

Constructing Islamic Moderation in Arabic Digital Discourse: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Al-Azhar's Platform X

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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on the analysis of the linguistics of Islamic moderation in Al-Azhar's official digital discourse in Arabic and how this construction functions as a support for the religious authority of Al-Azhar in the contemporary mediated environment. The current study adopted a qualitative design based on the socio-cognitive Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Arabic micro-linguistic analysis, such that it analysed thirty tweets posted between 2019 and 2025 on Al-Azhar's verified Platform X account. The results indicate that the modulation happens through recurrent lexical patterns, nominal sentence structure (*jumla ismiyyah*), *masdar* nominalization, definiteness marking by the prefix *al-*, performative institutional verb sequencing, lexical oppositions and patterned embedding of the citation of the Qur'anic text and *Hadiths*. There are also linguistic mechanisms which reinforce moderation as an institutional normative Islamic perspective and which highlight Al-Azhar's institutional authority in formal Arabic digital communication. The study reveals that Arabic digital religious discourse is a patterned institutional positioning that relies on grammatical form, scriptural intertextuality, and institutional register as mechanisms of authority. What is original about it is the unique combination of socio-cognitive Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) with a close Arabic micro-grammatical analysis of the original source texts, providing a language-centred framework that brings together the fields of study on Islamic moderation, digital religion and discourse analysis.

Keywords: Arabic Digital Discourse, Critical Discourse Analysis, Islamic Moderation, Institutional Authority, Al-Azhar

الملخص

تركّز هذه الدراسة على تحليل البنية اللغوية للوسطية الإسلامية في الخطاب الرقمي الرسمي لمؤسسة الأزهر باللغة العربية، وكيفية إسهام هذه البنية في دعم السلطة الدينية للأزهر في البيئة الإعلامية المعاصرة. اعتمدت الدراسة منهجاً نوعياً قائماً على التحليل النقدي للخطاب وفق المقاربة الاجتماعية المعرفية، إلى جانب التحليل اللساني الدقيق للغة العربية. وحلّلت ثلاثين تغريدة نُشرت بين عامي ٢٠١٩ و ٢٠٢٥ عبر الحساب الرسمي الموثّق للأزهر على منصة «X». أظهرت النتائج أن بناء خطاب الوسطية يتحقق من خلال أنماط معجمية متكررة، وبنية الجملة الاسمية، والاسمية القائمة على استخدام المصدر، والتعريف بالبادئة «ال»، وتسلسل الأفعال المؤسسية ذات الوظيفة الإنجازية، والتقابلات المعجمية، فضلاً عن التضمن المنهجي للاقتباسات القرآنية والأحاديث النبوية. كما كشفت الدراسة عن آليات لغوية ترسخ الوسطية بوصفها منظوراً إسلامياً معيارياً مؤسسياً، وتبرز سلطة الأزهر المؤسسية في التواصل الرقمي الرسمي باللغة العربية. وتبيّن الدراسة أن الخطاب الديني الرقمي العربي يمثل تموضعاً مؤسسياً منظماً يعتمد على البنية النحوية، والتناص مع النصوص الشرعية، والسجل اللغوي المؤسسي بوصفها آليات لبناء السلطة. وتمثل أصالة الدراسة في الجمع الفريد بين التحليل النقدي للخطاب وفق المقاربة الاجتماعية المعرفية والتحليل الدقيق للبنى النحوية العربية في النصوص الأصلية، بما يقدّم إطاراً لغوياً

يربط بين مجالات دراسة الوسطية الإسلامية، والدين الرقمي، وتحليل الخطاب.
الكلمات المفتاحية: الخطاب الرقمي العربي، التحليل النقدي للخطاب، الوسطية الإسلامية، السلطة المؤسسية، الأزهر

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INTRODUCTION

Al-Azhar has been a key player in the creation, dissemination and control of Sunni Islamic knowledge for over a thousand years. It has earned a strong historical reputation, established significant scholarly connections, and come to occupy a prominent symbolic position in the Muslim world, making it a key actor at the intersection of theology, politics, and public religion (Pektas, 2021). In today's world of religious polarization, radicalization of religious beliefs and the propagation of extreme talk, Al-Azhar has begun to define Islamic moderation as part of its theological, educational, and transnational mission (Alhamshary, 2024). This positioning is not only conveyed in formal religious discourses, in academic circles or in policy making processes, but also via digitally mediated discourse (Rohid et al., 2025).

Digital use has changed the production, circulation and contestation of religious authority (Noor, 2022). Religious institutions can use social media to reach larger audiences, act quickly on public concerns, and engage in a transnational discussion of religion, along with gaining access to fragmented, alternative and sometimes extreme interpretations of religion (Campbell, 2022). In such circumstances, the capacity of religious actors to keep their doctrinal authority in new communication modes while avoiding the loss of the inherited modes of theological and linguistic credibility becomes more and more dependent (Abusharif, 2023). It is not just a technology-based way to communicate with religious and religiously inclined Arabic speakers. It is a mediated space where authority and moderation are linguistically enacted and publicly negotiated (Zaid et al., 2022).

There are basically three lines of scholarship on this topic. The first looks at Islamic compromise (*al-wasāṭiyyah*) in a theological, educational and jurisprudential, and governance sense. The above studies have revealed the role of moderation as a doctrinal approach in combating radicalism, socio-political polarization, and religious extremism (Syauqi et al., 2025). Studies of Al-Azhar and other Muslim institutions have also revealed how moderation is institutionalized in the discourse of the institutions, religious

diplomacy, and public interaction (Amin et al., 2024). But much of it still addresses macro-level aspects of ideology, policy and institutional frameworks and has been limited to the specific linguistic mechanisms involved in the construction of moderation in Arabic texts.

The second strand is on digital religion and digital shifts in religious authority. Research on this topic includes the concept of digital religious participation, online legitimacy, and the evolving dynamics between religious institutions and audiences (Laugu et al., 2024). Social media are rarely seen as just platforms for engagement, but rather as socio-technical environments that influence how religion is visible, engaged, and authoritative (Zaid et al., 2022). However, studies on Arabic-speaking Middle Eastern religions are still under development, especially as they relate to the formal Arabic digital texts and their use of repeated linguistic and rhetorical strategies to create moderation. Previously, there has been a tendency to focus on grassroots religious movements, digital influencers or non-Arabic religious context.

The third strand is about Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Islamic communication. Skripovski and Svitova (2020) view CDA-oriented studies on the use of ideology, legitimacy, and power in religious speeches, institutional discourse, and online communication among others as rooted in Fairclough's three-dimensional model and van Dijk's socio-cognitive framework. It has expanded the knowledge of Islamic discourse in constructing a social reality and granting legitimacy to authority in ways of rhetorical and ideological approaches (Muji Buddin SM et al., 2025). However, there are still many studies that focus on macro-discursive interpretation and neglect to consider the micro-grammatical structure of Arabic, particularly in the case of digitally mediated institutional discourse (Elewa 2026).

While such three strands offer valuable clues to moderation, to authority, and to mediation, the interaction of these strands is not sufficiently investigated. Previous research into Islamic moderation has not been interested in examining grammatically how moderation is constructed in Arabic digital texts (Fakhri, 2012). Such research into shifting authority has been a consistent theme of digital religion research, yet has not focused on the formal language communicative characteristics of institutional Arabic discourse (Whyte, 2025). While CDA oriented studies have shed light on the notions of ideology and power, they have not given sufficient consideration to elements specific to

Arabic grammar, including the prevalence of the form of *jahlan ismiyyah*, *masdar nominalization*, the marking of definiteness through the prefix *al-*, and restrictive constructions, including formulaic scriptural embedding (Alshamari 2022; Guillaume 2020). Thus, the subject of moderation and authority in formal Arabic digital discourse has been given little attention (Kashgary, 2015).

To overcome this deficiency, this study combines systematic analysis of Arabic micro-linguistic and Al-Azhar's socio-cognitive CDA in the official Arabic discourse on platform X. This study examines the construction of Islamic moderation as a theme and as an institutional position and as a patterned linguistic formation. It specifically explores lexical repetition, nominal sentence structures, *masdar* nominalization, definiteness marking, performative institutional verbs, lexical opposition, and Qur'anic and *Hadith* intertextuality. This study aims at maintaining the grammatical, rhetorical and theological particularity of the discourse by analyzing the original Arabic texts without the translation being the main analytical tool.

In this context the study focuses on three research questions. First, how is the concept of Islamic moderation linguistically built in Al-Azhar's Arabic digital discourse? Second, how is institutional authority grammatically and rhetorically included in this discourse? Third, what role do citations of the Qur'an and the *Hadith* play in the intertextuality of the digital articulation of moderation? These questions move the analysis from only a thematic reading of the concept of moderation to a structural reading of the relation of moderation and authority to Arabic linguistic forms.

This work has three contributions. First, it contributes to the research on Islamic moderation by showing that moderation is formalized in Arabic grammatical and rhetorical structures. Second, it provides a new development of CDA-based research in Islamic communication as it entails a socio-cognitive analysis along with a close micro-linguistic analysis of original Arabic documents. Third, it provides a perspective on digital religion studies of how a key Islamic institution reinterprets classical Arabic conventions in today's communication mediated by platforms. The study adopts a language-centred approach to understanding Arabic digital religious discourse as an institutionalised space for authority, theological justification, and mediated communication.

METHODS

The study used a qualitative-descriptive approach that is based on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) using micro-linguistic analysis of Arabic digital texts, with a focus on a socio-cognitive perspective. The corpus comprised 30 tweets in the Arabic language posted from the official Platform X account of Al-Azhar between 2019 and 2025 on the verified account. Only content of the points in the main text of each tweet was analyzed. Visual content and videos, comments, replies, threads, retweets, external links, and likes, reposts, and comments were all removed. This delimitation allowed focus to be placed on the discursive construction of the institution of moderation, instead of audience reception or platform interaction.

There were three criteria for the selection of tweets. First, only Arabic-language tweets were included because they would be linguistically homogeneous and would allow for detailed grammatical analysis. Second, the chosen tweets had to explicitly refer to Islamic moderation, or to a related theme, including such concepts as tolerance, coexistence, peace, anti-radicalism, religious legitimation, and Islamic diplomacy. Third, every tweet was classified based on the communicative focus it expressed in five thematic fields: tolerance and coexistence, peace, anti-radicalism, religious legitimation, and Islamic diplomacy. The selection of these criteria ensured that the data the study used was directly related to the research questions and the research goals of the study. The theoretical and methodological framework for the analysis was complemented by relevant literature on CDA, Arabic discourse, digital religion and Islamic communication.

Data collection was done by digital archiving. For each of the tweets selected, the information of the Arabic text, date of publication and thematic category was captured. The tweets were then transcribed into a textual corpus, keeping as close as possible to the original Arabic. Chronological and thematic organization of the corpus was adopted for ease of detection of the lexical, syntactic, performative and intertextual patterns that recur. This procedure enabled the focus to stay within textual and linguistic aspects of the discourse and not on visual or interactional aspects of Platform X communication.

There were 5 stages in the analytical procedure. Lexical items related to moderation were first identified and then mapped to identify the recurrent semantic fields of peace, dialogue, tolerance, mercy, moderation and anti-extremism. Lexical frequency mapping has been employed descriptively, to signify the frequency of some selected

lexemes in the corpus, and not as a measure of the dominance of the discourse. Second, syntactic structures were analyzed through the analysis of the use of *al-* prefix for definiteness, the use of nominalization in the form of *masdar*, the use of *jumlah ismiyyah*, and the use of restrictive constructions such as *al-sabīl al-waḥīd*, and *lā ... illā*. Third, the analysis of those performative and institutional verbs that are used repeatedly, such as *istaqbala*, *akkada*, *shaddada*, *a' raba*, and *qāla*, was used to detect patterns in institutional positioning and formal narrative sequencing. Fourth, the formulaic introductory phrases of Qur'anic and *Hadith* citations were studied in order to identify their structure in tweets, for example *qāla ta'ālā* and *yaqūlu ṣallā Allāhu 'alayhi wa-sallam*. Fifth, the findings of the lexical, syntactic, performative and intertextual analysis were combined to describe the construction of Islamic moderation and institutional authority in Al-Azhar's Arabic digital discourse.

The analysis was performed without any mediation of translation of the original Arabic texts. This was done to maintain the grammatical, rhetorical, and theological particularity of the discourse, especially since the features studied in this paper are all very much entrenched in the linguistic structure of Arabic, such as the use of *jumlah ismiyyah*, the use of *masdar* nominalization, the use of definiteness markers, and the use of scriptural formulae. The study was qualitative and interpretive but also included the lexical frequency mapping. For this reason, the frequency data was used as an auxiliary instrument in determining repeating linguistic patterns, and the primary analysis involved the analysis of the way in which these linguistic patterns are used discursively in the construction of moderation and institutional power.

RESULTS

Lexical and Syntactic Patterns in the Construction of Moderation

Thirty Arabic-language tweets were analyzed to identify the persistent lexical and syntactic structures in which Islamic moderation is built in Al-Azhar's virtual discourse. The main lexical fields linked to peace, dialogue, tolerance, anti-extremism, mercy and moderation. Table 1 shows the frequency of some key lexical items selected.

Table 1.
Frequency of Key Lexical Items in 30 Tweets (2019–2025)

No	Lexical Item	Frequency (n = 30)
1	<i>al-salām</i>	14
2	<i>al-ḥiwār</i>	11

3	<i>al-taṭarruf</i>	10
4	<i>al-taṣāmuḥ</i>	9
5	<i>al-wasaṭiyyah</i>	8
6	<i>al-raḥmah</i>	6

Note. Frequency means number of occurrences of each lexical item in a corpus as token count, not number of tweets which include the lexical item. Tweets can contain more than one key lexical item.

The result can be seen in Table 1, which shows that *al-salām* is the most common lexical item in the corpus, with fourteen occurrences. This was followed by *al-ḥiwār* (dismissal) (eleven times) and *al-taṭarruf* (removal) (ten times). The term *al-taṣāmuḥ* was used nine times, *al-wasaṭiyyah* was used eight times and *al-raḥmah* was used six times, with the majority used in the context of scripture or prophecies. The following lexical items were found in tweets that were classified under peace promotion, tolerance, anti-radicalism, scriptural legitimation, and Islamic diplomacy. In a few instances, multiple key lexical items were found in one textual unit. The expressions, for instance, *nashr qiyam al-salām and al-ta'āyush wa muwājahat al-taṭarruf wa nashr al-fikr al-mu'tadil* bring together notions of peace, coexistence, anti-extremism and moderation within the same discursive context.

Another important syntactic characteristic was the high frequency of the use of *masdars*. Recurrent forms included in the corpus were—*nashr, mukāfahah, tarsīkh, taḥqīq, taqabbul, farḍ, da'm*. They served as objects in nominal constructions as in *nashr qiyam al-salām, mukāfahat al-taṭarruf, ta'zīz al-ta'āwun al-mushtarak, tarsīkh maḥmūd al-muwāṭanah, and taḥqīq al-amn wa al-istiqrār*. These forms represent moderation-related actions less as individual events and more as institutionalised processes or as programmatic commitments.

Several anti-radicalism and diplomatic statements also had restrictive constructions, such as in anti-radicalism. Restrictive clauses also emerged in some tweets, especially with respect to anti-radicalism and diplomatic statements. These are examples such as *al-sabīl al-waḥīd li-muwājahat al-ḥiwār*, which means the only path along which you can find a man whose company you enjoy is *lā sabīl lil-khurūj min azamāt al-insān al-mu'āṣir*. These constructions serve to restrictive markers like *al-waḥīd* and *lā ... illā* that isolate dialogue, moderation, and Al-Azhar's interpretive approach as alternative options required or exclusive in addressing extremism and current human crises.

Recurrent verbs in the corpus were also modal and performative such as *yanbaghī*, *yajibu*, *da'ā*, *akkadā*, *shaddadā*, *a'rāba* and *qāla*. These include *yanbaghī an tasūd thaqāfat al-salām*, *yajibu an yataḥawwal al-taṣāmuḥ ilā nahj 'amalī, da'a' al-Islām ilā al-taṣāmuḥ*, *akkada Shaykh al-Azhar anna...*, *shaddada al-imām al-akbar 'alā...*, and *a'raba al-wazīr 'an...*. The verbs used are primarily used for institutional statements, normative claims, or official assessments.

Lexical oppositions were also recognized within the data set as oppositions that are explicit. These oppositions aid grouping the semantic contours of moderation and its perceived alternatives. The repeated presentations of the pairing are given in Table 2.

Table 2.
Recurrent Lexical Oppositions in the Dataset

No	Positive Lexical Item	Contrasting Lexical Item
1	<i>al-waṣāṭiyyah</i>	<i>al-taṭarruf</i>
2	<i>al-i'tidāl</i>	<i>al-fikr al-munḥarif</i>
3	<i>al-salām</i>	<i>al-ḥurūb</i>
4	<i>al-ḥiwār</i>	<i>al-karāhiyah</i>
5	<i>al-ta'āyush</i>	<i>al-ta'aṣṣub</i>

Note. The oppositional pairings were found in tweets that commented on anti-radicalism, peace promotion and tolerance.

In Table 2, we can see that the discourse builds modulation by the use of semantic contrasts. These are things *al-sabīl al-waḥīd li-muwājahat al-taṭarruf huwa nashr manhaj al-Azhar al-mu'tadil*, *nabdh al-'unf wa al-karāhiyyah*, and *muqāwamat al-tashaddud wa al-fikr al-munḥarif*. These oppositions are primarily found in tweets with anti-radicalism, peace promotion, and tolerance coding. There was also some rhetorical repetition and metaphorical expressions, as well as lexical opposition. The idea of coexistence in the form of *unmūdḥaj wāḥid yasūd al-'ālam*, for example, represents an universal paradigm of coexistence; meanwhile, terms like *al-fikr al-munḥarif* and *al-haddāmah* describe extremism as deviation and destruction. In contrast, expressions of moderation are often linked to unity, dialogue, peace and collective responsibility.

Institutional and Discursive Structures in Digital Communication

The data also showed that there are formulaic institutional patterns in the tweets that report official meetings, diplomatic relations, and institutional activities. The tweets were often arranged in a repeating pattern of performative verbs, like *istaqbala*, *akkada*, *shaddada*, *a'raba*, and *qāla*. Some examples are *istaqbala faḍīlat al-imām al-akbar wazīr al-shu'ūn al-islāmiyyah...*; *akkada Shaykh al-Azhar anna...*; *shaddada al-imām al-akbar*

'alā ḍarūrat...; a'raba al-wazīr 'an sa'adatih...; and qāla faḍīlatuhu inna... This sequence was observed primarily in tweets about official government meetings, international cooperation, diplomatic communication and institutional announcements.

These tweets exhibited a formal institutional register. This register was indicated by the use of complete institutional titles, such as *faḍīlat al-imām al-akbar* A.D. Aḥmad al-Ṭayyib Shaykh al-Azhar al-Sharīf; the identification of visiting officials and their positions; formal descriptions of meetings, such as *baḥṭh subul ta'zīz al-ta'āwun al-mushtarak*; and references to international organisations, including *al-Umam al-Muttaḥidah*, *al-Ittiḥād al-Urūbbī*, and *al-Yūniskū*. Even in the context of platform X's short text format, the features demonstrate the continuity of Al-Azhar's digital discourse with the formal institutional communication it is.

The data set was dominated by declarative structures. The majority of tweets were in the form of "it is" statements rather than questions or dialogue. These include al-Azhar *lā yatawānā 'an al-qiyām bi-dawrihi*, *al-Azhar ḍamīr al-ummah*, *al-'ālam yasīr fī ittijāh khāṭi' bilā qawā'im insāniyyah*, and *al-adyān laysat mas'ūlah 'an jarā'im al-muntasibīn ilayh*. Only in very specific rhetorical situations, such as in situations where there was a global crisis or a moral concern, did interrogative forms occur.

The word "institutional" was used in several posts. These were *marṣad 'ālamī li-mukāfahat al-irhāb*, *Bayt al-'Ā'ilah al-Miṣriyyah*, *Wathīqat al-Ukhuwwah al-Insāniyyah*, *Barāmij Tadrīb al-A'immaḥ*, *al-ta'āwun ma'a al-Fātīkān*, and *Mu'tamar al-Ḥiwār al-Islāmī-al-Islāmī*. These references have been primarily in tweets about global partnerships, interfaith activities, imam training and counter-radicalism measures. The tweets also mentioned geographical and institutional actors other than Egypt, such as Singapore, Germany, the European Union, the United Nations and UNESCO. The locative and the global aspects of Al-Azhar's discourse were established with expressions like *maḥalliyyan wa 'ālamīyyan*, *al-sharq wa al-gharb*, and *al-umam wa al-shu'ūb*.

Violence, war, occupation, and instability were among the common words used in tweets that raised issues about human rights and conflict. These references were frequently associated with the messages of peace, dialogue, moral responsibility, and human fraternity. Educational activities were also represented as part of institutional authority, as was mentioned in relation to foreign students (*al-ṭullāb al-wāfīdīn*) and alumni who were represented as carriers or ambassadors of Al-Azhar's values.

Scriptural Intertextuality and Textual Embedding

A major component of the data was scriptural intertextuality. There were 30 tweets studied, among which 12 (40%) were direct quotes from the Qur'an, the *Hadith*, or both. There were nine tweets that referenced at least one Qur'anic verse, and three tweets referenced *Hadiths*, and two tweets referenced both Qur'anic and *Hadiths* in the same tweet.

Standard formulaic expressions, such as *qāla ta'ālā*, *yaqūlu ta'ālā* and *fī qawlihi ta'ālā* were used to introduce the Qur'anic citations. Some examples are *qāla ta'ālā: wa'taṣimū bi-ḥablillāhi jamī'an wa lā tafarraqu; yaqūlu ta'ālā: faṣfaḥ al-ṣafḥ al-jamī'*; and *fī qawlihi ta'ālā: wa mā arsalnāka illā raḥmatan lil-'ālamī'in*. The verses referred to were typically shown in brackets or quotation marks and woven into the text of the tweet.

Hadiths were quoted in three tweets and were included in a formulaic manner: *yaqūlu ṣallā Allāhu 'alayhi wa sallam and al-ḥadīth al-ṣaḥīḥ*. These are the types of phrases such as *yaqūlu ṣallā Allāhu 'alayhi wa sallam: "wa mā zāda Allāhu 'abdan bi-'afwin illā 'izzan"* and *yataṣaddaruhu al-ḥadīth al-ṣaḥīḥ: "man ṣallā ṣalātanā wa istaqbala qiblatanā..."*. In contrast to the shorter references to the Qur'an, citations of *Hadiths* typically occurred in longer structures of narration.

Three predominant embedding patterns of text were discovered. The first type of mid-text embedding was when a Qur'anic verse followed an introductory narrative statement and then was explained. Second, a sequence of scriptural citations happened when more than one scriptural citation was cited in the same tweet, in sequence. In one Tweet five verses of the Qur'ān were quoted one after the other with each one beginning with *yaqūlu ta'ālā*. Third, closing-position embedding was when a verse was embedded near the end of the tweet as a concluding text element.

Scriptural-based tweets tended to be linked to tolerance, unity, peace, internal Islamic discussion, and humanitarianism. The narrative statement was often followed by a quotation formula and then by the quotation of the Qur'ān or a *ḥadīth*. Tweets were institutional narration coupled with a quotation formula and followed by a quotation of the Qur'ān or *ḥadīth*. It can be seen that scriptural texts did not simply refer to each other, but were embedded in Al-Azhar's digital discourse as an enabling and legitimating text. The combined data reveals that Islamic moderation in the data set is organized in Woven lexical, syntactic, institutional, and intertextual mechanisms.

DISCUSSION

The results show that Islamic moderate discourse in Al-Azhar Arabic electronic media is not only a message, but also a pattern of language and institutions. The use of the following lexical items such as *al-salām*, *al-ḥiwār*, *al-taṭarruf*, *al-taṣāmuḥ*, *al-wasaṭiyyah*, and *al-raḥmah*, as presented in Table 1, forms a consistent semantic field in which moderation is seen in relation to peace, dialogue, tolerance, mercy, and resistance to extremism. Such lexical patterns are further emphasized by the terms of opposition displayed in Table 2 where terms connected to moderation are systematically contrasted with terms of extremism, deviant thinking, war, hatred and fanaticism. A contrastive structure situates moderation not only as a valued moral attribute, but also as the proper focal point of Islamic argumentation against any type of religious deviation and tumult.

On the grammatical level, the use of *jumlaḥ ismiyyah* (definiteness) markings with *al-* prefix, performative institutional verbs and performative nominalization of moderation shows the formalization of Arabic linguistic structure. Nominal sentence patterns and definite noun phrases realize concepts of peace, tolerance, coexistence and human fraternity as already established normatively recognized concepts (Baycar & Rakipoglu, 2022). *Masdar* of verbs also helps to move away from the focus on the individual act towards the institutionality of the processes that are in place, such as the promotion of peace, the fight against extremism, the strengthening of cooperation and the consolidation of citizenship. In this way, moderation is not seen as a reaction to specific incidents, but as an ongoing commitment from the institutions themselves, and it is embedded in the Arabic grammatical structure.

The performative verbs also play a central role in the construction of institutional authority, as do the following verbs: *akkada*, *shaddada*, *aṣraba*, *qāla*, and *istaqbala*. These verbs structure the tweets into the following actions: declaration, affirmation, receipt, emphasis, and institutional positions (Butyrina et al., 2024). This continuous performative sequencing places Al-Azhar in a position of authority as a speaker who sets the agenda for problem-setting, assessing moral crises and making normative proposals. The result of the finding is in line with CDA-oriented scholarship which states that institutional power is manifested in the formal discursive structure and repetition of authoritative speech (Muji Buddin SM et al., 2025). In this study however, it is demonstrated that in the Arabic digital religious discourse, authority is not only an

ideological or rhetorical phenomenon, but also a grammatical phenomenon.

This institutional positioning is also reinforced by scriptural intertextuality (Zaid et al., 2022). The citations of the Qur'ān and *hadīth* are not inserted randomly, but are interwoven by means of identifiable formulaic expressions and are strategically located within the text structure of the tweets. The institutional voice of Al-Azhar is linked to sacred textual authority by its use of *qāla*, *ta'ālā*; *yaqūlu*, *ta'ālā*; and *yaqūlu*, *ṣallā Allāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*. This pattern allows for the presentation of current institutional communication and the theology that is inherited. Therefore, Platform X is a virtual setting where classical Arabic religious authority is recontextualized for public communication today.

The results are significant to the scholarship on digital Islam and digital religious authority. Social media has been found in previous studies to enable religious institutions and actors to renegotiate their visibility, legitimacy and public influence. In previous research on Southeast Asian and Middle Eastern contexts, digital media have also been found to be areas for religious communication and authority building. The present study validates these claims while also revealing that the institutional authority in Arabic digital discourse is successfully maintained via a certain linguistic approach: formal Arabic, institutional register, scriptural citation and global diplomatic vocabulary, compressed into the Platform X.

This study also contributes to the existing research on Islamic communication in the field of CDA. CDA-oriented studies have been largely macro-level, in terms of ideology, power relations and institutional positioning, whereas the present study illustrates the significance of considering micro-linguistic features in the original (Arabic) texts. The analysis reveals that the nominal dominance, the marking of definiteness, the *masdar* nominalization is not only a stylistic device, but also the lexical opposition, performative sequencing and embedding in script. They serve as strategies to stabilize, authorize and institutional religious moderation. Thus, the study provides an analytical framework based on the language approach, which relates both socio-cognitive CDA with Arabic stylistics and digital religion studies.

The results indicate also two implications of Al-Azhar's linguistic approach. The use of formal Arabic systems, quotations from the scripture, and the sequencing of the institutional narrative enhances coherence, legitimacy, and continuity, on the one hand.

These characteristics help to consolidate a religious institution's voice in a digital context where religious authority is weak and contested (Hashmi et al., 2020). Conversely, the use of declarative forms, formality and one-directional institutional statements can restrict dialogic interaction in digital contexts. This implies that formal institutional communication can maintain authority, but it is not always in line with the participatory norms of social media communication. There are parallels with research regarding digital religious authority, where the visibility and textual presence of a text doesn't always mean that it is received by the audience or that it has an impact on their ideology.

Theoretically, the study proposes that Arabic digital religious discourse should be seen as a place where the classical authority of language and the contemporary mediation of digital technology converge. Al-Azhar's tweets don't give up on religious terminology in favour of the informal Twitter vernacular. Rather, they have reinterpreted the classical rhetorical conventions, scriptural formulas, and institutional forms of classical Arabic in a contemporary digital space. The discovery suggests that digitalization does not weaken formal religious authority, but can create a new space in which it can be reproduced. In this sense, formal Arabic is not just a means of communication, but it is a discursive tool that allows the institutional Islam to legitimize itself theologically, to exercise public authority, and to be relevant across the transnational field.

Even with these contributions, the results of the analysis should be viewed as part of the data set. Thirty tweets were collected from a single institutional account and were analyzed in relation to the textual composition of the text, rather than in terms of the algorithmic circulation or the visual design, or the audience reception. Further research could extend the corpus; conduct comparative analysis of Al-Azhar's discourse against other Islamic institutions; and consider multimodal analysis of examining how images, typography, layout and platform affordances interact with the Arabic text and its structures. These comparative and multimodal approaches would help to articulate the construction of religious authority and moderation in various digital contexts (Hashmi et al., 2020).

CONCLUSION

The present study shows that Islamic moderation in Al-Azhar's Arabic digital discourse is not just a theological message but a linguistic and institutional structure as

well. The results reveal that the use of recurrent lexical items, nominal sentence patterns, definiteness marking, *masdar* nominalization, performative institutional verbs, as well as lexical oppositions all contribute to the stabilization of moderation as a normative Islamic position. Scriptural references to the Qur'an and *Hadith* add to this construction by connecting the institutional with the sacred textual. In this way, moderation is given a legitimate place in the center of Islamic communication, and extremism is placed outside the area of institutional balance, peace, and religious legitimacy.

The study makes a valuable contribution in three aspects of scholarship. First, it contributes to the field of Arabic discourse studies by demonstrating the role of the micro-linguistic features of formal Arabic digital texts in the construction of institutional authority. First, it contributes to Arabic discourse studies by illustrating how micro-linguistic features of formal Arabic digital texts are involved in the construction of institutional authority. Second, it brings socio-cognitive Critical Discourse Analysis to the fore to show that power and legitimacy is not just produced in Arabic religious texts through ideology and rhetoric, but also through grammar. Third, it makes a contribution to the study of digital religion because it demonstrates the recontextualization of classical Arabic linguistic conventions in the context of the digital platform-mediated communication of a significant Islamic institution. This study proposes a language-centered approach to the analysis of the original Arabic texts in order to analyze the articulation of religious authority through digital discourse.

But there are some study limitations. The sample size was set at thirty tweets from a single institutional account and the study did not include consideration of visual design, platform interaction or audience reception. Thus, these findings should not be extrapolated to the Arabic digital religious discourse in general. Further research might extend the data, include analysis of Al-Azhar's discourse in relation to other Islamic institutions, or involve multimodal or audience-based analysis. This type of study would contribute to a deeper knowledge of the dynamics between religious authority, Islamic moderation, and digital communication in various platforms and institutional settings in the Arabic context.

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