



## Validity vs Virality of Hadiths in Digital Era: A Matan Criticism Study of Popular Hadiths on Social Media

Wavika Sifana,<sup>1</sup> Ike Rahayu Putri,<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup> Universitas Islam Negeri Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung

<sup>1</sup>wavikasifana01@gmail.com, <sup>2</sup>ikep40947@gmail.com

### ABSTRACT :

The phenomenon of the widespread dissemination of popular hadiths on social media has raised concerns about the authenticity of Islamic teachings received by the broader public. This study aims to examine the validity of viral hadiths through a matan criticism approach, analyzing the textual consistency of these hadiths with the Qur'an, authentic hadiths, sound reasoning, and historical context. The research employs a qualitative method based on library research, with content analysis of popular hadiths circulating on digital platforms. The finding indicate that several hadiths in circulation do not meet the criteria of authentic matan, and most lack a clear chain of transmission (sanad). In the digital context, matan criticism can be applied through digital *tabrij* and verification using hadith applications. The internalization of a critical religious attitude, such as *tabayyun* (careful verification), hadith literacy education, and the use of information technology, becomes an essential strategy in preserving the authenticity of Islamic teachings. This study recommends strengthening Islamic literacy based on matan criticism as a preventive measure against the spread of fabricated hadiths in the digital era.

**Key words:** *matan criticism, popular hadiths, social media, validity, Islamic literacy* .

## INTRODUCTION

Muslims can easily access religious information through social media in today's digital age. Hadiths of the Prophet Muhammad, once found only in classical texts, are now widely distributed in the form of images, videos, and quotations on various digital platforms <sup>1</sup>. This can facilitate preaching and increase public interest in Islamic literacy. However, the hadiths shared on social media sometimes have unclear sources and often only mention the Prophet Muhammad without narrators of reference books. This issue shows that despite increasing religious fervor, the validity of the religious information circulating is increasingly unclear.

The phenomenon of hadith circulating on various digital platforms raises serious issues regarding the veracity of viral hadith. Most people acquire these viral hadith without scientific verification. This has the potential to obscure Islamic understanding and even lead people to erroneous religious practice <sup>2</sup>. For example, some hadith quotations are often used in motivational

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<sup>1</sup> Sabilar Rosyad and Muhammad Alif, "Hadis Di Era Digital: Tantangan Dan Peluang Penggunaan Teknologi Dalam Studi Hadis," *Jurnal Ilmu Agama: Mengkaji Doktrin, Pemikiran, Dan Fenomena Agama* 24, no. 2 (December 1, 2023): 185–97, <https://doi.org/10.19109/jia.v24i2.18979>.

<sup>2</sup> Rosyad and Alif.

discourse without examining the chain of transmission or the status of the hadith. One popular example is the statement: “Work for your worldly life as if you were to live forever, and work for your afterlife as if you were to die tomorrow”. This sentence is often attributed to the Prophet Muhammad, even though hadith scholars have stated that this hadith lacks a valid chain of transmission. Al-Albani (1993) asserted that there is no reliable source from the Prophet for this hadith and declared it fabricated. Although it contains the value of balance between worldly life and the afterlife, the use of fabricated hadith for motivational purposes can lead to a distortion of religious understanding. This has serious implications for religious education, especially if educators lack adequate hadith literacy. Therefore, caution is needed in using hadith, particularly in context of learning or motivation, to avoid errors in attributing sayings to the Prophet Muhammad<sup>3</sup>. Therefore, a scientific approach is needed to examine the content of hadith textually, not just based on popular belief.

Several previous studies have examined the issue of hadith dissemination and authenticity in contemporary contexts. Yulanda (2020) analyzed popular fabricated hadiths frequently cited by public religious figures, focusing on their classification and theological implications<sup>4</sup>. Irham (2020) discussed the circulation of popular hadiths related to knowledge and their relevance to Islamic education, highlighting the pedagogical impact of weak narrations<sup>5</sup>. Meanwhile, Rosyad and Alif (2023) explored the challenges and opportunities of hadith studies in the digital era, emphasizing the role of technology in accessing and verifying hadith sources<sup>6</sup>. Saefudin et al (2022) examined hadith content on social media through content analysis, identifying patterns in presentation and thematic emphasis of hadith related posts<sup>7</sup>. However, these studies generally address hadith dissemination from theoretical, educational, or media perspectives and have not sufficiently applied detailed matan criticism to viral hadiths circulating specifically across multiple social media platforms. Therefore, this study positions itself by applying matan criticism directly to viral hadith

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<sup>3</sup> Darussamin, Dzikri., *Pengembangan Pemikiran Hadis*, 2012.

<sup>4</sup> Atika Yulanda, “Kajian Hadis-Hadis Palsu Yang Populer Oleh Ustadz Adi Hidayat,” *Islam Transformatif: Journal of Islamic Studies* 4, no. 1 (July 14, 2020): hal. 36, <https://doi.org/10.30983/it.v4i1.2626>.

<sup>5</sup> Irham Irham, “Hadis Populer Tentang Ilmu Dan Relevansinya Dengan Masalah Pendidikan Islam,” *AL QUDS : Jurnal Studi Alquran Dan Hadis* 4, no. 2 (November 12, 2020): hal. 235, <https://doi.org/10.29240/alquds.v4i2.1704>.

<sup>6</sup> Rosyad and Alif, “Hadis Di Era Digital: Tantangan Dan Peluang Penggunaan Teknologi Dalam Studi Hadis.”

<sup>7</sup> Maulana Wahyu Saefudin, Agus Suyadi Raharusun, and Muhamad Dede Rodliyan, “Konten Hadis Di Media Sosial: Studi Content Analysis Dalam Jejaring Sosial Pada Akun Lughoty.Com, @RisalahMuslimID, Dan @thesunnah\_path,” *Jurnal Penelitian Ilmu Ushuluddin* 2, no. 1 (2022): hal. 19–49, <https://doi.org/10.15575/jpiu.13580>.

content in the digital sphere, integrating classical hadith principles with contemporary digital verification practices.

The dissemination of unvalidated hadiths not only impacts theological aspects but can also influence the social behavior and moral decisions of Muslims <sup>8</sup>. When inauthentic hadith are used as the basis of worship or social attitudes, the community is vulnerable to deviant religious practices. For example, some fabricated hadith that promise great rewards for minor deeds are often used as justification to trivialize core Islamic punishment. If left uncritically examined, such hadith can reinforce a culture of shallow textualism and distance the community from a comprehensive and modern understanding of Islam. Therefore, the application of matan criticism is not only crucial for scientific validity but also for maintaining a healthy balance of Islamic teachings and practices in a digital society.

Based on the problems outlined by the researcher, this study aims to: 1) Identify the characteristics of popular hadith on social media; 2) Assess its validity through critical textual evidence; 3) Formulate the appropriate attitude for a Muslim towards this phenomenon. This research is important considering the rapid spread of religious information through social media, which is not always accompanied by a scientific validation process. As a community that considers hadith as one of the main sources of law after the Qur'an, the spread of inauthentic hadith can lead to misunderstandings in Islamic teachings, deviations in worship, and the development of beliefs or attitudes that contradict true Islamic values. Furthermore, the lack of hadith literacy among the public makes most social media users tend to accept and spread hadith instantly, without considering the authority of the sanad, matan, or the information from the reference books, this research aims to bridge the classical methods of hadith science with the contemporary needs of Muslims, especially in developing critical and responsible digital religious literacy.

Despite the growing number of studies on matan criticism and digital hadith dissemination, limited attention has been given to the practical analysis of viral hadiths circulating on social media. This study differs from previous research on hadith criticism by focusing specifically on the phenomenon of viral hadiths circulating on contemporary social media platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and WhatsApp while earlier studies predominantly examined matan criticism from a theoretical or classical perspective, this research integrates classical principles of matan criticism with digital takhrij practices to evaluate the validity of widely shared hadith content. Furthermore, this study emphasizes the tension between virality and validity in the digital era, highlighting how

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<sup>8</sup> Marlina Ratna Sari, "Dampak Penyebaran Hadis Lemah Dan Palsu Dalam Tatanan Kehidupan Bermasyarakat," *El-Sunnah: Jurnal Kajian Hadis Dan Integrasi Ilmu* 1, no. 1 (December 31, 2020): hal. 99–110, <https://doi.org/10.19109/elsunnah.v1i1.7414>.

popularity, emotional appeal, and visual presentation often influence the public acceptance of hadiths regardless of their authenticity. By situating hadith criticism within the context of digital religious communication, this research contributes a contextual and applied perspective that responds to the contemporary challenges of Islamic literacy in the age of social media.

## Methods

This study employed a descriptive qualitative method with library research approach. The primary data consisted of popular hadiths circulating on various social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and WhatsApp, often cited without citing authentic sources or narrators. Data collection was conducted through documentation and online observation. Secondary data were obtained through in-depth reviews of books, articles, and scientific journals discussing the critical of the text and its methodology, both classical and modern. The analysis was conducted descriptively using content analysis techniques to identify methods for assessing the validity of the hadith widely circulated among the public. This method allows for a comprehensive study of the text and context of the hadith and supports a broader understanding of the issue of the level of validity of popular hadiths in contemporary hadith studies.

## Result and Discussion

### Characteristics of Popular Hadith on Social Media in the Context of the Digital Era

The abundance of hadith content circulating on social media is immense. In fact, almost every social media platform contains hadith content. However, not all hadith content distributed on social medias authentic. Hadith itself is understood as anything originating from the Prophet Muhammad<sup>9</sup>. Hadith is positioned as the second source of Islam after the Qur'an<sup>10</sup>. Unlike the Qur'an. Which is *mutawatir*, hadith is relative. This is because hadith were only recorded in the 8<sup>th</sup> century<sup>11</sup>. Therefore, the authenticity of hadith needs to be tested to determine whether it is truly from the Prophet Muhammad or from someone other than the Prophet Muhammad.

Searching for information about hadith in this era of increasingly sophisticated technological developments has made it easier for internet users to find the hadith they desire through applications available on their smartphones. Among the many social networking applications used, such as Facebook, TikTok, and Instagram, popular hadith spread on social media have several

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<sup>9</sup> Abdul Karim, "Pergulatan Hadis Di Era Modern," *Riwayah : Jurnal Studi Hadis* 3, no. 2 (April 5, 2019): hal. 171, <https://doi.org/10.21043/riwayah.v3i2.3720>.

<sup>10</sup> Wahyudin Darmalaksana, Lamlam Pahala, and Endang Soetari, "Kontroversi Hadis Sebagai Sumber Hukum Islam," *Wawasan: Jurnal Ilmiah Agama Dan Sosial Budaya* 2, no. 2 (December 31, 2017): hal. 245–58, <https://doi.org/10.15575/jw.v2i2.1770>.

<sup>11</sup> Rodina Billah, U I N Sunan, and Ampel Surabaya, "ORISINALITAS HADIS ULAMA SUFI MELALUI METODE KASYF PERSPEKTIF IMAM AL-SUYUTI" 8, no. September (2024): hal. 292–309.

easily recognizable characteristics. This spread has resulted in increased public interest in Islamic teachings, but also raises challenges regarding the validity and authenticity of the sources<sup>12</sup>. For example, many viral hadith are not included in the authoritative hadith books or are even considered weak or weak by scholar. Therefore, it is important for the public to understand the characteristics of these popular hadith to be able to distinguish between authentic teachings and those that merely appear editorially appealing but lack a strong basis.

Some characteristic of popular hadiths that often circulate in society include multimodal and interactive formats, simple and easy-to-understand language, varying credibility and authenticity, the influence of interpretation and polarization, focus on the needs and context of modern society, and use in da'wah and promotional strategies<sup>13</sup>. Multimodal and interactive formats mean presenting content that combines various media such as text, images, audio, and video, and allows for direct user engagement, such as commenting or re-sharing<sup>14</sup>. Hadith circulating on social media are often presented in multimodal and interactive formats. This presentation makes users more interested in reading, understanding, and sharing the content. For example, the "Hadith of the Day" account on Facebook displays hadith complete with translations narrators name, biblical reference, and attractive graphic visuals, thus, this varied presentation format facilitates the dissemination of religious messages to a wide audience quickly and engagingly.

Simple and easy-to-understand language is language that does not use complex scientific or theological terms, making it accessible to all groups, including those unfamiliar with religious terminology<sup>15</sup>. When sharing hadith on social media, this style of language is chosen to make spiritual messages more easily understood by the wider community. For example, Ustadz Hanan Attaki often conveys the Prophet's hadiths in a light, casual, and relatable language that resonates with young people. When explaining a hadith about the importance of guardian the heart, he does not directly use the term "*tazkiyatun nafs*" or "purification the soul", but uses sentences such as:

*"If your heart is at peace, your life will be at peace. The Prophet Muhammad said, 'In the human body there is a lump of flesh. If it is good, everything will be good.' That is our heart."*

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<sup>12</sup> Maulana Wahyu Saefudin, Agus Suyadi Raharusun, and Muhamad Dede Rodliyana, "Konten Hadis Di Media Sosial: Studi Content Analysis Dalam Jejaring Sosial Pada Akun Lughoty.Com, @RisalahMuslimID, Dan @thesunnah\_path," *Jurnal Penelitian Ilmu Ushuluddin* 2, no. 1 (2022): hal. 19–49, <https://doi.org/10.15575/jpiu.13580>.

<sup>13</sup> Karim, "Pergulatan Hadis Di Era Modern."

<sup>14</sup> Herman Dwi Surjono, *Multimedia Embelajaran Nteraktif*, 2017.

<sup>15</sup> Saefudin, Raharusun, and Rodliyana, "Konten Hadis Di Media Sosial: Studi Content Analysis Dalam Jejaring Sosial Pada Akun Lughoty.Com, @RisalahMuslimID, Dan @thesunnah\_path."

Using a related style and everyday language makes the spiritual message easier to understand and more beneficial, especially for young people active on social media. The use of simple language makes the hadith feel close and relevant to everyday life. Therefore, the use of simple language is one of the keys to successful da'wah through social media.

Credibility and authenticity refer to the level of the truth and authenticity of the hadith, which is usually determined through a study of the sanad (chain of narrators) and matan (revision of the hadith). Hadith on social media have varying degrees of credibility and authenticity. Consequently, not all hadith circulated can be directly used as reference without verification<sup>16</sup>. Some hadith only include translations without clear sanad or reference, and some are even considered weak or fabricated<sup>17</sup>. Therefore, it is important for users to have good Islamic literacy to be able to filter religious information critically and responsibly. One example, of a frequently quoted hadith is, "Seek knowledge even as far as China." Although its meaning inspires enthusiasm for seeking knowledge, this hadith is categorized as weak (*dha'if*) by several scholar. This hadith is also not included in major hadith books such as Sahih Bukhari and Sahih Muslim<sup>18</sup>. For comparison, there is a valid hadith narrated by Imam Muslim, "Whoever follows a path in search of knowledge, Allah will make easy for him the path to Jannah." (Narrated by Muslim, no. 2699). This hadith has a strong sanad (chain of transmission) and its content underscores the importance of seeking knowledge as a path to goodness<sup>19</sup>. Therefore, it is important for the public to have good Islamic literacy to verify the truth of the hadith before disseminating it, so that the religious messages conveyed truly refer to authentic source.

Interpretation is the process of understanding the meaning of a text, while polarization refers to sharp divisions of opinion among groups of users<sup>20</sup>. Social media, being open and free, allows anyone to interpret hadith personally, even without a scientific basis<sup>21</sup>. This situation often gives rise to debate and polarization among users. Unlike traditional hadith study forums guided

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<sup>16</sup> Anggun Puspita Ningrum, "Kredibilitas Caption Sebagai Syarah Hadits Dalam Media Sosial: Studi Akun Instagram @ Fiqihwanita \_" 5, no. 3 (2024).

<sup>17</sup> Muhamad Halim Fatahillah, Rahmad Egi Cahyono, and Salman Lokollo, "Hadits Dha'if Dan Hukum Mengamalkannya," *DIRAYAH: Jurnal Ilmu Hadis* 4, no. 2 (2024): 160–79, <https://doi.org/10.62359/dirayah.v4i2.252>.

<sup>18</sup> Irham, "Hadis Populer Tentang Ilmu Dan Relevansinya Dengan Masalah Pendidikan Islam," *AL QUDS: Jurnal Studi Alquran Dan Hadis* 4, no. 2 (November 12, 2020): hal. 235, <https://doi.org/10.29240/alquds.v4i2.1704>.

<sup>19</sup> Tajul Arifin, *Ulumul Hadits, Jurnal Ulumul Hadist*, vol. 211, 2014.

<sup>20</sup> Mutmainah, *Buku Sistem Model Dan Desain Pembelajaran* (Aceh: Yayasan Penerbit Muhammad Zaini, 2021).

<sup>21</sup> Darmalaksana, Pahala, and Soetari, "Kontroversi Hadis Sebagai Sumber Hukum Islam."

by experts, social media displays comment that are not always based on science. Therefore, hadith discussions on social media need to be handles wisely and include scientific references to avoid misleading public opinion.

The needs and context of modern society refer to contemporary issues faced by Muslims, such as stress, motivation, work ethic, and digital life <sup>22</sup>. Hadith shared on social media are generally selected because they are relevant to current societal conditions and challenges. Consequently, these hadith provide relevant spiritual and social solutions for users in the digital age <sup>23</sup>. For example, much hadith content discusses motivation, work ethic, simple living, or the importance of maintaining physical and mental health. Therefore, the contemporary context is a primary consideration in selecting hadith for digital da'wah purposes.

Preaching and promotional strategies on social media involve techniques for presenting religious messages that capture attention and build relationships with audiences, including utilizing hadith as the primary content. Disseminators of hadith on social media often utilize this content as both a preaching strategy and a promotional tool. This strategy has proven effective in attracting attention and building high engagement with audiences. For example, several Islamic preaching accounts and institutions utilize hadith as their primary content to increase their following and interaction. Thus, hadith serve not only as religious teachings but also as an effective means of communication in the digital world.

### **Applying Matan Criticism to Test the Validity of Popular Hadith**

Matan criticism is one of the important pillars in the science of hadith that functions to test the authenticity of the content or text of a hadith. Through this approach, researchers or scholar can assess whether a hadith text is in accordance with the basic teachings of Islam, especially the Qur'an and *mutawatir* hadith. Matan criticism or *al-naqd al-dakbili* is a method in the science of hadith that focuses on evaluating the content or text of the hadist, both in terms of wording (*lafzi*) and meaning (*ma'nawi*) <sup>24</sup>. The main goal of matan criticism is to trace the authenticity of the message of the hadith and test its conformity with the basic principles of Islam. Classical hadith scholars have applied this method since the early days of hadith transmission, by examining the conformity of matan with the Qur'an, other authentic hadith, and the historical reality of the life

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<sup>22</sup> Irham, "Hadis Populer Tentang Ilmu Dan Relevansinya Dengan Masalah Pendidikan Islam."

<sup>23</sup> Yulanda, "Kajian Hadis-Hadis Palsu Yang Populer Oleh Ustadz Adi Hidayat."

<sup>24</sup> Fadhilah Sofyan et al., "Kajian Metode Kritik Matan Hadis," *Jawami'ul Kalim* 1 (2023): hal. 11, <https://doi.org/10.36701/jawamiulkalim.v1i1.987>.

of the Prophet Muhammad <sup>25</sup>. Therefore, matan criticism plays a role in filtering the content of the hadith to prevent the spread of false sayings in the name of the Prophet.

To avoid purely theoretical discussion, this study analyzes several viral hadiths frequently circulated on social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and WhatsApp. These hadiths are often quoted without clear references and are widely accepted due to their motivational tone rather than their scholarly authenticity. One of the most frequently shared viral statements attributed to the Prophet Muhammad states :

*“Work for your worldly life as if you were to live forever, and work for your afterlife as if you were to die tomorrow.”*

This statement is widely circulated on social media as a prophetic hadith. However, based on takhrij analysis, this narration does not possess a valid chain of transmission tracing back to the Prophet Muhammad. Hadith scholars such as al-Albani asserted that this narration has no authentic basis as a prophetic hadith<sup>26</sup>.

From the perspective of matan criticism, although the meaning promotes balance between worldly life and the hereafter, this statement cannot be classified as a hadith. The wording does not reflect the concise linguistic style typical of authentic prophetic traditions and its attribution to the Prophet may lead to theological inaccuracies. Therefore, despite its moral appeal, this narration should not be quoted as a prophetic hadith. Through matan criticism, the validity of these narrations can be examined more comprehensively based on established principles of hadith studies

Another popular hadith frequently circulated on social media states :

طَلَبُ الْعِلْمِ وَلَوْ بِالصِّينِ

*“Seek knowledge even as far as China”*

This narration is widely used to motivate Muslims to pursue education. However, hadith scholars classify this narration as weak (daif), and it is not recorded in the major authoritative hadith collections such as Şahih al-Bukhari and Şahih Muslim<sup>27</sup>.

From the standpoint of matan criticism, although the message aligns with Islamic values that emphasize the importance of seeking knowledge, its historical plausibility and transmission reliability remain questionable. Islam already provides numerous authentic hadiths that encourage seeking knowledge without relying on weak narrations. Consequently, this hadith may be used as

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<sup>25</sup> Muhammad Qomarullah, “Metode Kritik Matan Hadis Dengan Pendekatan Alquran Dalam Kaidah Ilmu Naqd Al-Matan,” *AL QUDDS : Jurnal Studi Alquran Dan Hadis* hal. 6, no. 3 (December 30, 2022), <https://doi.org/10.29240/alquds.v6i3.4041>.

<sup>26</sup> Arifin, *Ulumul Hadits*.

<sup>27</sup> Irham, “Hadis Populer Tentang Ilmu Dan Relevansinya Dengan Masalah Pendidikan Islam.”

general wisdom but cannot be employed as authoritative religious evidence or explicitly attributed to the Prophet Muhammad.

As a comparison, Islam possesses authentic hadiths that clearly emphasize the virtue of seeking knowledge, such as the narration recorded by Imam Muslim:

مَنْ سَلَكَ طَرِيقًا يَلْتَمِسُ فِيهِ عِلْمًا، سَهَّلَ اللَّهُ لَهُ بِهِ طَرِيقًا إِلَى الْجَنَّةِ

“Whoever follows a path in search of knowledge, Allah will make easy for him a path to paradise.”

(Sahih Muslim, no. 2699)

This hadith has a strong chain of transmission and its content is fully consistent with Qur'anic principles and Islamic teachings. From the perspective of matan criticism, the wording is concise, proportional, and free from exaggeration, reflecting the authentic style of the Prophet Muhammad. Therefore, this narration can be confidently used as a legitimate religious reference<sup>28</sup>.

These examples demonstrate that viral popularity does not equate to authenticity. The application of matan criticism reveals that many widely circulated hadiths fail to meet accepted standards of textual validity despite their emotional appeal and widespread dissemination. In the digital era, matan criticism functions not only as a scholarly method but also as a practical framework for strengthening Islamic literacy and preventing the uncritical spread of unreliable religious narratives.

Hadith scholars have established a number of scientific standards for conducting matan criticism. Figures such as Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jauziyyah emphasized that the validity of matan can only be achieved if one possesses in-depth knowledge of the Prophet Muhammad's personality, from his life history, habits, instructions, to his speaking style. Ibn al-Qayyim even described an ideal hadith researcher as being able to understand the Prophet Muhammad as if he were a companion who lived side by side with him<sup>29</sup>. This approach demonstrates that matan criticism is not a mechanical process, but rather requires spiritual, historical, and textual depth in understanding the Prophet's sayings.

The standards for critical textual evidence have also been systematically explained by contemporary scholars such as Dr. Shalahuddin al-Adlabi. He emphasized that a textual evidence is considered authentic if it does not contradict the Qur'an, other authentic hadith, the history of the Prophet (*sirah*), common sense, the five senses, and historical facts. If a hadith violates any of these standards, its authenticity is questionable and may even be classified as weak (*dhajif*) or

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<sup>28</sup> Muchlis, “Materi Pendidikan Islam Dalam Perspektif Hadits,” *TAJDID: Jurnal Pemikiran Keislaman Dan Kemanusiaan* 6, no. 2 (2023): hal. 67, <https://doi.org/10.52266/tajdid.v6i2.1064>.

<sup>29</sup> M Suryadinata, “KRITIK MATAN HADIS : KLASIK HINGGA KONTEMPORER,” *Ushuluna: Jurnal Ilmu Ushuluddin* hal. 2, no. 2 (April 12, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.15408/ushuluna.v2i2.15183>.

defective<sup>30</sup>. Therefore, the validity of textual evidence is not only tested textually but also through in-depth contextual and logical analysis.

The method of matan criticism essentially groups hadith into two broad categories *makbul* (accepted) and *mardud* (rejected). *Makbul* hadith are those that can be used as evidence because they do not contradict Islamic law and fulfill scientific principles. Conversely, *mardud* hadith are rejected because they contradict the Qur'an or stronger Islamic principles. After the hadith is categorized, data is collected and the structure of the matan is verified: whether the sentence is reasonable, consistent, and worthy of being used as a basis for good deeds. If irregularities such as *syaz* (oddities) or *'illat* (hidden flaws) are found, then the hadith is considered invalid and unworthy of being used as a guideline<sup>31</sup>. Thus, matan criticism ultimately aims to ensure that every saying claimed to be from the Prophet Muhammad truly reflects the truth that can be accounted for religiously and intellectually.

Khatib al-Baghdadi established several objective criteria in assessing the validity of the text of a hadith. According to him, a text can only be accepted (*maqbul*) if it meets six main requirements: it does not deny the law of reason, it does not contradict the *mubkam* Qur'an, it does not contradict the *mutawatir* hadith, it does not contradict the consensus of the salaf scholars, it does not contradict absolute evidence, and it does not contradict other authentic hadith<sup>32</sup>. This standard shows that the validity of the text depends not only on the sanad, but also on its conformity with the established framework of Islamic epistemology and law. Thus, Khatib al-Baghdadi's method of criticizing the text is rational, integrative, and based on the authority of the text and scientific consensus.

The majority of hadith scholars agree that several signs indicate a hadith's text is forged. These include: ambiguous language, illogical content, conflicting with the objectives of sharia, contradicting the *sunnatullah* (the Sunnah of Allah), inconsistent with historical facts, and contradicting the Qur'an and *mutawatir* hadith. Furthermore, texts that promise excessive rewards or threaten punishment for simple deeds are also suspected of being forged because they contradict the Islamic principle of moderation<sup>33</sup>. For example, a hadith stating that reciting a particular surah guarantees paradise without any other deeds, even though it is not found in authentic sources, is an example of a problematic text. Therefore, thorough textual and contextual analysis must be carried out to avoid fabrication of hadith that could mislead the community.

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<sup>30</sup> Rizkiyatul Imtyas, "Metode Kritik Sanad Dan Matan," *Ushuluna: Jurnal Ilmu Ushuluddin* 1, no. 1 (2020): hal. 18–32, <https://doi.org/10.15408/ushuluna.v1i1.15286>.

<sup>31</sup> Sofyan et al., "Kajian Metode Kritik Matan Hadis."

<sup>32</sup> Sofyan et al. "Kajian Metode Kritik Matan Hadis"

<sup>33</sup> Imtyas, "Metode Kritik Sanad Dan Matan."

Contemporary scholars such as Saladin al-Adlabi and Muhammad al-Ghazali made important contributions to enriching the methodology of matan criticism. Al-Adlabi emphasized that matan hadith must be consistent with the Qur'an, authentic hadith, the Prophetic tradition, reason, senses,, and historical facts. Muhammad al-Ghazali added that hadith that contradict established science should also be rejected <sup>34</sup>. This approach demonstrates that the validity of matan is determined not only by textual sources but also by its connection to objective reality and scientific rationality. For example, hadith that mention astronomical or biological events proven erroneous by modern science must be critically evaluated. Thus, the approach of contemporary scholars integrates reason, revelation, and science in assessing the validity of matan hadith.

The method of matan criticism in a digital context is increasingly relevant as a tool for religious verification amidst the massive spread of hadith without authoritative sources. The dissemination of religious information, including hadith, is no longer limited to religious scholars or Islamic institutions, but has penetrated the vast and free public sphere <sup>35</sup>. The viral phenomenon of Islamic content on social media such as TikTok, Instagram, and WhatsApp makes people vulnerable to accepting false or weak hadith due to their persuasive and emotional appearance. This content often goes viral not because of its scientific validity, but because of its visual appeal, emotional rhetoric, or because it is delivered by a popular figure. This makes the general public more easily influenced by hadith that are not necessarily authentic, especially if they are packaged convincingly and have a spiritual or motivational effect. The method of matan criticism plays a crucial role as an initial screening tool to test the truth of hadith content, especially before it is used as a reference for belief or the basis for religious action.

The process of digitally critiquing the hadith can be carried out by integrating technology and scientific principles in the science of hadith. The initial step is to conduct digital *takhrīj*, which involves tracing the origins of the hadith through search engines, hadith book applications (such as *Maktabah Syamilah*, *Hadith Collection*, or *Sunnah.com*), and online hadith databases. Once the text of the hadith is found, the content of the matan needs to be further examined whether it contradicts the Qur'an, whether it contradicts other *mutawatir* or authentic hadith, and whether its

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<sup>34</sup> Ardiansyah Ardiansyah and Heri Firmansyah, "Studi Kritis Terhadap Pandangan Muhammad Al-Ghazali Tentang Hadis Âhâd Dalam Kitab As-Sunnah Al-Nabawiyah Baina Ahl Al-Fiqh Wa Ahl Al-Hadits," *AL QUDS : Jurnal Studi Alquran Dan Hadis* 5, no. 2 (November 2, 2021): hal. 735, <https://doi.org/10.29240/alquds.v5i2.2792>.

<sup>35</sup> Ibnu Kasir and Syahrol Awali, "Peran Dakwah Digital Dalam Menyebarkan Pesan Islam Di Era Modern," *Jurnal An-Nasyr: Jurnal Dakwah Dalam Mata Tinta* 11, no. 1 (2024): hal. 59–68.

content aligns with common sense, historical facts, and the Prophet's style of delivery <sup>36</sup>. For example, if a hadith mentions the promise of great rewards for minor deeds in an exaggerated manner, then it needs to be criticized because it may contain elements of exaggeration that are inconsistent with the Islamic principle of moderation. Through this approach, digital matan criticism not only serves as a means of validating the text but also serves as a medium for educating religious literacy, encouraging people to be more selective, critical, and responsible in disseminating religious information.

### **Internalization of Muslim Attitudes in Facing Popular Hadith**

The spread of popular hadith in the digital era has raised serious concerns about the authenticity of Islamic teachings. The Muslim community is now increasingly vulnerable to accepting unverified hadith, as they are disseminated in persuasive, emotional, and visually appealing formats. This phenomenon is evident on platforms like WhatsApp, TikTok, and Instagram, where hadith quotations are often shared without citing clear sources. Therefore, steps are needed to internalize a wise, critical, and scientific attitude to prevent the Muslim community from spreading misinformation about religion <sup>37</sup>.

One fundamental attitude that needs to be internalized is *tabayyun*, or caution in receiving and conveying religious information. This attitude can create a moral and intellectual filter in dealing with the flood of Islamic information whose validity is unclear. *Tabayyun* is a principle emphasized in Surah Al-Hujurat: 6, where Allah commands us to verify information from unreliable sources to avoid regret due to wrong decisions <sup>38</sup>. Therefore, using *tabayyun* as a lens in assessing every circulating hadith is a strategic step to maintain the integrity of Islamic teachings.

Second, every Muslim must firmly believe in not relying carelessly on statements attributed to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Mistaking false information for the Prophet not only leads to deviant teachings but is also considered a major sin. A valid hadith narrated by Bukhari states that anyone who lies about the Prophet will have their place prepared for them in Hell <sup>39</sup>. Therefore, Muslims must refrain from quoting or disseminating hadith without valid references, as a form of respect for the Prophet and a careful adherence to religious teachings.

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<sup>36</sup> Saefudin, Raharusun, and Rodliyana, "Konten Hadis Di Media Sosial: Studi Content Analysis Dalam Jejaring Sosial Pada Akun Lughoty.Com, @RisalahMuslimID, Dan @thesunnah\_path."

<sup>37</sup> Darmalaksana, Pahala, and Soetari, "Kontroversi Hadis Sebagai Sumber Hukum Islam."

<sup>38</sup> Faizah Putri et al., "Konsep Tabayyun Dalam Surat Al-Hujurat: Menyikapi Berita Hoax Di Zaman Sekarang Dari Perspektif Tafsir Ibnu Katsir," *Journal of International Multidisciplinary Research* 2, no. 11 (November 13, 2024): hal. 56, <https://doi.org/10.62504/jimr979>.

<sup>39</sup> Irham, "Hadis Populer Tentang Ilmu Dan Relevansinya Dengan Masalah Pendidikan Islam."

Advances in information technology can actually be used to strengthen critical attitudes toward hadith. The use of digital applications such as the Hadith Encyclopedia, Maktabah Syamilah, or Sunnah.com facilitates the process of *takbrij* and quickly identifying the status of hadith. This access is an important tool for ordinary Muslims in distinguishing between authentic, weak, or fabricated hadith (Ibn and Syahrol Awali, "The Role of Digital Da'wah in Spreading the Message of Islam in the Modern Era."). Therefore, internalizing a critical attitude does not mean rejecting religious teachings, but rather proves that a sound understanding of Islam requires a responsible and knowledge-based approach.

A Muslim must be aware of equipping themselves and their environment with hadith literacy. Islamic education that addresses the validity of hadith can produce a society that is not easily provoked by baseless religious narratives <sup>40</sup>. Various forums such as online study groups, schools, religious study groups, and da'wah media can serve as a means to ground the importance of critically understanding the sanad and main of hadith. If Muslims cultivate this education on a massive scale, the future will produce a generation of Muslims who are not only religious but also rational and responsible in their religion <sup>41</sup>.

These four key attitudes *tabayyun* (religious ascertainment), not relying carelessly on the Prophet's sayings, utilizing technology, and educating oneself can help Muslims protect themselves from the spread of inauthentic hadith. These four attitudes complement each other and form a religious ethic that harmonizes faith and reason. Internalizing these practices will not only protect society from religious error but also strengthen the scientific tradition in Islam, which prioritizes validity and scientific honesty. Therefore, maintaining the validity of hadith is not solely the task of religious scholars, but the responsibility of all Muslims in the digital age.

## Conclusion

This study concludes that matan criticism is an important approach in testing the validity of popular hadith widely circulated on social media. Many viral hadith have been proven to fail to meet scientific standards because they contradict the Quran, logic, and Islamic history. In the digital context, matan criticism can be applied through digital *takbrij* (authentication) and content analysis based on scientific principles of hadith. Internalizing critical religious attitudes such as *tabayyun* (verification), caution in attributing sayings to the Prophet, and the use of verification technology are key to stemming the spread of false hadith. Therefore, strengthening hadith literacy

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<sup>40</sup> Dewi Shara Dalimunthe, "Transformasi Pendidikan Agama Islam: Memperkuat Nilai-Nilai Spiritual, Etika, Dan Pemahaman Keislaman Dalam Konteks Modern," *Al-Murabbi Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 1, no. 1 (June 14, 2023): hal. 75–96, <https://doi.org/10.62086/al-murabbi.v1i1.426>.

<sup>41</sup> Siti Uswatun Khasanah et al., "Meningkatkan Peran Dan Fungsi Majelis Taklim Sebagai Wadah Pendidikan Dan Penguatan Karakter Masyarakat," *Jurnal Abdimas Le Mujtamak* 4, no. 2 (December 31, 2024): hal. 78–89, <https://doi.org/10.46257/jal.v4i2.1086>.

and a culture of verification in the digital society is necessary as part of religious responsibility in the information age.

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