

Islamic Self-Moderation as a Spiritual Remedy for Fear of Missing Out in the Digital Age

Mustafiyanti Mustafiyanti¹, Zainuddin Zainuddin², Ulfa Hoyriah³, Saskia Pungki⁴, Nurdiana Sari⁵,
Muhammad Latif Nawawi⁶

^{1,2,3,4}Institut Agama Islam Al-Qur'an Al-Ittifaqiah Indralaya, ^{5,6}STIT Bustanul Ulum Lampung Tengah,
Corresponding Author: Zainuddin Zainuddin, E-mail: zainuddin@iaiqi.ac.id

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ABSTRAK

The development of digital technology has brought significant changes to the way humans interact, communicate, and access information. However, this advancement has also created new psychological challenges, such as the Fear of Missing Out a sense of anxiety arising from the fear of being left behind from others' experiences. This phenomenon negatively affects mental health, social relationships, and spiritual balance. This article aims to analyze the concept of self-moderation in Islam as a spiritual solution to the Fear of Missing Out in the digital era. Using a qualitative phenomenological approach, this study examines relevant Qur'anic verses and Hadiths, interpreting Islamic principles applicable to managing digital behavior. The findings indicate that values such as *qana'ah* (contentment), *tawakkal* (trust in God), and life balance form a spiritual foundation that helps individuals use social media proportionally. By practicing self-moderation, Muslims can avoid social anxiety and maintain harmony between worldly and spiritual needs

Keywords: Self-Moderation, Fear of Missing Out, Wasathiyah, the Digital Era

ABSTRACT

Perkembangan teknologi digital telah membawa perubahan signifikan pada cara manusia berinteraksi, berkomunikasi, dan mengakses informasi. Namun, kemajuan ini juga menciptakan tantangan psikologis baru, seperti Fear of Missing Out (FOM), yaitu rasa cemas yang muncul karena takut ketinggalan pengalaman orang lain. Fenomena ini berdampak negatif pada kesehatan mental, hubungan sosial, dan keseimbangan spiritual. Artikel ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis konsep pengendalian diri dalam Islam sebagai solusi spiritual terhadap FOM di era digital. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan fenomenologi kualitatif, studi ini meneliti ayat-ayat Al-Qur'an dan Hadits yang relevan, serta menafsirkan prinsip-prinsip Islam yang berlaku untuk mengelola perilaku digital. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa nilai-nilai seperti qana'ah (kepuasan), tawakkal (kepercayaan kepada Tuhan), dan keseimbangan hidup membentuk fondasi spiritual yang membantu individu menggunakan media sosial secara proporsional. Dengan mempraktikkan pengendalian diri, umat Islam dapat menghindari kecemasan sosial dan menjaga harmoni antara kebutuhan duniawi dan spiritual.

Kata kunci: Pengendalian Diri, FOM, Wasathiyah, Era Digita

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INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of digital technology and social media has significantly transformed the way humans interact, communicate, and access information. While instant access to various sources of information has made human connection easier, it has also created new forms of social pressure. One of the emerging psychological phenomena resulting from this development is the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) a feeling of anxiety about being left out of experiences or information enjoyed by others

(Przybylski et al., 2013). This condition often leads to anxiety, self-dissatisfaction, and compulsive behavior in social media use (Al Maghaireh et al., 2025). The phenomenon is particularly prevalent among younger generations who are highly active in the digital world, posing potential disruptions to both psychological and social balance (Dhir et al., 2018).

The Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) phenomenon is not merely a form of ordinary social anxiety; it is closely associated with an increasing dependence on social media. Research conducted by Przybylski and Weinstein reveals that FOMO plays a crucial role in shaping addictive behaviors toward digital media, as individuals feel compelled to constantly check their phones or social media platforms to avoid the feeling of being left behind (Przybylski & Weinstein, 2013). Another longitudinal study published in the *International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction* also found that FOMO and the intensity of social media use mutually reinforce each other over time (Brailovskaia & Margraf, 2024). The consequences of this condition extend beyond emotional disturbances such as anxiety and stress; it also contributes to decreased productivity, poor sleep quality, and weakened interpersonal relationships in real-life settings (Beyens et al., 2016).

In the context of Muslim society, the challenge of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) carries a more complex spiritual dimension. Uncontrolled use of social media can foster consumptive behavior, tendencies toward self-display (*riya'*), and habitual self-comparison with others. These behaviors contradict core Islamic values such as *qana'ah* (contentment) and *tawakkal* (trustful reliance on God). This phenomenon underscores the need to integrate Islamic spiritual principles into the management of digital behavior. In this regard, the concept of *wasathiyah* (moderation) serves as a crucial paradigm for restoring balance in the lives of Muslims amidst the rapid currents of digitalization (Inayati et al., 2025).

The concept of moderation in Islam has long been a focal point for both classical scholars and contemporary researchers. Islam emphasizes the importance of maintaining balance in worship, social interactions, and the use of technology. In the modern context, *wasathiyah* (moderation) not only refers to taking the middle path in religious matters but also encompasses self-control in responding to rapid social changes (Sirajuddin, 2020). A study published in the *Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization* affirms that Islamic moderation is a universal principle that can be applied to address moral and psychological crises in the digital era. Accordingly, strengthening the value of self-moderation becomes highly relevant in shaping ethical and healthy digital behavior.

Based on this background, the present study aims to conduct an in-depth analysis of how the values of self-moderation in Islam can serve as a solution to the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) in the digital era. The study primarily focuses on: (1) identifying the factors that trigger FOMO in social media use; (2) exploring Islamic values relevant to fostering self-moderation; and (3) formulating practical strategies for applying the principles of self-moderation among Muslim communities. This study is expected to provide a conceptual contribution to the literature in Islamic studies and modern psychology,

while also offering a spiritual approach to mitigating the negative impacts of digital technology on human life.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a phenomenological design, aiming to gain an in-depth understanding of individuals' subjective experiences in dealing with the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) and how Islamic self-moderation values are applied as spiritual and psychological strategies in managing digital behavior. The phenomenological approach is considered appropriate because it focuses on exploring the meaning of lived experiences from the participants' own perspectives, rather than testing hypotheses or making quantitative generalizations (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

According to Moustakas (1994), phenomenology seeks to reveal the essence of human experiences by suspending the researcher's assumptions (*epoché*) to understand the pure meaning of participants' consciousness. In the context of this study, the phenomenological approach is employed to uncover the spiritual, psychological, and social meanings experienced by Muslim individuals when facing digital anxiety manifested as FOMO. This approach allows the researcher to explore the relationships between online behavior, psychological conditions, and religious values that serve as the foundation for self-regulation.

The research data were obtained from two main sources: primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews with seven informants selected purposively based on specific criteria: (1) active social media users for at least two years, (2) having experienced FOMO symptoms, such as anxiety when not connected online, and (3) possessing sufficient Islamic background to understand the concept of self-moderation *wasathiyah*. The interviews were conducted both in-person and online, with an average duration of 45–60 minutes per session. All conversations were recorded (with the informants' consent) and transcribed for qualitative analysis.

In addition, secondary data were obtained through a literature review, including Qur'anic verses, Hadiths, classical and contemporary exegeses, as well as scholarly research from reputable journals addressing FOMO, psychological well-being, and the concept of moderation in Islam. Key references include digital psychology studies by Przybylski & Weinstein (2013) in *Psychological Science* and research on Islamic moderation by Bakir & Othman (2017) in *The Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization*. These secondary data serve to strengthen the theoretical framework and provide an interdisciplinary perspective that integrates modern psychology with Islamic spirituality.

The data analysis process was conducted using thematic analysis techniques as developed by Braun and Clarke (2006), consisting of six stages: (1) repeatedly reading the transcript data to understand the context, (2) identifying relevant units of meaning, (3) grouping these units into initial themes, (4) reviewing the interrelationships among themes, (5) constructing thematic descriptions that represent

participants' experiences, and (6) drawing conceptual conclusions regarding the relationship between FOMO and Islamic self-moderation values. The analysis was performed iteratively and reflectively, with the researcher continuously engaging in interpretation and validation until the derived meanings were stable and consistent.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the data, this study employed several strategies. First, source triangulation was conducted by comparing interview results, literature data, and observations of participants' digital behavior. Second, member checking was carried out by asking participants to verify the researcher's interpretations to ensure alignment with their intended meanings. Third, an audit trail and reflexivity were maintained by systematically documenting the analysis process and considering potential researcher biases (Moon, 2019). These strategies aimed to ensure that the findings are credible, dependable, and scientifically accountable.

This study also adhered to ethical principles in social-religious research, including respect for participants' privacy and confidentiality, as well as obtaining voluntary informed consent prior to the interviews. Participants were given full freedom to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences. The entire process was conducted in accordance with Islamic ethical principles emphasizing honesty (*ṣidq*), trustworthiness (*amanah*), and respect for human dignity.

By combining a phenomenological approach with in-depth thematic analysis, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how Islamic self-moderation values function as a psycho-spiritual mechanism in addressing FOMO in the digital era. The integration of empirical data with theological foundations is expected to contribute academically to the development of contemporary Islamic studies and spiritual psychology.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

FOMO in the Islamic Perspective: The Crisis of *Qana'ah* and Digital Spirituality

The Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) phenomenon emerges as a form of social anxiety characterized by an individual's fear of being left out of activities, information, or experiences enjoyed by others on social media (Tanhan et al., 2022). Based on phenomenological research findings, most informants reported feelings of anxiety, restlessness, and even low self-esteem when not participating in trending online activities. This indicates psychological pressure resulting from excessive social comparison. Intensive social media use generates emotional dependence on external validation, which ultimately affects mental health and individual spiritual balance (Farid, 2025).

From an Islamic perspective, FOMO is not merely a psychological symptom but also a spiritual reflection of the loss of *qana'ah*, the attitude of contentment with the sustenance and circumstances granted by Allah SWT (Siagian & Is, 2025). *Qana'ah* is central to inner peace and life balance for a Muslim (Aisya, 2025). Allah states in QS. Al-Ḥadīd [57]: 23, “*So that you may not grieve for what has eluded you, nor exult*

excessively over what He has given you.” This verse emphasizes the importance of emotional balance in facing life’s dynamics, including in the digital context, which is full of visual and social temptations.

The tendency to compare oneself on social media often erodes gratitude and fosters envy toward others’ achievements. Prophet Muhammad SAW warned, “*Avoid envy, for envy consumes good deeds just as fire consumes wood*” (HR. Abu Dawud). Thus, FOMO can be understood as a spiritual crisis that undermines sincerity (*ikhlas*) and inner peace. According to Sutanto et al., (2020), the FOMO phenomenon is significantly correlated with addictive social media behaviors and lower psychological well-being among users (Savitri, 2019). These findings emphasize that FOMO is not merely an emotional issue but reflects an imbalance in life values that must be addressed through spirituality.

From an Islamic spiritual perspective, FOMO represents a modern form of *taẓīf al-iman* (weakening of faith), leading individuals to rely on human recognition rather than Divine acknowledgment. Those trapped in FOMO lose orientation toward the ultimate purpose of life, which is seeking Allah’s pleasure (Muchtar, 2025). By reinstating the principles of *qana’ah* (contentment) and *tawakkal* (trust in God), individuals can develop a spiritual coping mechanism to navigate digital pressures. These values serve as a psychological shield to control envy, anxiety, and the craving for validation that often arise from exposure to the online world.

Psychological and Social Factors Contributing to FOMO

The findings indicate that FOMO arises from a combination of interrelated psychological and social factors. The first factor is excessive social media use, where prolonged exposure constantly immerses individuals in others’ lives. This exposure creates a social illusion that other people’s lives are always happier and more successful. The second factor is the habit of social comparison, which makes individuals feel left behind or less valuable for not having similar experiences or achievements.

Additionally, a third factor reinforcing FOMO is low psychological satisfaction. Individuals whose basic needs for social acceptance (*belongingness*) and self-esteem are unmet are more vulnerable to digital anxiety. The fourth factor is low self-esteem, leading individuals to rely heavily on likes, followers, and positive comments as forms of self-validation. Finally, the fifth factor is feelings of loneliness and social isolation, which drive individuals to replace real-life interactions with online engagement to seek social validation and attention.

These findings are consistent with research by Tandon et al., (2021), which states that FOMO has a reciprocal relationship with intensive social media use and contributes to long-term psychological disturbances. Dhir et al. (2018) further note that digital fatigue experienced by social media users often results from social pressure and expectations to remain constantly engaged online. Thus, FOMO is not merely a social symptom but also a form of psychological burnout, indicating an imbalance between emotional needs and digital realities.

From an Islamic perspective, these factors reflect weak *muraqabah* the awareness that Allah is always observing every human action (Uasni et al., 2019). When *muraqabah* is absent, individuals focus more on seeking human recognition than Allah's pleasure. Islam emphasizes spiritual balance in all aspects of life as the essence of the concept of *wasathiyyah*. This principle guides humans to remain calm, mindful, and moderate in responding to the fast-paced influences of the digital world.

Self-Moderation (*Wasathiyyah*) as a Spiritual Solution to FOMO

In Islamic teachings, *wasathiyyah* represents the principle of balance, encouraging humans to avoid extremes in all matters, including technology use. Allah SWT states in QS. Al-Baqarah [2]:143, “*And thus We have made you (Muslims) a just and chosen community, so that you may be witnesses over mankind.*” This verse emphasizes that Muslims must serve as exemplars in maintaining equilibrium between spiritual and worldly needs. In the digital context, *wasathiyyah* teaches self-regulation in social media use to prevent consumptive behaviors and the pursuit of superficial validation (Baso Hasyim, 2025)

The study's findings indicate that applying the principle of self-moderation can significantly reduce FOMO symptoms. Informants who limited social media use, curated positive content, and increased devotional activities reported lower levels of digital anxiety. This demonstrates that a balance between spirituality and technology can be achieved through self-control. As Bakir & Othman (2017) affirm, Islamic moderation is a universal approach guiding humans toward a peaceful, balanced, and harmonious life amidst rapid social change.

Self-moderation also requires ethical awareness and moral responsibility in social media engagement. Muslims are encouraged to use digital platforms for good, da'wah, and education, rather than as tools for social competition. This attitude reflects the principles of *adl* (justice) and *ihsan* (excellence), which are pillars of *wasathiyyah*. Individuals with high spiritual awareness use technology with the intention of worship, not for showing off or seeking recognition. Thus, self-moderation becomes a psycho-spiritual shield protecting individuals from existential crises caused by FOMO.

In practice, *wasathiyyah* can be implemented through four main strategies: regulating online time, filtering content, strengthening spirituality, and maintaining the balance between worldly and spiritual life. These strategies help Muslims preserve inner peace and focus on meaningful life goals. When consistently applied, social media no longer serves as a source of anxiety but becomes a means to expand goodness and knowledge.

Integrating Islamic Values in Managing Digital Anxiety

Integrating Islamic values into digital life is a crucial strategy for addressing social anxieties such as FOMO (Zubair & Raquib, 2020). According to the study's findings, informants who consistently practiced acts of worship such as *dhikr*, reading the Qur'an, and self-reflection (*muhasabah*) exhibited higher levels of psychological calmness compared to those who did not. These spiritual activities function

as coping mechanisms that soothe the mind, strengthen self-awareness, and reduce the urge to compare oneself with others (Irhas et al., 2023).

These findings align with Safitri (2025), who asserts that religious moderation in the digital context fosters healthier and more productive social media behavior. Islam not only provides moral guidance but also offers a model for psychological balance through repeated spiritual practices. When values such as gratitude (*syukur*), patience (*sabar*), and trust in God (*tawakkal*) are internalized, individuals can more readily accept fate and navigate digital life without excessive emotional pressure.

The integration of Islamic values in managing FOMO also encompasses social and ethical dimensions. Islam emphasizes the importance of *ukhuwah* (brotherhood), *amanah* (responsibility), and *adab* (etiquette) in every interaction, including in digital spaces. By practicing these values, Muslims can cultivate a civil and positive online environment, spreading goodness while avoiding behaviors that provoke envy, malice, or hatred. This principle aligns with the spirit of *maqashid al-shariah*, which aims to preserve intellect, soul, and human dignity.

Moreover, self-moderation is not only a spiritual solution for individuals experiencing FOMO but also a social paradigm that strengthens digital harmony among Muslims. When the principle of *wasathiyah* is applied comprehensively, Muslims can use technology as a tool for empowerment rather than a source of anxiety. Integrating spirituality into digital life guides individuals toward inner well-being and transforms technology into a means of worship rather than a threat to mental and spiritual tranquility.

CONCLUSIONS

This study demonstrates that the widespread Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) in the digital era is not merely a psychological issue but also a spiritual crisis arising from the weakening of *qana'ah* (contentment) and *tawakkal* (trust in God) within individuals. Dependence on social media and the pursuit of external validation through the online world create inner restlessness, feelings of insufficiency, and a loss of balance between worldly needs and spiritual values. From an Islamic perspective, FOMO can be seen as a manifestation of humans' inability to accept Allah's decree with sincerity, ultimately diminishing faith quality and true happiness.

Self-moderation (*wasathiyah*) has proven to be an effective spiritual solution to the psychological pressures caused by FOMO. The principle of balance taught in Islam guides individuals to use technology wisely and proportionally. By internalizing the values of *qana'ah*, *tawakkal*, patience (*sabar*), and gratitude (*syukur*), one can develop digital self-regulation rooted in spiritual awareness. Applying these moderation principles also strengthens psychological resilience, cultivates inner peace, and directs social media use toward more meaningful and beneficial purposes.

Beyond its theoretical contribution to contemporary Islamic studies and digital psychology, this research has practical implications for education, *da'wah*, and digital literacy. The value of *wasathiyah* should be

integrated into Islamic learning and digital communication strategies, enabling younger generations to navigate online challenges without losing moral and spiritual orientation. In this way, technology ceases to be a source of anxiety and becomes a medium to strengthen faith, spread benefits, and uphold human values.

Furthermore, Islam, through the principle of *wasathiyah*, offers a comprehensive paradigm of balance—integrating spirituality, ethics, and rationality in confronting digital realities. When these values are actualized, Muslims can achieve genuine digital well-being, characterized by inner tranquility, emotional stability, and closeness to Allah SWT amidst the rapid flow of global information.

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