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A Constitutional Perspective**

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WASATIYYAH DA'WAH AND RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN MALAYSIA: A CONSTITUTIONAL PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

This article examines the constitutional legitimacy and practical implications of Wasatiyyah da'wah – an Islamic propagation model rooted in the principle of moderation – in Malaysia's plural legal and religious context. While the Federal Constitution recognizes Islam as the religion of the Federation (Article 3(1)), it also guarantees religious freedom (Article 11), creating a legal space that necessitates careful interpretation and application. This study uses a normative legal methodology to analyze constitutional texts, statutory instruments, and judicial decisions through systematic, teleological, and contextual interpretations. The findings indicate that Wasatiyyah da'wah may function as a constitutionally compatible approach to Islamic propagation, provided it avoids coercion and adheres to legal safeguards. However, tensions arise in its implementation, especially when state-sponsored religious programs intersect with public welfare, education, and minority rights. The institutionalization of Wasatiyyah must be accompanied by transparent regulation, independent oversight, and alignment with human rights principles. By treating Wasatiyyah not merely as a theological ideal but as a constitutional strategy, the study contributes to constitutional Islamic studies and offers insights into reconciling Islamic identity with democratic pluralism. The research also opens avenues for comparative studies in other Muslim-majority societies facing similar legal and social challenges.

Keywords: Wasatiyyah; Constitutional Law; Islamic Propagation; Religious Freedom; Legal Pluralism.

A. Introduction

Malaysia is widely recognized as a pluralistic nation in Southeast Asia, characterized by its diverse ethnic, cultural, and religious composition. According to the 2020 census, Muslims constitute approximately 63% of the population, followed by Buddhists (18.7%), Christians (9.1%), and others—including Confucians, Taoists, Sikhs, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Baha'is—at 9% (Hassan, 2016; Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2021). This demographic reality reflects a complex interplay between religion, ethnicity, and national identity, especially in states like Sabah and Sarawak, where religious diversity is particularly prominent (Harding, 2012; Shah & Sani, 2011).

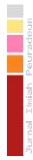
Malaysia's constitutional framework embodies this pluralism through a dual commitment: upholding Islam as the religion of the Federation under Article 3(1) while simultaneously guaranteeing religious freedom under Article 11. These provisions create a dynamic yet fragile legal equilibrium wherein the state asserts Islamic identity while safeguarding the rights of non-Muslims. Within this context, the doctrine of *Wasatiyyah*—derived from the Qur'anic concept of *ummatan wasatan* (Qur'an 2:143)—has emerged as a core national philosophy for religious engagement. Institutionalized through state programs such as the National Wasatiyyah Policy and the Wasatiyyah Institute Malaysia, it has become central to state-sponsored *da'wah* strategies (Abdullah et al., 2016; Al-Attas, 2015; Muir et al., 2022).

Wasatiyyah has since been operationalized as a normative foundation for Islamic propagation by organizations such as PERKIM, MRM, and YADIM (Handoko et al., 2024; Wagiman, 2019). These efforts emphasize non-coercive, ethical engagement. However, criticisms persist, especially regarding the top-down nature of state-promoted *da'wah*. In East Malaysia, where religious minorities are significant, *Wasatiyyah* initiatives are often viewed with suspicion. Incidents involving Islamic literature being distributed to non-Muslim schoolchildren, *da'wah* programs linked to welfare services, and inconsistent regulations have raised questions about whether *Wasatiyyah* truly safeguards interfaith neutrality (State, 2022; Zaporozhchenko et al., 2023).

Legal scholars and minority rights advocates have raised concerns about the constitutional implications of such policies. Although framed around moderation, *Wasatiyyah* may facilitate what is termed “soft coercion” –pressuring non-Muslims through indirect means. These critiques underscore tensions between the state’s Islamic character and its constitutional obligation to uphold religious liberty (Othman & Sulaiman, 2014; Balynska et al., 2024). Such concerns resonate with broader academic debates on the balance between religious propagation and minority protection, especially in hybrid legal systems where civil and religious laws operate in tandem (Pranoto & Gaussyah, 2024; Kartono et al., 2024).

In academic discourse, *da'wah* in plural societies is often discussed through theological, sociocultural, and political lenses. Scholars like Ghozali and Aula (2022), Mohamad et al., (2023), and Alkhotob et al., (2023) have provided valuable insights into the spiritual, cultural, and social implications of Islamic propagation. Nonetheless, these studies tend to overlook the legal-constitutional dimension. Specifically, little attention has been paid to how *Wasatiyyah da'wah* aligns with Malaysia’s constitutional order and legal norms. This gap is particularly critical in a dual-legal system where Islamic and civil law coexists and frequently intersects (Zhanabergenova & Kairbekov, 2024).

Moreover, most analyses treat *Wasatiyyah* as an ideal concept or policy rhetoric rather than a subject of legal inquiry. This tendency reflects a broader gap in legal scholarship, where normative religious values are rarely scrutinized through rigorous legal reasoning (Muchimah et al., 2024; Asyiqin et al., 2024). Literature often fails to address how the doctrine is institutionalized through enactments, judicial decisions, or regulatory frameworks, which is essential for understanding how *Wasatiyyah* operates within the legal system (Ardhanariswari et al., 2023). An integrated legal analysis is crucial to determine whether the implementation of *Wasatiyyah* respects constitutional limits and the rights of religious minorities, especially in contexts where legal culture and administrative discretion influence normative application (Maskur et al., 2024).



To support such legal analysis, a deeper understanding of the interpretive foundations of Islamic doctrines is necessary. Recent scholarship on Islamic governance increasingly emphasizes the need for contextualized interpretation of sacred texts. Dhulkifli (2023), for example, highlights the importance of understanding tafsir as products of socio-historical context and rational traditions, which is essential when doctrines like *Wasatiyyah* are embedded in legal structures. Likewise, Muhammad and Rahman (2022) compare Abdullah Saeed and Farid Esack's views on minority rights in Islam, concluding that effective engagement requires more than normative ethics—legal accountability and structural sensitivity.

Additionally, the strategic dimension of *Wasatiyyah* can be compared with broader efforts to integrate Qur'anic values into public life. Fatchiatuzahro et al., (2024) discuss the concept of "edutainment" in Qur'an publishing, where learning and ethical principles are embedded in accessible media. This suggests that Islamic propagation in plural societies must innovate pedagogically and legally. Similarly, Tottoli (2023) examines how the Qur'an is interpreted in non-Muslim contexts in Europe, reminding us of that scriptural narratives and *da'wah* practices are never ideologically neutral—broader power relations and institutional constraints shape them.

Thus, it is essential to move beyond descriptive praise or critique of *Wasatiyyah* and assess its institutional reality. This includes evaluating its legal validity, impact on non-Muslim autonomy, and alignment with Malaysia's constitutional obligations and international human rights norms. Such analysis requires a normative legal methodology incorporating systematic, teleological, and contextual interpretation of constitutional texts.

Engagement with landmark judicial decisions, such as *Lina Joy v. Majlis Agama Islam Wilayah Persekutuan* and *Indira Gandhi v. Director of Islamic Affairs Perak*, is indispensable. These cases illuminate how Malaysia's courts interpret the scope of religious freedom, conversion rights, and the jurisdictional reach of Syariah courts. By incorporating doctrinal methods, this article grounds *Wasatiyyah* in ethical theory and legal practice.

This article thus seeks to fill a critical gap in the literature by offering a normative constitutional analysis of *Wasatiyyah*-based *da'wah*. It asks: Is *Wasatiyyah*, as promoted by the state, compatible with Articles 3(1) and 11 of the Federal Constitution? Can it be implemented in ways that affirm pluralism and avoid coercion? And can Malaysia's model inform other Muslim-majority democracies that grapple with similar tensions between Islamic identity and constitutionalism?

To answer these questions, the study applies a qualitative, document-based methodology rooted in normative legal analysis. Primary sources include the Federal Constitution of Malaysia (2020 consolidated version), statutory enactments, and major court rulings. These are analyzed using doctrinal methods such as systematic interpretation (assessing internal consistency), teleological interpretation (understanding the objectives behind legal provisions), and contextual interpretation (situating legal texts within socio-political realities). Supplementary materials include institutional reports, fatwas, and academic literature (Faruqi, 2008, 2022).

The novelty of this research lies in its synthesis of Islamic normative ethics and constitutional law. Rather than treating *Wasatiyyah* as a theological abstraction or bureaucratic slogan, the article frames it as a legal construct subject to constitutional scrutiny. It argues that to be effective and just, *Wasatiyyah* must be grounded in a rights-respecting legal framework that ensures transparency, limits state discretion, and safeguards minority liberties.

This study aims to contribute to constitutional Islamic studies by highlighting the legal dimensions of state-led *da'wah*. It positions Malaysia as a test case for how Islamic values can be incorporated into democratic governance without eroding pluralism. By bridging the gap between *da'wah* discourse and constitutional jurisprudence, the article offers a roadmap for evaluating religious policies in multicultural and legally complex societies.

B. Method

This study adopts a qualitative research approach grounded in the normative legal method, which is particularly appropriate for assessing the constitutional legitimacy of state-led religious initiatives such as *Wasatiyyah*



da'wah. Rather than relying on empirical fieldwork, this method focuses on interpreting legal texts, doctrines, and statutory frameworks to evaluate their alignment with constitutional guarantees and Islamic ethical principles (Hutchinson, 2012; Salim, 2017).

The data were derived entirely from documentary sources, both primary and secondary. Primary materials include the *Federal Constitution of Malaysia* (2020 consolidated version), landmark judicial decisions—such as *Lina Joy v. Majlis Agama Islam Wilayah Persekutuan* [2007] and *Indira Gandhi v. Director of Islamic Affairs Perak* [2018]—as well as key legislation like the *Selangor Non-Islamic Religions (Control of Propagation Among Muslims) Enactment 1988* (Azhar et al., 2013; Faruqi, 2020). These were accessed through official legal databases, including CLJLaw and the Attorney General's Chambers.

To examine the institutionalization of Wasatiyyah, the study also draws on policy documents and reports, notably the 2022 *International Religious Freedom Report – Malaysia* and YADIM's 2023 *Annual Report* (Y. D. I. Malaysia, 2023). These assess how moderation-based *da'wah* is promoted by state-linked bodies and how such efforts intersect with constitutional rights.

In addition, secondary sources—including scholarly articles, fatwas, and books—were reviewed to support the analysis (Abdullah, 2023; Alkhotob et al., 2023; Kamali, 2015). A total of 53 documents were selected for their relevance to the intersection of *da'wah*, law, and religious pluralism.

To interpret the data, the study applies four normative techniques. *First*, systematic interpretation assesses the coherence between Article 3(1), which affirms Islam as the religion of the Federation, and Article 11, which guarantees religious freedom (Faruqi, 2008). This is illustrated in the Results by analyzing court rulings like *Che Omar* and *Lina Joy*. *Second*, teleological interpretation explores legal provisions' ethical purposes (*maqasid*), such as balancing public morality and minority rights (Kamali, 2010). *Third*, contextual interpretation considers Malaysia's sociopolitical landscape, especially in regions like Sabah and Sarawak, where Wasatiyyah programs have provoked interfaith concerns (Rohman, 2020). *Fourth*, thematic content analysis groups document under categories like constitutional legitimacy, soft coercion, and religious moderation (Othman & Sulaiman, 2014).

To ensure validity and depth, the study uses source triangulation to verify data across legal, institutional, and academic texts, and theoretical triangulation by combining Islamic concepts—*hikmah*, *rahmah*, *tasamuh*, and *i'tidal*—with constitutional interpretation (Kamali, 2003). These tools support the discussion of how Wasatiyyah functions in practice, as elaborated in the next section, where legal texts and policies are assessed for their actual compatibility with pluralism and religious autonomy.

C. Results and Discussion

This section presents and analyzes the key findings of the study concerning the constitutional legitimacy and operational dynamics of Wasatiyyah da'wah in Malaysia. Consistent with the normative legal methodology, the results are derived through systematic, teleological, and contextual interpretations of primary legal sources, including the Federal Constitution, relevant judicial decisions, and statutory enactments. These findings are subsequently examined concerning established legal theories, *da'wah* scholarship, and broader religious pluralism and constitutionalism discourses.

1. Results

a. Constitutional foundation of Wasatiyyah Da'wah

Malaysia's constitutional arrangement presents a duality that both acknowledges Islam as the religion of the Federation (Article 3(1)) and guarantees religious freedom for all citizens (Article 11). This dual structure directly impacts how Islamic propagation is understood and implemented under the *Wasatiyyah* model. While Article 3(1) has often been interpreted as declaratory rather than enforceable, the landmark case *Che Omar bin Che Soh v. Public Prosecutor* [1988] 2 MLJ 55 clarified that Islam's constitutional status does not override secular principles unless explicitly stated. Nevertheless, the symbolic power of Article 3(1) legitimizes state-sponsored religious initiatives, particularly those promoting values perceived as universal, such as moderation.



Conversely, Article 11(1) provides individuals the right to profess and practice their religion, while Article 11(4) allows state legislatures to enact laws restricting the propagation of non-Islamic doctrines among Muslims. This juxtaposition reveals an intentional balancing act: the state may promote Islamic values but must not infringe upon the rights of others to maintain and practice their faith. In this context, *Wasatiyyah*—derived from Qur'an 2:143 as a concept of moderation and balance—has been adopted as a constitutional strategy that ostensibly harmonizes propagation with pluralism. The application of systematic interpretation reveals that *Wasatiyyah* is conceptually positioned as a bridge between religious propagation and constitutional liberty.

b. Judicial developments and legal precedents

The tension between Islamic propagation and religious freedom has been the subject of significant judicial scrutiny. In *Lina Joy v. Majlis Agama Islam Wilayah Persekutuan* [2007] 4 MLJ 585, the Federal Court held that the Syariah Court must determine religious status and conversion matters. This ruling affirmed the primacy of Islamic institutions in matters of faith but simultaneously raised concerns about access to legal remedies for individuals attempting to leave Islam. Similarly, in *Indira Gandhi v. Director of Islamic Affairs Perak* [2018] 1 MLJ 545, the apex court ruled that the conversion of minors to Islam without parental consent violated constitutional protections.

These cases demonstrate how the judiciary has struggled reconciling constitutional guarantees with religious authority. *Wasatiyyah*-based *da'wah*, though ostensibly promoting moderation, operates within this contested legal terrain. Through doctrinal interpretation, it becomes evident that unless *da'wah* initiatives explicitly align with constitutional jurisprudence, they risk falling into legal grey zones—especially when targeting vulnerable or marginalized communities.

c. Legislative frameworks at the state level

Malaysia's federal structure allows state governments to enact laws pertaining to Islam. The Selangor Non-Islamic Religions (Control of

Propagation among Muslims) Enactment 1988 is one such law, empowering authorities to prevent non-Muslims from preaching to Muslims. Similar enactments exist in other states, including Kelantan, Terengganu, and Johor. However, the enforcement of these laws is often inconsistent and lacks standardized procedural safeguards.

In evaluating these laws through contextual legal analysis, the propagation of Islamic teachings through *Wasatiyyah* operates with relative impunity, while non-Islamic propagation is stringently regulated. This asymmetry has constitutional implications. It illustrates how state institutions interpret and enforce religious boundaries in ways that may privilege Islam at the expense of interfaith equity. Despite *Wasatiyyah's* purported moderation, its deployment within this uneven legal landscape suggests an inherent bias favoring Islamic dominance in the public sphere.

d. State-sponsored institutionalization of *Wasatiyyah*

According to YADIM's 2023 Annual Report, more than 2,000 *da'wah*-related programs were conducted nationwide under the *Wasatiyyah* framework. These included educational seminars, welfare-linked activities, youth outreach, and interfaith dialogues. Program content emphasized ethical communication (*hikmah*), compassion (*rahmah*), and contextual sensitivity (*ta'sīr al-waqi'*). Institutionalization is further evidenced by integrating *Wasatiyyah* modules into the National Islamic Training Curriculum and the civil service.

However, independent evaluations suggest that implementation practices vary widely between Peninsular Malaysia and East Malaysia. While the former often benefit from more structured and culturally nuanced programming, the latter experiences inconsistent or intrusive *da'wah* activities, including unsolicited religious materials distributed in schools and rural welfare-linked conversions. These variations indicate a need for greater regulatory oversight and policy standardization. When analyzed through thematic content-coding, institutional documents show a lack of robust monitoring mechanisms to ensure compliance with Article 11's safeguards.

e. Societal impacts in East Malaysia: Case reflections

The states of Sabah and Sarawak, which are home to large non-Muslim populations, have reported several controversial incidents tied to state-endorsed *da'wah*. For example, in 2022, Christian community leaders in Sabah lodged formal complaints following reports that Islamic literature was being distributed to non-Muslim students under the guise of general moral education. In Sarawak, religious NGOs documented cases where welfare distribution was tied to participation in Muslim religious events. While these activities were officially categorized as 'community service, testimonies collected in civil society reports and legal commentaries suggest a perceived link between aid and religious affiliation.

The U.S. Department of State's 2022 International Religious Freedom Report corroborated these findings, highlighting that *da'wah* initiatives were often seen as intrusive, especially in indigenous-majority districts. This undermines the constitutional principle that religion may be practiced "in peace and harmony", as stated in Article 3(1), and intensifies distrust among minority communities toward Islamic institutions. Legal analysis confirms that such practices, even if well-intentioned, breach the threshold of non-coercion enshrined in international legal norms such as the ICCPR, to which Malaysia is not a signatory but often benchmarks its policy.

f. Normative-theological justifications and legal boundaries

The normative framework of *Wasatiyyah da'wah* relies heavily on ethical principles derived from Qur'anic values such as balance (*wasat*), tolerance (*tasāmuḥ*), and wisdom (*ḥikmah*). These values are frequently cited in program literature and institutional mandates. However, theological pluralism in Qur'anic interpretation—especially among minority Muslim scholars—presents a spectrum of views on religious engagement. According to Dhulkifli (2023), the diversity of tafsir traditions reveals that concepts such as *wasat* are often subject to selective interpretation, particularly in state contexts. Similarly, Muhammad and Rahman (2022) argue that Muslim minority scholars like Esack and Saeed advocate for a

more dialogical approach that centers on justice and freedom, challenging statist interpretations of moderation.

These scholarly views question the authenticity of state-sponsored moderation, especially when it functions as a legitimating discourse for religious control. Moreover, the political use of Qur'anic principles without incorporating dissenting theological traditions risks transforming a spiritual ethic into a policy enforcement tool.

g. Regulatory ambiguities and lack of oversight

Despite the wide adoption of *Wasatiyyah* in state religious affairs, no unified regulatory framework exists to govern its application. Oversight is limited to internal monitoring within *da'wah* institutions, and judicial review is rarely invoked unless complaints escalate to the civil courts. Inconsistencies between state enactments, administrative circulars, and implementation practices create a fragmented legal environment.

For example, while Selangor mandates Islamic *da'wah* to follow ethical guidelines, Kelantan's regulations allow for more assertive propagation styles. This disparity produces legal uncertainty for both practitioners and recipients of *da'wah*. When viewed through teleological interpretation, such ambiguities undermine the constitutional intent to maintain peace and harmony in religious practice. Kamali (2015) argues that moderation must be anchored in enforceable norms, not rhetorical policy frameworks. Without clear legal benchmarks, *Wasatiyyah* risks being reduced to a symbolic slogan rather than a constitutional doctrine.

h. Integration of legal and Islamic norms

This study's most significant analytical outcome is the ability to conceptually integrate *Wasatiyyah* into Malaysia's dual legal framework through normative constitutionalism. By aligning Islamic ethical values such as *ḥikmah*, *i'tidāl*, and *raḥmah* with Articles 3(1) and 11, it becomes possible to create a jurisprudence of moderation that is both religiously authentic and legally binding. However, this integration requires a



comprehensive methodology incorporating systematic, teleological, and contextual interpretations alongside doctrinal sources.

Recent literature has called for such a synthesis. Tottoli (2023) emphasizes the European experience in reconciling Qur'anic ethics with secular legal orders, while Fatchiatuzahro et al., (2024) advocate for merging educational theory with religious propagation to produce more dialogical forms of Islamic communication. These contributions suggest that *Wasatiyyah* can be meaningfully embedded into legal systems when interpreted through pluralistic and interdisciplinary lenses.

2. Discussion

The findings of this study reaffirm the complex legal status of *Wasatiyyah da'wah* in Malaysia as a phenomenon situated at the intersection of Islamic ethics, constitutional law, and state policy. From a normative legal analysis perspective, this intersection reveals the normative aspirations of religious moderation and the pragmatic challenges of safeguarding religious freedom in a dual legal system. The *Wasatiyyah* doctrine, rooted in Qur'an 2:143 and operationalized through state institutions such as YADIM, has evolved from a theological ethos into a semi-legal policy framework. However, its constitutional viability must be assessed not only in terms of its stated moderation but also through its consistency with the rule of law, proportionality, and the principle of non-coercion (Balynska et al., 2024).

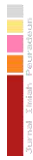
From a constitutional interpretation standpoint, the study confirms that Article 3(1) of the Federal Constitution, which acknowledges Islam as the religion of the Federation, does not confer absolute authority for state-sponsored religious propagation. The provision must be read harmoniously with Article 11, particularly subclauses 11(1) and 11(4), which guarantee freedom of religion and allow states to regulate the propagation of other religions to Muslims. The *Wasatiyyah* approach, when assessed through systematic and teleological interpretation, may indeed serve as a bridge between Malaysia's Islamic identity and its pluralistic legal commitments.

However, the effectiveness of this bridge is conditional upon the legal clarity and institutional safeguards surrounding its implementation (Faruqi, 2020; Kamali, 2010; Zaporozhchenko et al., 2023).

In this regard, the study's use of doctrinal legal methods, including the analysis of landmark cases such as *Lina Joy v. Majlis Agama Islam Wilayah Persekutuan* and *Indira Gandhi v. Director of Islamic Affairs Perak*, illustrates the tensions between personal religious autonomy and institutional religious authority. These cases highlight how Islamic propagation, even when framed under the banner of *Wasatiyyah*, must be constitutionally scrutinized to ensure that it does not devolve into legal coercion or procedural discrimination. Legrand (2017) states that legal pluralism can only thrive when distinct legal traditions are subjected to the same constitutional scrutiny, a standard that remains inconsistently applied in Malaysia (Pranoto & Gaussyah, 2024).

The analysis of state-level enactments, such as the Selangor Enactment 1988, reveals how regulatory frameworks can legitimize state interference in religious choice under the guise of maintaining Islamic orthodoxy. While constitutionally permitted under Article 11(4), these legal instruments must not be interpreted as a *carte blanche* for invasive propagation policies. Recent empirical data from the 2022 Religious Freedom Report indicates that *minority communities perceive da'wah efforts linked to welfare programs and educational systems as indirect coercion* (U.S. Department of State, 2022). This is particularly pronounced in East Malaysia, where Christians, animists, and adherents of indigenous belief systems constitute significant portions of the population and maintain distinct religious worldviews (Adnan & Rahman, 2023; Syarif & Khamim, 2025).

The normative concern here is not merely theological but legal and ethical: Can a state-sponsored Islamic narrative, even one based on *Wasatiyyah*, be deployed in ways that indirectly pressure or marginalize non-Muslim citizens? As An-Na'im (2008) argues, the instrumentalization of religious values by the state—particularly when linked to resource distribution—risks converting ethical precepts into tools of soft domination.



This concern is also reflected in the work of Tottoli (2023), who demonstrates that religious translation and moderation strategies in plural societies require both hermeneutical sensitivity and institutional neutrality to avoid undermining interfaith relations. In similar contexts, customary norms have also shown how socio-religious values can shift from communal solidarity to transactional enforcement (Susanti et al., 2025).

Another pressing issue raised in this study is the absence of robust institutional oversight in the implementation of *Wasatiyyah da'wah*. While the 2023 Annual Report by YADIM showcases over 2,000 *da'wah* programs promoting ethical moderation, it remains unclear how these programs are monitored for compliance with constitutional standards or evaluated for their impact on minority rights. This absence of evaluative transparency creates an accountability vacuum that may inadvertently permit abuse or overreach, particularly in decentralized governance contexts (Firmandayu & Elfaki, 2023; Alfariasi et al., 2025). Therefore, institutional safeguards such as independent review boards, interfaith consultative councils, and judicial oversight must be considered essential in ensuring the integrity of religious outreach under a constitutional framework.

From a theoretical standpoint, the Malaysian experience contributes to the emerging discipline of constitutional Islamic studies, which examines the embedding of Islamic norms within secular legal frameworks. As Kamali (2015) and Alwi et al., (2024) articulated, Islamic moderation—*Wasatiyyah*—must be grounded in ethical authenticity and constitutional fidelity. The mere invocation of moderation is insufficient; it must be operationalized through rule-of-law mechanisms capable of safeguarding rights and adjudicating conflicts fairly (Zaporozhchenko et al., 2023). This is especially relevant in multicultural societies where religious sensitivity intersects with constitutional entitlements.

The broader socio-political implications of this study also echo Zhanabergenova and Kairbekov's (2024) findings on Islamic institutional development in Kazakhstan, where religious authority is often caught between state alignment and societal legitimacy. While unique in its dual-

legal structure, the Malaysian context presents similar tensions. As such, the *Wasatiyyah* model may serve as a test case for the viability of constitutionalized Islamic propagation in other Muslim-majority democracies, particularly those grappling with pluralistic demands and identity politics (Balynska et al., 2024).

Moreover, the epistemic gap between ethical ideals and legal execution is evident in the divergence between *Wasatiyyah's* Qur'anic foundations and its administrative deployment. While the Qur'an emphasizes wisdom (*hikmah*), compassion (*rahmah*), and gradualism in conveying religious truths, these values can be diluted when filtered through bureaucratic or political institutions. As Fatchiatuzahro et al., (2024) note, even the integration of educational principles into religious publishing must strike a balance between didactic clarity and spiritual inclusivity—a balance that is equally necessary in state-sanctioned *da'wah* (Syarif & Khamim, 2025).

The study also resonates with Dhulkifli's (2023) critique of *tafsir* traditions that overlook diverse interpretive traditions. In the case of *Wasatiyyah*, the danger lies in its reification into a monolithic doctrine that marginalizes alternative expressions of Islamic thought or other faith traditions. Similarly, Muhammad and Rahman (2022) argue that minority Muslim perspectives often highlight the need for dialogical, not prescriptive, approaches in religious engagement—an insight that should inform *Wasatiyyah* policy in Malaysia (Susanti et al., 2025).

Finally, the global implications of this research are significant. The Malaysian experience demonstrates the promise and pitfalls of integrating religious ethics into constitutional governance. In an era marked by rising religious nationalism and interfaith tensions, *Wasatiyyah* offers a potential model for reconciling Islamic identity with democratic pluralism. However, its success hinges on three critical conditions: (1) normative clarity in defining moderation, (2) legal infrastructure that ensures procedural justice, and (3) political will to uphold minority rights (Zaporozhchenko et al., 2023).

As Muslim-majority democracies like Indonesia, Tunisia, and Turkey continue to navigate the balance between religious authenticity and



democratic norms, Malaysia's attempt to constitutionalize Islamic moderation offers valuable lessons—both cautionary and constructive. For instance, in Indonesia, the role of *dakwah* movements such as Tarbiyah and Hizbut Tahrir has similarly raised questions about the boundary between religious outreach and political mobilization (Alwi et al., 2024). Therefore, a comparative lens grounded in constitutional legal analysis may help develop universally applicable frameworks for ethically and legally sound Islamic propagation (Pranoto & Gaussyah, 2024).

In conclusion, this discussion illustrates that *Wasatiyyah da'wah*, while normatively aligned with constitutional values, demands stronger legal foundations, transparent procedures, and constant judicial and institutional oversight to function as a truly inclusive approach. Malaysia's experience, though context-specific, can serve as a reference point for other nations seeking to embed religious values within secular or hybrid legal systems without compromising democratic integrity or religious pluralism.

D. Conclusion

This study has explored the constitutional foundations and socio-legal dynamics of *Wasatiyyah da'wah* as practiced in Malaysia, positioning it as a unique model of moderated Islamic propagation within a pluralistic and multi-religious constitutional framework. Through normative legal analysis, it has been demonstrated that while *Wasatiyyah* is rooted in ethical moderation and promoted to foster interfaith harmony, its legitimacy depends on how faithfully it adheres to the constitutional guarantees of religious freedom and the principle of non-coercion. The interplay between Articles 3(1) and 11 of the Federal Constitution illustrates the legal balancing act between the affirmation of Islam as the religion of the Federation and the preservation of religious liberties for all citizens.

The research highlights that *Wasatiyyah da'wah* must be evaluated not only in terms of theological virtue but also through a legal lens that ensures institutional transparency, procedural accountability, and respect for minority rights. In practice, this requires a clear separation between

religious propagation and state coercion, especially in regions marked by complex religious demography. Legal safeguards must be embedded within propagation frameworks to avoid the instrumentalization of religion for political or social leverage.

Conceptually, the study contributes to the growing field of constitutional Islamic studies by demonstrating how Islamic ethical values can be integrated into modern legal governance without compromising fundamental rights. Treating *Wasatiyyah* as a constitutional tool rather than a mere policy discourse adds depth to legal theory and *da'wah* studies, offering Malaysia as a compelling case study for other Muslim-majority democracies navigating similar tensions.

Practically, this study calls for enhancing existing frameworks governing state-sponsored religious outreach. Independent oversight bodies, legal harmonization between Syariah and civil jurisdictions, and public education on religious rights are essential components to ensure that promoting moderation translates into inclusive and democratic religious governance. The institutionalization of *Wasatiyyah* must go beyond slogans and be grounded in enforceable legal norms that uphold pluralism.

Finally, this research opens avenues for further inquiry, especially in comparative legal contexts. Exploring how moderated Islamic values are implemented in other constitutional settings could enrich global conversations on religion, law, and democracy. Field-based studies incorporating community perceptions, judicial behavior, and administrative practices would also validate normative claims empirically. In an increasingly polarized world, the search for legally grounded, ethically moderate religious engagement models remains urgent and globally significant.

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