," in *Proceedings of International Conference on Religion, Social and Humanities*, vol. 3, 2024, p. 97–108.

[14]Rohmat Mulyana, "Religious Moderation in Islamic Religious Education Textbook and Implementation in Indonesia," *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 79, no. 1 (2023), p. 8592.

[15]Wahidul Anam and Mubaidi Sulaeman, "Law, Ethics, and Hadith Ahkam: An Analysis of Fatwa MUI in the Perspective of Progressive Interpretation," *Samarah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga Dan Hukum Islam* 8, no. 2 (2024), p. 1023–53.

[16]Amirah Ahmad Nahrawi, *Peran MUI Dalam Praktik Washatiyatul Islam Di Indonesia*, ed. Shabah S.M. Syamsi (Yogyakarta: Q-Media, 2020).

[17]Abdul Rahman and Mulsir Irawanda, "Islamic Ethical Guidance in the Digital Age: A Study of MUI Fatwas on Social Media Use in Indonesia," *Parewa Saraq: Journal of Islamic Law and Fatwa Review* 3, no. 1 (2024), p. 45–53.

levels, both in the form of public policy and theological discourse. There is still little research examining how the values of wasathiyyah are translated into institutional practice particularly through the fatwa mechanisms of Islamic organizations. In the context of Indonesian identity, fatwas hold a strategic position as legal instruments, moral guidelines, and mechanisms for the institutionalization of religious values.[18]

Where a fatwa is not merely a legal opinion, but a form of social communication between scholars, society, and authority.[19] Thus, the study of fatwas needs to shift from merely textual analysis to institutional analysis, that is, how an Islamic institution develops mechanisms of collective ijtihad that reflect the values of wasatiyyah. In this context, the Wahdah Islamiyah Sharia Council (DSWI) becomes a highly relevant case study. As the fatwa institution of one of the largest Islamic movements in Indonesia,[20] Wahdah Islamiyah combines the salafiyyah manhaj orientation with the spirit of social da'wah and national participation.[21] The Wahdah Sharia Council not only functions as an internal legal authority but also as an ideological regulatory mechanism that maintains a balance between the purity of faith and social adaptation.[22] Through an analysis of the official document 'Ijtihad Methodology and Fatwas of the Wahdah Islamiyah Sharia Council' along with its fatwa products, this study seeks to demonstrate that the value of wasathiyyah in Wahdah Islamiyah is not merely religious rhetoric, but a structured and systematic institutional practice. In other words, Islamic moderation in Wahdah Islamiyah represents wasathiyyah tanzīmiyyah, which is moderation institutionalized through legal mechanisms, scholarly deliberation, and organizational governance.

This study was conducted at the Central Office of the Dewan Syariah Wahdah Islamiyah (DSWI) in Makassar, South Sulawesi, which serves as the highest authority in ijtihad activities and fatwa deliberation within the Wahdah Islamiyah organization. The units of analysis include fatwa texts and legal documents issued by DSWI from 2015 to 2024, as well as the institutional process of fatwa formulation, encompassing decision-making mechanisms, ijtihad methodologies, and the dynamics of interaction among council members.

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[18]Khaydarov Mirodil Mirvaxidovich, "The Relevance and Importance of Fatwas in Muslim Societies," *Web of Teachers: Inderscience Research* 3, no. 2 (2025), p. 149–59.

[19]M Usman, Layyin Mudofir, and Muh Nashirudin, "The Dynamics of Fatwa among a Diverse Community," *International Journal of Pharmaceutical Research* 12, no. 4 (2020).

[20]Andar Nubowo, "Indonesian Hybrid Salafism: Wahdah Islamiyah's Rise, Ideology and Utopia," in *Rising Islamic Conservatism In Indonesia* (New York: Routledge, 2021), p. 181–97.

[21]Chris Chaplin, "Salafi Islamic Piety as Civic Activism: Wahdah Islamiyah and Differentiated Citizenship in Indonesia," *Citizenship Studies* 22, no. 2 (2018), p. 208–23.

[22]Islahuddin Ramadhan Mubarak, et al., "Metode Istinbath Dewan Syariah Wahdah Islamiyah Dalam Menetapkan Hukum BPJS Kesehatan Mandiri," *Bustanul Fuqaha: Jurnal Bidang Hukum Islam* 1, no. 1 (April 2020), p. 60–78.

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The analysis aims to explore how the principle of *wasatiyyah* is embodied not only in fatwa outcomes but also in the epistemological procedures and governance of the institution.

The data consist of both primary and secondary sources. Primary data include official DSWI documents such as the 2022 Methodology of Ijtihad and Fatwa, compilations of fatwas addressing contemporary sociopolitical and economic issues, and in-depth interviews with eight key informants comprising commission leaders, senior members, and individuals directly involved in fatwa formulation. Secondary data were obtained from academic literature, policy reports, and relevant scholarly publications on fatwa and Islamic movements in Indonesia.

Data collection techniques consist of documentary studies, semi-structured interviews, and limited observations. Documentary studies were employed to analyze the structural formulation of fatwas, the legal reasoning (both *naqli* and *'aqli*), and the patterns of *istidlal* applied. The interviews explored the perceptions and experiences of DSWI members regarding the implementation of *wasatiyyah* within collective ijtihad mechanisms. Observations were conducted in internal forums such as *Liqā' Ilmī* to capture deliberative dynamics in the practice of consultation, balance (*tawāzun*), and tolerance (*tasāmuh*) as principles of moderation.

Data were analyzed using three complementary approaches. First, content analysis was conducted to identify legal themes and the application of principles such as *taḥqīq al-'aqīdah*, *maṣlaḥah al-'āmmah*, and attention to social realities (*murā'āt al-wāqi'*) within fatwas. Second, thematic coding was applied to categorize findings from interviews and documents that represent *wasatiyyah* values. Third, a hermeneutic-contextual analysis was utilized to interpret fatwas as "living texts" that mediate between scriptural sources and the sociological-ideological context of the organization. The combination of these methods provides a comprehensive understanding of how Islamic moderation is operationalized within the institutional structure and decision-making processes of DSWI.

The credibility of the data was ensured through source and method triangulation, member checking with key informants, and a well-documented audit trail of research procedures. Additionally, the researcher's reflexivity was maintained to safeguard scientific objectivity, despite the researcher's epistemological proximity to the Islamic institutional context under study.

Moderation in Islam

Etymologically, wasathiyyah comes from the root word al-Waṣṭ, which means something that is close together. If this word is used as a noun in a sentence, it can mean a middle position between two opposing positions. For example, if someone says *jalastu waṣṭ al dār* (I sit in the middle of the house),

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secondly, if this word is in the form of an adjective, it means the main and best choice. Third, the word *al waṣṭ* also has the meaning of *al-'adl* (just), and fourth, this word can also mean something that is between good and bad (neutral).[23]

Terminologically, it cannot be separated from its literal meaning, which is the good character in a person that can protect them from tendencies to act in an extreme manner. The word Wasathiyyah is interpreted as a method of thinking, interacting, and behaving based on the attitude of tawāzun (moderation or balance) in responding to two behavioral conditions that can be analyzed and compared, so that an attitude appropriate to the situation can be found and does not contradict the principles of Islamic teachings as well as societal traditions.[24]

Yusuf al-Qardhawi defines the word al wasathiyyah as giving or placing everything in its proper place with justice and perfection, without any distortion, excessiveness, or leniency.[25] Meanwhile, the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) defines the word Wasathiyyah according to Ibnu 'Asyur's definition, stating that Wasathiyyah is an Islamic value built on a straight and moderate way of thinking, and not excessive in anything. It is a belief that takes the middle path, meaning a belief that is neither far-left nor far-right.[26]

The concept of wasathiyyah has become a major discourse in contemporary Islamic studies, especially following the emergence of various phenomena of extremism and religious liberalism in the Islamic world.[27] Term wasathiyyah comes from the Arabic word wasath (وسط) which means 'middle,' 'balanced,' or 'just.' In the Qur'an, this word is mentioned in the verse of Allah Ta'ala: 'And thus We have made you a just community that you will be witnesses over the people and the Messenger will be a witness over you' (QS. al-Baqarah [2]:143), which conveys the meaning that Muslims are established as a ummatan wasaṭan, that is, a community that is in a middle position, just, and serves as a witness for all humanity.[28]

In the classical tafsir tradition, scholars such as al-Ṭabarī (d. 310 AH), al-Qurṭubī (d. 671 AH), and Fakhr al-Rāzī (d. 606 AH) interpreted the word wasaṭ

[23]'Alī Muḥammad Muḥammad al-Ṡalabī, *Al Waṡaṭiyyah Fi Al-Qur'ān* (Kairo: Maktabah al-Tabi'īn, 2001), p. 13.

[24]Muchlis M Hanafi, "Konsep Al-Wasathiyyah Dalam Islam," *Harmoni* 8, no. 32 (2016), p. 36–52.

[25]Yūsuf al-Qarḍāwī, *Fiqh Al-Wasaṭiyah Al-Islāmiyah Wa Al-Tajdīd Ma'ālim Wa Manārāt* (Markaz al-Qarḍāwī lil Wasaṭiyah al-Islāmiyyah wa al-Tajdīd, 2009), p. 24.

[26]N Amirah Ahmad Nawawi, et al., "Peran MUI Dalam Praktik Wasathiyyatul Islam Di Indonesia" (Yogyakarta: Q-Media, 2020), p. 11.

[27]Muhammad Yunus, "Wasathiyyah As a Prophetic Practice: A Thematic Study of Hadith on The Principles of Religious Moderation in Indonesia," *Universum* 19, no. 2 (2025), p. 1–23.

[28]Abū Bakar Jābir Al-Jazā'irī, *Aysar Al-Tafāsīr Li Kalām Al-'Alī Al-Kabīr* (Jeddah: Racem Advertising, 1990), p. 125–26.

as a symbol of al-‘adl (justice) and al-khiyār (the best choice). This interpretation emphasizes that wasathiyyah does not merely mean a moderate position, but also encompasses moral and spiritual qualities that characterize the Muslim community. This concept was further developed by Sufi and theological scholars such as al-Ghazali (d. 505 AH), who in Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din described moderation as a balance between two extremes — between ifrāṭ (excess) and tafrīṭ (negligence). In the field of ethics, he explained that virtue lies at the midpoint between two extreme traits, such as courage, which lies between cowardice and recklessness.

A similar view was expressed by Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728 AH), who emphasized that Islam is a balanced (wasaṭ) religion between two extremes, both in creed and worship. In *Majmū' al-Fatāwā*, he stated that excessiveness in religion actually contradicts the objectives of the Sharia, which guide the community toward balance, compassion, and well-being. Thus, wasathiyyah in the view of classical scholars is a universal principle that guides humans toward moral perfection (al-kamāl al-akhlāqī) and life balance (al-tawāzun al-insānī).

Entering the modern era, the concept of wasathiyyah has undergone significant revitalization through the thoughts of contemporary scholars such as Yusuf al-Qaradawi, Ahmad al-Raysuni, Muhammad Imarah, and Thariq Ramadan. In his work al-Wasathiyyah al-Islamiyyah wa al-Tajdīd (2001), al-Qaradawi asserts that wasathiyyah is the true identity of Islam, encompassing a balance between this world and the hereafter, between texts and objectives, reason and revelation, as well as the individual and society. For him, wasathiyyah is not a compromise with the truth, but a method of thinking and practicing religion that protects the community from extremism and deviation.

Wahdah Islamiyah Movement

Islamic da'wah institutions in Indonesia play a central role in disseminating Islamic values rooted in the principle of rahmatan lil 'alamin, strengthening religious identity, and fostering strong communities as the foundation of ummatic resilience. Da'wah organizations function strategically as mediators, facilitators, and motivators in enhancing both the understanding and implementation of Islamic values in everyday individual and social life. Wahdah Islamiyah is one of the Islamic mass organizations that has received formal legal recognition from the Indonesian government. At the local level, Wahdah Islamiyah is registered under the Decree of the Makassar National and Political Unity Agency (KESBANG) Number 220/1092-1/KKB/2022, and at the provincial level in South Sulawesi under Number 220/3709-1/BKK_SS. At the national level, legal recognition was granted by the Directorate of Political Institutional Relations, Directorate General of National Unity, Ministry of Home Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia in Jakarta under Number 148/D.1/IX/2002.

The establishment of an institution or organization does not occur

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instantly or spontaneously; rather, it is shaped by a variety of interrelated factors. First, political factors, such as dissatisfaction with existing governmental systems or the aspiration to advocate for the interests of particular groups. Second, social conditions at the local, national, and international levels, including social inequality, poverty, injustice, and various forms of discrimination. Third, religious factors, namely the emergence of doctrinal deviations and religious practices that depart from core Islamic teachings, as well as the desire to strengthen and purify the understanding and implementation of Islamic values.[29]

Similarly, the emergence of Wahdah Islamiyah as an Islamic mass organization that is now widely recognized in Indonesia is inseparable from its extensive da'wah and social activities. To gain a comprehensive understanding of the background of this organization's formation, the researcher delineates several developmental phases in the establishment of Wahdah Islamiyah. From the perspective of organizational theory as articulated by William G. Scott in *Organization Theory*, an analysis of the organizational evolution of Wahdah Islamiyah indicates that the organization has undergone three significant phases of formation, each characterized by distinct patterns of management and organizational dynamics. The first phase, the Crystallization of Ideas, represents a critical period for tracing the early historical development of the founders' ideas and intellectual foundations, which later shaped the central figures in the growth of the Wahdah Islamiyah movement. This phase began with the intellectual interaction between KH. Fathul Muin Dg Maggading and the founders of Wahdah Islamiyah and extended until 1985. KH. Fathul Muin Dg Maggading is widely recognized as a charismatic Islamic scholar who demonstrated a strong commitment to improving the condition of the Muslim community, particularly in the city of Makassar. His distinctive da'wah approach was marked by enthusiasm and moral courage in upholding *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar*, as reflected in his various da'wah journeys and activities.[30]

One of the significant events in the history of his da'wah was his opposition to the Lottery Gambling system (*Lotere Totalisator* or Lotto) in 1969. At that time, Lotto was legalized by the Makassar city government under the leadership of Mayor H. M. Dg Patompo, based on the rationale of generating funds for regional development needs that could not be sufficiently met by the central government due to budget deficits. Although the revenue generated from Lotto contributed tangibly to the development of urban infrastructure, its existence also gave rise to various social and religious problems within the

[29]Abdul Basit, et al., "Peran Ormas Islam Dalam Pengembangan Pendidikan Islam Di Indonesia," *AL-IBANAH* 8, no. 2 (2023), p. 77–84.

[30] Interview with Dain Yunta, First chairman of the Yayasan Fathul Mu'in, in Makassar, 2025.

community.[31] The second event, regarded as highly monumental in the intellectual journey of KH. Fathul Muin and one of the main reasons he is deeply respected by activists in Makassar, occurred during the implementation of the Single Principle of Pancasila (Asas Tunggal Pancasila) policy by the New Order government under the leadership of President Soeharto. This repressive policy required all political parties and mass organizations to adopt Pancasila as their sole ideological foundation, thereby forcing Islamic organizations to remove Islam as their organizational principle, which had long served as a core element of their identity.[32]

The policy encountered widespread opposition from various Islamic figures in Indonesia, including KH. Fathul Muin. In his sermons at the Ta'mirul Masajid Mosque, he firmly and openly expressed his rejection of the policy. Nevertheless, KH. Fathul Muin did not reject Pancasila as the foundation of the state within the context of national and civic life. His firmness and courage in responding to the various challenges faced by the Muslim community elevated KH. Fathul Muin as a central and admired figure, particularly among young activists who later became the pioneers of Wahdah Islamiyah. His critical stance toward policies perceived as detrimental to the ummah, along with his strong commitment to upholding amar ma'ruf nahi munkar, shaped a responsive and courageous da'wah character among the younger generation of his time.[33]

Following the passing of KH. Fathul Muin on September 18, 1985, the young people who had previously engaged intensively and gathered at the Ta'mirul Masajid Mosque felt a strong obligation to continue the ideals and spirit of ummatic reform bequeathed by their teacher. Based on this shared vision, they established an organization known as Fityatu Ta'mirul Masajid, which functioned as a forum for coordination, the exchange of ideas, and a means of sustaining da'wah activities and community development initiatives. On the basis of these historical facts, it can be argued that the embryonic emergence of Wahdah Islamiyah cannot be separated from the profound influence of KH. Fathul Muin, particularly in terms of his spirit of struggle, his courage in upholding the truth, and his sincerity in dedicating himself to Islam. This view is further reinforced by a statement from Muhammad Dain Yunta, one of the initiators and the first chairman of the Fathul Muin Foundation, who emphasized that their movement was inspired by the dedication and sacrifices demonstrated by KH. Fathul Muin in his da'wah activities and struggle for the

[31]Fitri Handayani and Mustari Bosra, "Legalisasi Lotto Di Makassar, 1967-1969," *Jurnal Pattingalloang* 6, no. 2 (2019), p. 35–45.

[32]Zaini Dahlan, "Kebijakan Pemerintah Orde Baru Terhadap Majelis Ta'Lim," *Jurnal Al-Fatih* 1, no. 1 (2018), p. 123–52.

[33]Interview with Agus Dwikarna, Senior Figure from the Yayasan Fathul Muin, in Makassar, 2025.

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ummah.[34]

The second phase is identity formation. This phase took place after the passing of Kiai Fathul Muin in 1985 and continued until the establishment of the foundation in 1988. It was marked by the formation of a youth group known as Fityatu Ta'mirul Masajid. The group was based at the Ta'mirul Masajid Mosque on Banda Street, which served as a center for da'wah activities as well as a medium for sustaining the transmission of ideas and the spirit of struggle inherited from Kiai Fathul Muin.The emergence of Fityatu Ta'mirul Masajid can be understood as an effort to maintain the continuity of the da'wah values pioneered by Kiai Fathul Muin, particularly his strong commitment to the reform and improvement of the Muslim community. Although the management and scope of da'wah activities continued to develop and the Ta'mirul Masajid Mosque increasingly became a hub for young activists, tensions and incompatibilities eventually arose between the mosque administrators and the youth group. These tensions were primarily caused by structural factors, as the youth movement was not formally affiliated with Muhammadiyah, the Islamic organization under whose auspices the mosque operated. This organizational misalignment led to friction at the institutional level. Anshar Amiruddin, the chairman of Fityatu Ta'mirul Masajid, noted that the group's space for movement and da'wah creativity became increasingly constrained. There were even indications that the group's existence might be dissolved by certain parties. Confronted with this situation, the young activists ultimately decided to leave the mosque and embark on a new chapter in their da'wah struggle.[35]

In Syarifuddin Jurdi's research, this phase is described as a nomadic period characterized by constant movement from one place to another. During this phase, the small group continued its community development and da'wah activities by relocating across various locations, without maintaining a permanent base as they had previously. It is undeniable that this dynamic was also shaped by the highly repressive political climate of the New Order era, which significantly restricted the space for da'wah activities and subjected them to considerable pressure.[36] Thus, the emergence of this movement was not merely a response to internal conditions, but also an adaptation to the evolving socio-political context of the period. As the movement expanded and extended its reach into schools and universities, the need for a more structured and effective organizational framework became increasingly apparent. Consequently, the establishment of a formal and well-organized institution became a necessity in order to maximize the da'wah initiatives that had

[34]Syandri Syandri, *K.H. Fathul Muin Dg. Maggading Dalam Perggolakan Dakwah Sulawesi Selatan Akhir Abad XX* (Makassar: Ar Rahmah Sukses Berkah, 2021), p. 184.

[35]Interview with Anshar Amiruddin, 2025.

[36]Irhas Fansuri Mursal and Gusmira Wita, "Transisi Orde Baru Ke Reformasi (1985-2000)," *Mukaddimah* V, no. I (2021), p. 111–22.

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previously been undertaken. In 1988, a series of deliberations took place and were marked by intense discussions; however, these were ultimately concluded through consensus with the establishment of an institution named the Fathul Muin Foundation (Yayasan Fathul Muin, YFM).[37]

The second condition underlying the emergence of this movement was political in nature, as the government at that time implemented an authoritarian system that constrained the freedoms of the Muslim community, particularly through the enforcement of the Single Principle of Pancasila (Asas Tunggal Pancasila) as the sole foundation for organizational and political life.[38] This policy was perceived not merely as an instrument of ideological standardization, but also as a form of state intervention that undermined the independence of the Muslim community in preserving its principles and the identity of its struggle. From the perspective of social movement theory—particularly McCarthy and Zald's Resource Mobilization Theory—such structural pressure exerted by the state served as a catalyst for collective responses in the form of resource consolidation, the strengthening of social networks, and the enhancement of organizational capacity, ultimately giving rise to a more structured and strategic movement..[39] In other words, repressive pressure functioned as a catalyst that strengthened internal solidarity and accelerated the process of mobilizing the Muslim community particularly young da'wah activists to establish a formal organizational platform that could serve as an instrument for da'wah struggle and the preservation of Islamic values amid the political hegemony of the state.

The third phase is organizational modernization The third phase, organizational modernization, represents a crucial stage in the evolution of an organization, during which it begins to adopt modern values, principles, systems, and technologies to enhance its effectiveness, efficiency, and competitiveness. At this stage, the organization undergoes a fundamental transformation from traditional patterns that tend to be hierarchical, rigid, and bureaucratic toward more adaptive and professional forms grounded in innovation and continuous renewal. As part of this modernization process and institutional restructuring, Wahdah Islamiyah established the Wahdah Islamiyah Education Foundation (*Yayasan Pendidikan Wahdah Islamiyah*, YPWI) as a legal entity that serves as the formal legal standing for the establishment and management of educational institutions under its auspices. Historically, YPWI

[37]Muhammad Qosim Saguni, "Wawancara Ketua Bidang I DPP Wahdah Islamiyah" (Makassar, 2024).

[38]Aditia M Yusup and Kasman Bakry, "The Dynamics Of Politics And The Positivization Of Islamic Law In Indonesia: A Historical and Constitutional Analysis," in *Proceeding of International Conference on Islam and Humanities in the Modern Era*, vol. 1, 2025, p. 57–71.

[39]John D. McCarthy and Mayer N. Zald, "Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory," *American Journal of Sociology* 82, no. 6, p. 1212–41.

was initially formed to accommodate the establishment of a higher education institution, namely the College of Islamic Studies and Arabic Language (STIBA) Makassar. Over time, YPWI evolved into the official body responsible for managing all educational units and levels that constitute an integral part of the Wahdah Islamiyah educational system.[40]

History and Functions of the Sharia Council of Wahdah Islamiyah

Historically, the Sharia Council was established simultaneously with the founding of the Wahdah Islamiyah mass organization on Monday, 2 Safar 1423 Hijri, corresponding to April 15, 2002 (Gregorian calendar). The establishment of the Sharia Council from the very inception of the organization reflects Wahdah Islamiyah's strong commitment to positioning Islamic law (*sharia*) as the primary foundation for organizational governance, policy-making, and the overall strategic direction of the organization.[41]

The Sharia Council is a supreme body within the organizational structure that holds a strategic role in ensuring that all policies, activities, and strategic directions of the organization are aligned with the principles of Islamic law. The existence of the Sharia Council functions as a normative and ethical pillar that safeguards the organization's adherence to authentic Islamic values, both at the conceptual and practical levels. In this context, the Sharia Council performs functions of scholarly review, deliberation, supervision, and the formulation of binding sharia-based policies applicable to all components of the organization.[42]

Functionally, the Sharia Council has the primary duty and responsibility to safeguard the organization from any form of sharia deviation, whether ideological, structural, or operational in nature.[43] This effort is carried out through continuous oversight of organizational dynamics, along with the provision of guidance grounded in authoritative sharia evidence and recognized principles of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*). In addition, the Sharia Council plays an active role in providing guidance, mentorship, and the transformation of Islamic values to all members of the organization, as part of the institutional implementation of *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar*.[44]

In carrying out its duties, the Sharia Council also exercises oversight over all organizational activities, including work programs and strategic policies implemented by the Central Executive Board. This oversight is manifested

[40]Interview with Iskandar Kato, Head of Education Division of DPP Wahdah Islamiyah, in Makassar, 2025.

[41]Interview with Muhammad Yusran Anshar, Chairman of the Wahdah Islamiyah Sharia Council, in Makassar, 2025.

[42]DPP Wahdah Islamiyah, "AD/ART Wahdah Islamiyah" (n.d.), p. 17.

[43]Islahuddin Ramadhan Mubarak, et, al., "Metode Istinbath Dewan Syariah Wahdah Islamiyah Dalam Menetapkan Hukum BPJS Kesehatan Mandiri," *Bustanul Fuqaha: Jurnal Bidang Hukum Islam* 1, no. 1 (2020), p. 60–78.

[44]Islamiyah, AD/ART Wahdah Islamiyah, p. 18.

through the provision of responses and considerations, both oral and written, regarding the Organization's Work Program Plan as well as the Annual Organizational Revenue and Expenditure Budget Plan (RAPBO) submitted by the Central Executive Board. As a form of institutional accountability, the Sharia Council is obligated to present an annual report at the High Deliberative Assembly (Musyawarah Tinggi), which serves as the highest forum for organizational evaluation and accountability.

In terms of authority, the Sharia Council holds the right to assess and, when necessary, revoke any organizational decisions deemed to be inconsistent with the principles of Islamic law. This authority affirms the position of the Sharia Council as the highest normative authority in matters of sharia-based organizational policy. Furthermore, the Sharia Council is empowered to provide input and advice to all organizational elements, either upon request or independently, as an expression of its moral and scholarly responsibility to safeguard the organization's overall direction.[45]

The Sharia Council is also vested with the authority to provide responses to the annual reports of the Central Executive Board and to issue fatwas related to sharia-related issues faced by the organization. The fatwas and sharia-based policies established by the Sharia Council are binding in nature and serve as official references in organizational decision-making. In addition, the Sharia Council has the authority to oversee the organization's cooperative relationships with external institutions, ensuring that all forms of partnership remain aligned with Islamic values and principles.[46]

In order to support the effective execution of its duties, the Sharia Council may establish special commissions in accordance with organizational needs. The Sharia Council thus functions not only as a normative supervisory body but also as a strategic element in safeguarding the continuity of values, sharia legitimacy, and the overall institutional integrity of the organization.

Fatwa Methodology of the Sharia Council of Wahdah Islamiyah

Based on the *Methodology of Ijtihād and Fatwā* document issued by the Sharia Council of Wahdah Islamiyah (DSWI), the process of issuing fatwas is structured through six interrelated and continuous stages. These six stages represent the internalization of the values of *wasathiyyah* (Islamic moderation) within an institutional methodological framework, such that a fatwa does not merely function as a legal ruling, but also serves as an operational instrument for implementing the values of moderation in practice.

The first stage is *taṣwīr al-mas'alah* (problem depiction), which refers to

[45]Islamiyah, p. 18.

[46]Muttazimah Muttazimah, et al., "Analisis Fatwa Dewan Syariah Wahdah Islamiyah No. D. 027/QR/DSR-WI/VII/1435 Tentang Kegiatan Dakwah Muslimah Di Malam Hari," *BUSTANUL FUQAHA: Jurnal Bidang Hukum Islam* 5, no. 3 (2024), p. 580–600.

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an effort to comprehensively understand the social, political, and cultural realities underlying the emergence of a legal issue. At this stage, the principle of *murā'āt al-wāqi'* (consideration of context) is applied, based on the assumption that Sharīʿah rulings cannot be separated from the empirical conditions of society. Adequate contextual understanding thus becomes a crucial foundation to ensure that the resulting fatwa is not abstract, merely normative, or irrelevant to the needs of the Muslim community.

The second stage is *baḥts wa taḥlīl* (analysis of evidences and legal reasoning), which focuses on examining the primary sources of Islamic law, including the Qur'an, the Sunnah, *ijmāʿ*, and *qiyās*. This analysis is further complemented by considerations of *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah* and *maṣlaḥah mursalah*, in order to ensure that the fatwa is not only normatively valid, but also oriented toward the realization of public benefit (*maṣlaḥah*). At this stage, the values of *tawāzun* (balance) and *taḥqīq al-ʿaqīdah* (the preservation of orthodox belief) are manifested through a firm commitment to the principle of *tawḥīd*, while at the same time not neglecting the social and humanitarian dimensions of Islamic law.

The third stage is realized through liqā' ʿilmī (scholarly forum), which serves as an open and structured space for academic deliberation. Within this forum, legal issues are examined through the presentation of scholarly papers by members of the council as well as relevant experts, accompanied by critical discussions and methodological evaluations. This mechanism allows for differing viewpoints and constructive scholarly debate, thereby ensuring that the values of tasāmuh (intellectual tolerance) and iʿtidāl (proportionality) are concretely internalized within the fatwa-making process.[47]

The fourth stage is *ijtihād jamāʿī* (collective deliberative reasoning), which is conducted within closed meetings of the DSWI. All viewpoints that emerge during the scholarly forum are collectively reconsidered in order to arrive at a mutually agreed legal decision. This process is grounded in the principles of *shūrā* (consultation) and *musāwah* (argumentative equality), ensuring that no single individual dominates the decision-making process. Each opinion is assessed based on the strength of its evidentiary support, methodological coherence, and rational soundness of its argumentation.[48]

The fifth stage is *iqrār al-fatwā* (formal ratification of the ruling), namely the official enactment of the fatwa through a Decree (*Surat Keputusan*) signed by the leadership of the DSWI. The enacted fatwa is internally binding upon all members of Wahdah Islamiyah, yet it is not coercive toward the broader society. This characteristic reflects the value of *tawassuṭ* (the middle path), namely normative firmness within the organizational framework

[47]Tim Metodologi Fatwa, *Metodologi Ijtihad Dan Fatwa Dewan Syariah Wahdah Islamiyah* (Makassar, 2019), p. 10.

[48]Fatwa, p. 9.

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accompanied by openness in the wider social sphere.

The final stage is *iʿādat al-naẓar* (re-examination), which emphasizes that a fatwa is understood as a dynamic and contextual legal product rather than a static and closed doctrine. When social contexts change or new relevant realities emerge, the DSWI provides space for revising fatwas through renewed scholarly review. This stage represents the values of *iṣlāḥ* (reform) and *taṭawwur* (progressive adaptation), which constitute essential pillars of *wasathiyyah al-muʿāṣirah* (contemporary Islamic moderation).

Through these six stages, *wasathiyyah* is not merely articulated as a moral value or normative ethic, but is institutionalized as an epistemological and procedural structure within the internal legal system of the DSWI. This model distinguishes the DSWI from individual-centered fatwa approaches that tend to be subjective, emotional, and insufficiently attentive to social realities in a proportionate manner.

Conclusion

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that the Sharia Council of Wahdah Islamiyah has successfully transformed *wasathiyyah* from an ethical value into an operational institutional paradigm. Through a fatwa system grounded in collective ijtihad, scholarly deliberation, and methodological flexibility, the Sharia Council of Wahdah Islamiyah (DSWI) represents a model of a fatwa institution that is theologically orthodox, socially adaptive, and methodologically progressive. The main contribution of this study lies in its assertion that Islamic moderation should not be understood merely as an individual attitude or a normative discourse, but must be institutionalized within epistemological, procedural, and organizational structures. In this context, DSWI offers a model of institutionalized fatwa-making that is highly relevant to the development of fatwa studies and Islamic governance in the contemporary era.

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