



Patterns and Principles of Al-Ghazālī's Hermeneutics in the Book *Al-Sunnah al-Nabawiyyah* bayna Ahl al-Fiqh wa Ahl al-Ḥadith

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Abstract: This research sets out from the opinion of Muḥammad Al-Ghazālī in his book *Al-Sunnah Al-Nabawiyyah* which states that not all hadiths that are considered *ṣaḥīḥ* can be used as a legal basis if ‘*illah qādiḥah*’ are found. Al-Ghazālī's opinion caused him to be regarded as an *inkaru sunnah*. This study aims to explore the features and principles of hermeneutics of Muḥammad Al-Ghazālī's on hadith. This research includes qualitative library research. The sources come from Al-Ghazālī's thoughts in the Book *Al-Sunnah Al-Nabawiyyah*. Data analysis uses descriptive and inductive methods collected by coding by applying Schleiermacher's hermeneutic approach. Based on this research, the results show that Al-Ghazālī takes three steps in his hermeneutics, the first is conducting a strict canon of grammatical interpretation of a hadith, whether the text is appropriate or not to interpret, even though the *sanad* is valid. The second step, Al-Ghazālī also applied a distinctive psychological interpretation with various approaches such as the historical approach, the *asbābu al-wurūd* approach, the contemporary-empirical approach, and the rational approach, as well as the proportional ‘*irfānī*’ approach. The third and the last, he validates or confirms his interpretation by comparing it with verses in Koran. His hermeneutics has complied with all the principles of hadith hermeneutics namely confirmative principle, thematic-comprehensive principle, grammatical, historical, realistic, ethical and legal distinctions principle, and instrumental and intentional distinction principle.

Keywords: *Al-Sunnah Al-Nabawiyyah*; Hermeneutics; hadith; Muḥammad Al-Ghazālī.

Abstract: Penelitian ini bertitik tolak pada pandangan Muḥammad Al-Ghazālī dalam kitabnya *Al-Sunnah Al-Nabawiyyah* yang menyatakan bahwa tidak semua hadis sahih dapat dijadikan landasan hukum bila ditemukan cacat atau ‘*illah qādiḥah*’. Pendapat Al-Ghazālī ini menyebabkan dirinya dilabeli sebagai seorang *inkaru sunnah*. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menggali corak dan prinsip-prinsip hermeneutika hadis Muḥammad Al-Ghazālī.

Penelitian ini termasuk penelitian kualitatif kepustakaan. Data berasal dari pemikiran Al-Ghazālī di dalam Kitab Al-Sunnah Al-Nabawiyah. Analisis datanya menggunakan metode deskriptif dan induktif yang dikumpulkan secara coding dengan menerapkan pendekatan hermeneutika Schleiermacher. Berdasarkan penelitian ini, diperoleh hasil bahwa Al-Ghazālī memiliki tiga tahap hermeneutika yaitu tahap pertama dengan menerapkan canon interpretasi gramatikal yang ketat atas sebuah teks hadis, apakah teks itu layak atau tidak diinterpretasi, meskipun sanadnya sahih. Tahap kedua, Al-Ghazālī menerapkan corak interpretasi psikologis yang khas dengan pendekatan yang beragam seperti pendekatan historis, pendekatan asbābu al-wurūd, pendekatan empiris kontemporer, dan pendekatan rasional, serta pendekatan ‘irfānī yang proporsional. Tahap ketiga adalah validasi dengan ayat Alquran. Hermeneutika hadisnya telah memenuhi seluruh prinsip-prinsip hermeneutika hadis yaitu prinsip konfirmatif, tematis-komprehensif, gramatikal, historis, realistik, distingsi etis dan legis, dan prinsip distingsi instrumental dan intensional.

Kata Kunci: Shi’ah Hadith; Tarekat Syattariyah; Hisab Khumasi; Praktik Hadis

1. Introduction

Hadith is one of the authoritative texts of Islam that carries messages to serve as guidelines for its followers, in addition to the Qur'an. The guidelines in question include those related to law-making, moral or ethical references, or concerning faith. As authoritative sources, the Hadith and the Qur'an are nothing unless their meanings are explored (Syafurudin, 2009). Historically, extracting the meaning behind the messages contained in the hadith has long been done by hadith scholars (*muḥaddithūn*) and jurists (*fuqahā'*) with the existence of various works of hadith commentaries such as *Fath al-Bārī*, *Bulūgh al-Marām*, and others. Efforts to extract the meanings contained in the hadith should certainly not be stagnant, relying only on the works of previous scholars. Moreover, with the existence of other interpretive methods, especially hermeneutics, the exploration of the meanings of hadith will become more contextual, rational, and egalitarian (Sibawaihi, 2007). The interpretation of hadith must continue to evolve to remain relevant and meaningful.

It is not uncommon for jurists and hadith scholars or each other to differ in their understanding of a hadith. This difference is generally triggered by the orientation or purpose of extracting meaning, which is generally textual and contextual. (Syafurudin, 2009). In fact, at the time of the Prophet, this style of textual and contextual understanding had already occurred among the Companions, as the Prophet's message not to perform the 'Asr prayer except in the village of Bani Quraizhah. Meanwhile, the patterns of understanding hadith as mentioned by Muslim Hanafi in *Suryadilaga*,

there are three types, namely liberal, moderate, and traditional (Suryadilaga, 2020). Different understandings will obviously result in different laws because hadith is one of the sources of Islamic law. This should be a concern because some people need answers to the problems they face with a solutive and authoritative foundation. Therefore, the hadith needs to be understood to provide a meaning that is in accordance with the intention of the author, namely the Prophet Muḥammad.

One way to understand a text is through hermeneutics. Basically, hermeneutics has been practiced by many Islamic thinkers, even since classical times (Hidayat, 1996). Hermeneutics contain various meanings and have rules (canons) according to their bearers. However, hermeneutics is essentially an attempt to understand a text so that the reader can understand the author's intention. With many works of tafsir and hadith commentaries, Islam has basically applied hermeneutics in understanding the Quran and hadith. This is because hermeneutics is basically a method to extract the linguistic meaning of a text, and hadith is a text. Historically, hermeneutics has also long been applied by religious scholars to uncover the meaning of the Gospel text (Sibawaihi, 2007). Hermeneutics has long been used in various religious traditions to uncover the deeper meaning of sacred texts.

One of the figures who attempted to hermeneutically interpret the hadith was Muḥammad Al-Ghazālī from Egypt. His famous and controversial hermeneutical work is a book entitled '*Al-Sunnah al-Nabawiyyah bayna Ahl al-Fiqh wa Ahl al-Ḥadīṣ*' (Nurmansyah, 2021). One of the controversial points is his view that not all traditions that are declared *ṣaḥīḥ* can be used as a legal basis because they are found to be flawed (*'illah qādiḥah*) (Ghazali, 1989). With the circulation of this work, Al-Ghazālī was labelled by some as having denied the prophetic traditions (*inkāru al-sunnah*). Muḥammad Al-Ghazālī sparked controversy by questioning the legal use of some *ṣaḥīḥ* hadith in his work *Al-Sunnah al-Nabawiyyah*, leading to accusations of rejecting the Sunnah.

There have been many previous studies on Al-Ghazālī's work. This is despite the critical position of this work that encourages various scholars to explore its thoughts. So far, research has examined his work *Al-Sunnah al-Nabawiyyah* in four main focuses. First, in terms of the methodology of understanding hadith, a few studies have discussed Al-Ghazālī's approach of emphasising criticism of the *matn* over the *sanad* and filtering hadith through four main criteria: conformity with the Qur'an, other *ṣaḥīḥ* hadith, historical facts, and reason or modern science. Secondly, studies on the implications of hadith thinking for law and tashri' show how Al-Ghazālī's rejection of

ahad traditions in matters of faith triggered a polemic on the limits of hadith authority in the formation of law (Basid, 2017; Hafiz, Anwar, & Is, 2023). Third, there are studies that highlight social reformulation and justice in Al-Ghazālī's thought, especially in terms of reinterpretation of traditions that are considered discriminatory against women (Jauzaa' & Bakri, 2024). Al-Ghazālī is considered to have endeavoured to promote the values of justice in understanding the Prophetic traditions (Jauzaa & Bakri, 2024). Fourth, several studies map Al-Ghazālī's thought within the framework of tradition and *tajdīd*, linking his approach to the modern Islamic renewal movement, showing his connection to the classical Islamic scientific heritage and response to the challenges of modernity (Moussa, 2016). Studies that explicitly link Muḥammad Al-Ghazālī's pattern of hadith interpretation in his work *Al-Sunnah al-Nabawiyyah* with Schleiermacher's hermeneutical canons have not been conducted.

This study aims to complement existing studies by examining the patterns and principles of Muḥammad Al-Ghazālī's hadith hermeneutics in his work *Al-Sunnah Al-Nabawiyyah*. This study answers the research question: what are the patterns and principles of Muḥammad Al-Ghazālī's hadith hermeneutics in the book *As-Sunnah al-Nabawiyyah*, and to what extent does this approach have methodological affinity with Schleiermacher's hermeneutical canons? This research contributes to the enrichment of hermeneutical studies to strengthen the rationale that hadith (as well as the Qur'an) are always ready to be the object of study, including through a hermeneutical perspective. In addition, understanding the style of Al-Ghazālī's hadith hermeneutics is also expected to benefit readers in their efforts to '*verstehen*' the many controversial hadiths by applying his framework.

This study applies to a qualitative method with a literature approach. To obtain Al-Ghazālī's hermeneutic style, the researcher uses coding techniques by providing codes (characterisation) for events, cases, objects, explanations, and specific ideas given by the author (Yin, 2011). In this research, open coding of Muḥammad Al-Ghazālī's ideas in the book *As-Sunnah al-Nabawiyyah* was conducted. *Open coding is coding that is still general in nature from the data collected by conceptualising the data into certain concepts* (Danaher et al., 2016). From the open coding, theoretical coding was then carried out by classifying the results of the open coding with Schleiermacher's hermeneutic theory consisting of grammatical and psychological interpretations. Schleiermacher's grammatical interpretation concerns the linguistic elements of a text. His first canon states that determining the meaning of a linguistic element must be done from the language of the author and audience. The second canon states that the

exact meaning of a word must be determined from its context. As for psychological interpretation, which consists of purely psychological and technical, it complements grammatical interpretation. The purely psychological one tries to discover the author's potentially future decisions that have motivated his thinking and writing. As for the technical aspect, it seeks to understand how the author's thoughts are expressed in his composition (Schleiermacher, 1998).

2. Result and discussion

Hermeneutics as a Method of Interpretation

The practice of hermeneutics dates to 1737. A century earlier, hermeneutics was already known in Latin as *hermeneutica*, which was introduced by German Johann Dannhauer. As for its origin, it is the Greek 'hermeneuein' which means 'to express aloud, to explain or to interpret, or to translate'. Allegedly, hermeneutics is closely related to the name of the God Hermes who is in charge of conveying messages or wishes of Gods (Gods) to humans. However, the allegation is still under debate (Schmidt, 2010). The embryo of hermeneutics was utilised by Aristotle in his work *Peri Hermeneias*. In that work, he wrote that spoken words are symbols of mental experience. Whereas the written words are symbols of the spoken words (Sibawaihi, 2007). Hermeneutics is a discipline of interpreting meaning that originates from ancient Greek tradition and has developed since the early history of philosophy.

Schleiermacher (1768-1834) is regarded as the father of modern Hermeneutics. Since his appearance, the art of understanding has become a topic of discussion that extends to various disciplines such as theology and philosophy. In Schleiermacher's view, hermeneutics is the art of understanding what is expressed in writing or orally. The aim of hermeneutics is to reconstruct the creative process of the author and even to understand him better than he understands himself. Every expression in language has a dual relationship with the totality of the language and the whole of the author's thought so that hermeneutics has two interconnected parts, namely grammatical and psychological (Schleiermacher, 1998; Schmidt, 2010). Schleiermacher saw hermeneutics as the art of understanding expressions by reconstructing the author's thought, both grammatically and psychologically.

Schleiermacher's grammatical interpretation concerns the linguistic elements of a text. The first canon states that the determination of the meaning of a linguistic element must be made from the language adopted by the author and the audience. The second canon states that the precise meaning of a word must be determined from its context. Psychological interpretation complements grammatical interpretation. Psychological interpretation aims to understand the author's thoughts and how they are expressed in the text. So there are two parts: the purely psychological and the technical. The purely psychological one tries to discover the author's potentially future

decisions that have motivated his thinking and writing. As for the technical aspect, it seeks to understand how the author's thoughts are expressed in his composition (Schleiermacher, 1998; Schmidt, 2010). Schleiermacher's hermeneutics combines grammatical analysis of language with psychological insight into the author's thought and expression.

In simple terms, hermeneutics is a process that changes the state of a person (interpreter/reader) from being unknown to knowing (Sibawaihi, 2007). Hermeneutics is also a branch of philosophy that deals with the theory of interpretation (Musahadi, 2014). The essence of hermeneutics is to understand the text. Hermeneutics has two main functions, namely first, obtaining the exact meaning or content of a word, sentence, text, etc. Second, finding instructions or messages contained in various symbolic forms. Second, finding instructions or messages contained in various symbolic forms (Bleicher, 1980). According to Palmer, as cited in Hardiman (2014), The meaning and function of hermeneutics can be understood in six contexts. Firstly, hermeneutic as a theory of Biblical (Gospel) exegesis. Second, hermeneutics as a philological method. Third, hermeneutic as a linguistic method of understanding. Fourth, hermeneutics as the methodological foundation of the humanities. Fifth, hermeneutics as phenomenology of *das sein* and existential understanding. Sixth, hermeneutics as a system of interpretation (Hardiman, 2015). Hermeneutics is a philosophical method of interpretation aimed at understanding meaning in texts and symbols across linguistic, existential, and humanistic contexts.

Hadith as Object of Hermeneutics

As a process of understanding texts or interpretive activities, Islam has applied hermeneutics, although in different terms, namely interpretation of the Qur'an and hadith commentary. In Christian religious practice, hermeneutics is also used to understand the Bible, pioneered by German Johann Dannhauer (Sibawaihi, 2007). Then, may we say that hermeneutics can be equated with *tafsir* or *sharḥ*? Certainly. The reason is that hermeneutics, as a theory of interpretation, can be understood as a broad term encompassing meanings such as *to interpret*, *to translate*, or *to explain*, even though it is not considered a common or everyday word. Hermeneutics aligns with *tafsir* and *sharḥ*, as all aim to interpret sacred texts, differing only in term and tradition.

For example, the *kitāb* of *sharḥ ḥadīth*, *Fath al-Bārī*, serves as a collection of commentaries on the *ḥadīths* of *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. In this work, the author, Ibn Ḥajar, provides various explanations and presents arguments that allow him to generate understanding (*understanding*) and engage in interpretation (*verstehen*) of the grammatical structure of the speaker's (*Muḥammad's*) language, which he also contextualizes through *asbāb al-wurūd* (circumstantial causes of narration). Hence, it may be said that Ibn Ḥajar, as author and interpreter, has performed an act of

interpretation (*to interpret*) and sought understanding (*verstehen*) of the *ḥadīth* text in relation to its speaker (author/originator), so that the message of the text may be understood in line with the speaker's intent. Therefore, it is not *naïve* to assert that Ibn Ḥajar—and other scholars involved in interpreting *ḥadīth*—have in fact engaged in *ḥadīth* hermeneutics, whether through standardized methodologies or through context-based approaches tailored to the interpreter's understanding. Thus, there is no valid reason to reject *ḥadīth* hermeneutics. On the contrary, hermeneutics offers interpretive space for individuals who may not meet the normative qualifications of traditional *tafsīr* scholarship to understand authoritative texts within the framework of their own hermeneutical methodology (Sibawaihi, 2007). Hadith hermeneutics is a valid interpretive approach that connects textual meaning with contextual understanding.

The Principles of Hadith Hermeneutics

There are principles to be applied in hadith hermeneutics. First, the confirmative principle. This principle means that in hermeneutics, the meanings must be confirmed with the Qur'anic injunctions. Second, the thematic-comprehensive principle. This means that in understanding hadith, the hadith text cannot be viewed as a separate or independent text but must be compared with other hadith texts that have relevant themes. Third, the grammatical principle means that in hermeneutics the hadith must adhere to the grammatical aspects of the Arabic language. Fourth, the historical principle which means that the hermeneutics of hadith must consider the situation in which the hadith was spoken, both the specific situation (*asbābu al-wurūd*) and the general situation (social conditions) (Musahadi, 2014). The historical dimension must be considered in order to gain an understanding of the hadith texts such as when the hadith was spoken, to whom, and under what conditions (Juned, 2010). Fifth, the principle of realism. This principle implies that the hermeneutics of hadith should look at the current situation in which Muslims live. Sixth, the principle of ethical and legis distinction. This means that the interpreter must be able to explore ethical values, not only seeing that the hadith are legal texts. Seventh is the principle of instrumental and intentional distinction. This principle considers traditions to be instrumental in nature which is temporary (as a response to problems that arose during the time of the prophet) and intentional in nature which means permanent or has a permanent purpose. (Musahadi, 2014).

Al-Ghazālī's Hadith Hermeneutics

Biography of Muḥammad Al-Ghazālī

Al-Ghazālī was born in 1917 in the countryside of Beheira (Buhairah) province, Lower Egypt. At the time, Egypt was ruled by the Khedivial Dynasty and under the British Protectorate. Two years after Al-Ghazālī's birth, Egypt experienced a revolution

fuelled by the liberal nationalist Wafd movement, led by Sa'd Zaghloul, against the British colonial authorities. Contemporary notions of nationhood, anti-colonial discourse and the presence of traditional institutions in Egypt formed the backdrop to Al-Ghazālī's early life. The direction that Al-Ghazālī's life took would lead him on the path of religious scholarship at one of the most renowned academic institutions in the Muslim world, Al-Azhar University. As a student there, he joined the revivalist movement *Jama'at al-ikhwan al-Muslimun* in his late teens. After that, he became one of the active writers and contributed to various mouthpieces of the Brotherhood. However, a year after the Free Officers Revolution, which overthrew Egypt's last Khedivial ruler in 1952, Al-Ghazālī quit the *Ikhwanul*. Islam's ambivalent relationship with nationalism and Arabism influencing major public debates in the Arab world and the urgent demands arising from reviving the practice of *ijtihād* fuelled Al-Ghazālī's activities as a public intellectual and writer. From the 1950s until his death, Al-Ghazālī was a prolific writer and tireless preacher in the Muslim world (Moussa, 2016).

Al-Ghazālī's early education began at a mosque school (*local kuttab*) near his home. By the age of 10, he had memorized the entire Qur'an. He then continued his studies at a religious institution in Alexandria affiliated with al-Azhar, before moving to Cairo to study at the core of al-Azhar. Studying at one of the largest educational institutions in the Islamic world, Al-Ghazālī was immersed in various religious disciplines, drawing from the works of influential figures such as Mahmoud Shaltut, Abdullah Draz, and Musthafa al-Maraghi. Islamic sciences had been taught within the framework of al-Azhar for nearly a thousand years, and the scholarly spread of Islam was deeply rooted in this highly respected institution. Beyond the walls of al-Azhar, significant intellectual and societal changes also influenced its students. These changes stimulated the need for curriculum reform during Al-Ghazālī's period of study. Al-Azhar gradually transformed from a traditional religious school into a modern university with various faculties of Islamic sciences. Al-Ghazālī graduated from the Faculty of Uṣūl al-Dīn in 1941 with a diploma and continued his studies in the field of *wa'z wa irshād* (preaching and guidance), completing his master's degree in 1943 (Moussa, 2016).

The influence of Ḥasan al-Bannā on the young al-Ghazālī—who at the time was still a student at al-Azhar—was highly significant in shaping his activist stance, which was driven by a conception of pure Islamic social consciousness. Many of al-Ghazālī's ideas found their outlet through the ideological platform of the Muslim Brotherhood (*al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn*), which he expressed through the *Ikhwān* newspaper. His first book, *al-Islām wa al-Awḍā' al-Iqtisādiyyah* (Islam and Economic Conditions), marked his entry into written discourse. Another public intellectual outlet was the journal *al-Fikr al-Jadīd*, which he founded in October 1948 before formally joining the Brotherhood. The pressing social issues facing Egyptian society were addressed within an intellectual framework inspired by the comprehensive teachings of Islam—as envisioned by *Jamā'at al-Ikhwān*—and rooted in a spirit of social justice.

Al-Ghazālī's most monumental and controversial work is the book *Al-Sunnah al-Nabawīyyah bayna Ahl al-Fiqh wa Ahl al-Ḥadīṣ*, written in 1989. The motivation behind this work stemmed from the growing prevalence of narrow-minded thinking among segments of the Muslim community, at a time when Islam was facing severe challenges, such as economic colonization, ideological invasion, and physical oppression. Al-Ghazālī expressed his concern (*rishī*) about certain Islamic movements or groups that focused their energy and intellectual discourse solely on trivial matters—such as debating whether touching a woman nullifies ablution, or whether singing is permissible—while appearing indifferent to far more pressing issues affecting the ummah, like electoral processes, their legitimacy, and the possibility of manipulation within them (Ghazali, 1991).

Al-Ghazālī also witnessed the rise of fundamentalist movements that called for a return to the Qur'an and Sunnah while rejecting the authority of the madhhab tradition. However, he regarded such attitudes as childish in their approach to textual evidence. He cited examples of groups that would easily denigrate classical scholars simply for not conforming to specific prophetic traditions, such as the criticism directed at Abū Ḥanīfah for not raising his hands before or after *rukū'*. On the other hand, Al-Ghazālī felt that al-Azhar had, over the past thirty years, experienced a decline in its role of countering such narrow-minded thinking. Meanwhile, the Muslim ummah remained in a state of crisis, particularly regarding the Palestinian issue, while Arab states appeared reluctant to engage meaningfully with the problem (Ghazali, 1991). This context prompted Al-Ghazālī to articulate his concerns in his work *Al-Sunnah al-Nabawīyyah*.

Al-Ghazālī passed away on March 9, 1996, corresponding to 19 Shawwāl 1416 AH, at the age of 78, due to a heart attack in Riyadh. He was buried in al-Baqī', Medina (Nurmansyah, 2021). He devoted himself tirelessly to preaching Islam and upholding its teachings through various scholarly forums. He also left behind numerous works, including *al-Islām wa al-Awḍā' al-Iqtisādiyyah*, *Al-Sunnah al-Nabawīyyah*, *Kaifa Nafham al-Islām*, among others.

Muḥammad al-Ghazālī (1917–1996) emerged as a prominent Egyptian scholar, preacher, and public intellectual whose life was shaped by a dynamic interplay of traditional Islamic learning and modern socio-political realities. Educated at al-Azhar University, he was influenced by both its classical scholarship and contemporary reformist currents, including the thought of Ḥasan al-Bannā and the activism of the Muslim Brotherhood, which he joined in his youth. Disenchanted with ideological rigidity, he later distanced himself from the movement, devoting his efforts to reconciling Islamic teachings with the challenges of modern life. Through prolific writing and preaching, Al-Ghazālī sought to address both theological and social crises facing the Muslim world, most notably in his seminal and controversial work *Al-Sunnah al-Nabawīyyah bayna Ahl al-Fiqh wa Ahl al-Ḥadīth*. His intellectual legacy

reflects a deep commitment to reviving *ijtihād*, resisting superficial religiosity, and advocating for justice through informed and contextual Islamic interpretation.

1. Coding of ḥadīth hermeneutics in the book *Al-Sunnah al-Nabawiyyah*

Al-Ghazālī's grammatical interpretation is evident in his commentary concerning the identification of the apparent (*ẓāhir*) meaning of *ḥadīth* expressions, which determines whether the text contains any defects. The contextual aspect of the words or expressions he interprets is demonstrated through his comparison of one *ḥadīth* with others. Meanwhile, the psychological dimension in Al-Ghazālī's approach is limited to how he conveys his interpretation, often by establishing connections with epistemological elements such as empirical methods (*asbāb al-wurūd*, historical circumstances, contemporary conditions), rational approaches, and *'irfānī* (spiritual-intuitive) perspectives. The following presents the coding results of Muḥammad al-Ghazālī's ḥadīth hermeneutics as found in his book *Al-Sunnah al-Nabawiyyah*.

N o	Ḥadīth Texts Interpreted by Al- Ghazālī	Al-Ghazālī's Commentary	Coding of Grammatical patterns	<i>Coding of Psychological patterns</i>	Hermeneutic Results
1.	Beef is a disease (Jabbar, n.d.)	The statement "beef is a disease" contradicts the content of QS. 6:142–143, QS. 22:36, and several other verses that permit the consumption of beef. It also conflicts with both historical and contemporary facts, as beef has been consumed by humans from ancient times to the present. Regardless of its authenticity, the ḥadīth carries no significant meaning.	Interpreting the word "disease" in its literal sense. Tracing Qur'anic evidence to uncover the contextual meaning of the word. Emphasizing that there is no Qur'anic basis indicating that beef causes illness.	Using historical facts. Using contemporary facts.	Hermeneutics inapplicable
2.	The deceased is punished because of his family's weeping (Syaibah, 1409)	Citing a narration in which 'Āishah strongly rejected the ḥadīth, as she considered it to contradict QS.6:164, which states that every soul bears its own burden. Referring to the opinion of Ibn 'Abbās,	Interpreting the entire structure of the ḥadīth literally (the meaning is explicitly conveyed). Referring to Qur'anic evidence.	Using a rational approach.	Hermeneutics inapplicable

	who viewed lamentation as natural human behavior and thus not sinful. Although the word <i>punished</i> (<i>yuadhdhab</i>) could be interpreted metaphorically as “feeling distressed” rather than being punished by Allah, such a reading appears forced. The ḥadīth contradicts sound reason.	Citing the opinions of classical scholars. Using reports from the Companions.(<i>ṣaḥābah</i>)			
3.	... You are no more capable of hearing than they (the polytheist dead) are in hearing what I say (A. bin Hambal, 2001)	The “hearing” of the dead can be understood metaphorically, as hearing may be interpreted as comprehension something that can occur by Allah’s permission.	Interpreting the wording metaphorically	Using an <i>‘irfānī</i> (mystical-intuitive) approach	The dead were able to comprehend the Prophet’s words by Allah’s permission.
4.	Moses (peace be upon him) once struck the Angel of Death in the eye, causing it to become blind in one eye... Then Allah restored the eye. ...(a. I. Hambal, 2001)	Presenting various <i>sharḥ</i> (commentaries) on the ḥadīth by classical scholars. Arguing that the matn (text) of the ḥadīth is irrational, as a prophet would not reject Allah’s command, and questioning the plausibility of an angel’s eye being blinded by a punch. Supporting his argument with another ḥadīth:“ <i>Whoever loves to meet Allah...</i> ” Concluding that the text cannot be interpreted metaphorically, since it expli-	Deriving meaning based on the literal structure of the wording. Comparing with other ḥadīth	Using a rational approach	Hermeneutics are inapplicable

		citly states that Allah restored the angel's eye.			
5.	From Ḥudhayfah, he said: "If I die, do not inform anyone. I fear that it would fall under <i>na'y</i> , and indeed, I have heard the Messenger of Allah forbid the act of <i>na'y</i> ." (Jabbar, 2014)	The prohibited <i>na'y</i> is the one that glorifies or highlights the deeds of the deceased in a way that evokes pride for the deceased or their family. The forbidden <i>na'y</i> refers to death announcements accompanied by ostentation (<i>riyāʿ</i>) or the arousal of <i>ʿaṣabiyyah</i> (tribal or sectarian fanaticism).	Interpreting the entire wording literally, but considering the int-ended purpose	Using a rational approach	<i>Na'y</i> is not objectionable ; in fact, it is encouraged so that the surro-unding commu-nity is infor-med.
6.	A man was suspected of committing an immoral act with one of the Prophet's <i>umm al-walad</i> (concubines). The Prophet said, "Go to him and kill him." ...It turned out that the man was castrated, so ʿAlī released him (Jabbar, 2014)	Refuting al-Nawawī commentary which suggests that the man might have been a hypocrite deserving of the death penalty. Arguing that the punishment order is irrational, as the Prophet would not issue such a ruling without prior investigation and giving the accused a chance to defend himself. He also questioned: when did the Prophet ever command the killing of a hypocrite?	Deriving meaning based on the literal structure of the wording	Using a rational approach	Hermeneutic s inapplicable
7.	A nation that entrusts its affa-irs to a woman will surely fail (Bukhari, 1442)	It contradicts QS. 27:23, which tells the story of Queen Bilqīs. It contradicts a report or historical fact that ʿUmar once appointed a woman as a market	Deriving meani-ng from the wording by cons-idering its con-text (<i>asbāb al-wurūd</i>) Referring to Qur'anic evidence	Using histo- rical facts Using cont-emporary rea-lities	A woman's leadership can succeed if she possesses the qualities of a capable leader

		supervisor in Madinah. It conflicts with current realities, as many female leaders such as Golda Meir, Indira Gandhi, and the Queen of England—have proven successful.			
8.	...Your prayer in your home is better than your prayer in the mosque”... after that, the woman requested that a prayer space be prepared for her in the farthest and darkest part of her house...(Jabbar, 2013)	This contradicts historical facts based on ḥadīths indicating that the Prophet allowed women to attend congregational prayers. The Prophet also once shortened the Fajr prayer upon hearing a baby cry.	Deriving meaning from the wording by considering its context. Comparing it with other ḥadīth	Using historical facts	There is no prohibition for a woman to pray in the mosque, if she has fulfilled her responsibilities toward her family.
9.	When my ummah commits fifteen specific acts, calamity will surely befall them... when they begin to keep female singers and musical instruments, let them await the red wind, destruction, and ruin...(Tirmidzi,1998)	It contradicts historical facts, such as ‘Umar permitting a poet to continue composing poetry with good and beautiful language. Music is like speech if the content is good, then it is good; if it is bad, then it is bad. Music can also be used for personal comfort, motivation, and inspiration. There is no explicit Qur’anic text that prohibits singing.	Deriving meaning from the wording by considering its context. Referring to reports from the Companions (Ṣaḥābah)	Using historical facts Applying a rational approach	There is no prohibition against playing or enjoying music and singing, if it does not lead to sinful behavior.
10	All expenditures are in the way of Allah (fī sabīlillāh), except for buildings; there is no good in them (Tirmidzi, 1975)	Indeed, there are several ḥadīths indicating that the Prophet disliked the luxurious buildings owned by some Companions. However, another ḥadīth mentions that ‘Umar once ascended	Deriving meaning from the wording by considering its context Referring to other ḥadīth	Using historical facts Applying a rational approach	The value of a building is determined by its use

to an upper room to
retrieve food on the
Prophet's instruct-
tion.

A grand building
used for good has
value in goodness,
while a hut used for
harm carries the
value of harm.

The Patterns and Principles of Muḥammad al-Ghazālī's Ḥadīth Hermeneutics and Its Methodological Affinity with Schleiermacher's Hermeneutics

Al-Ghazālī upholds the consensus (*ijmā'*) of Ahl al-Sunnah scholars regarding the five conditions required for a ḥadīth to be accepted. Three of these conditions pertain to the chain of transmission (*sanad*), while the remaining two concern the wording or composition of the ḥadīth, commonly referred to as the *matn*. The first condition is that the ḥadīth must be transmitted by a narrator who is attentive (*wā'in*) and precise (*ḍābiṭ*) in preserving what he hears, and who later narrates it exactly as it was heard. The second condition is that the narrator must possess firm moral character (*matīn*), intellectual sharpness (*ḍamīr*), piety towards Allah, and a strong aversion to fabrication (*taḥrīf*). These two qualities are obligatory; without them, a ḥadīth cannot maintain its classification as *ṣaḥīḥ*. The fourth condition is that the ḥadīth must not contain *shudhūdh* (anomalous elements), and the fifth is that it must be free from any critical flaw or hidden defect (*'illah qādiḥah*) (Ghazali, 1989). Al-Ghazālī adheres firmly to these conditions, which is why he is often categorized as a traditionalist-oriented Islamic thinker (Moussa, 2016).

Although Al-Ghazālī upholds the five conditions for the acceptance of a ḥadīth as maintained by Ahl al-Sunnah scholars, the determination of whether a ḥadīth contains an *'illah qādiḥah* can become a point of contention—potentially leading to divergent interpretations. Al-Ghazālī criticized al-Albānī for his commentary on the ḥadīth whose *matn* states: (*laḥm al-baqari dā'*) — “beef is a disease.” Al-Albānī's interpretation, which Al-Ghazālī responded to in several interactive public teaching forums, suggested that the term “disease” refers specifically to the excessive consumption (*iktār*) of beef (Albaniy, n.d.). Al-Ghazālī's critique of al-Albānī did not target the substance of his commentary, but rather focused on the *matn* from a textual perspective. Although the ḥadīth has a sound *sanad*, Al-Ghazālī argued that it contains an *'illah qādiḥah* (critical defect) because it is irrational. Moreover, the *matn* contradicts the Qur'an. Among the verses he cited as evidence are Q.6:142–143 and Q.22:36 (Ghazali, 1991). Al-Ghazālī does not reject al-Albānī's interpretive conclusion per se, but rather critiques the status of the ḥadīth itself, asserting that it contains an *'illah qādiḥah* (critical flaw) at the textual level, rendering it unsuitable for

hermeneutical application. Al-Ghazālī appears to assess the presence of an *‘illah qādiḥah* by comparing the textual meaning of the ḥadīth with rational coherence and Qur’anic consistency. This reflects a distinctive aspect of Al-Ghazālī’s thought, as if he were conveying the message: “What is the point of forcing a hermeneutical reading of a ḥadīth whose textual content is already odd and irrational?”

Another example of how Al-Ghazālī identifies an *‘illah qādiḥah* is his reference to ‘Ā’ishah’s rejection of the ḥadīth (*inna al-mayyita yu’adhdhabu bibukā’i ahlihi ‘alayh*), which means “the deceased is punished because of his family’s weeping over him.” This ḥadīth is classified as *ṣaḥīḥ* and is transmitted through multiple chains of narration. However, according to Al-Ghazālī, despite the soundness of its sanad, the ḥadīth is not eligible for hermeneutical interpretation because it contradicts reason and the Qur’anic verse Q.6:164, which states: “No soul bears the burden of another.” (Ghazali, 1989). There are still several other ḥadīths containing *‘illah qādiḥah* that Al-Ghazālī elaborates on in his *Al-Sunnah al-Nabawiyyah*.

In strengthening the meaning of a ḥadīth, Al-Ghazālī consistently refers to the *ẓāhir* (apparent) meaning of the Qur’an. For example, there is a (*ṣaḥīḥ*) ḥadīth which states that “the deceased is punished because of his family’s weeping over him.” Al-Ghazālī rejects this ḥadīth on the grounds that it contradicts the apparent meaning of the Qur’an. He rejects it by comparing it to the verse that states: “No soul shall bear the burden of another” (Q.6:164). Thus, regardless of how sound the *sanad* of a ḥadīth may be, the Qur’an serves as the ultimate source for verifying the validity of hermeneutical outcomes. The Qur’an is always employed as affirmative evidence—*affirmative* here meaning that it confirms or legitimizes.

There is a ḥadīth whose *matn* recounts an incident in which the Prophet stood at the edge of a trench where the polytheists had been buried, and he called out their names as well as the names of their fathers. The *matn* includes the statement: “O [people], would you not have preferred to obey Allah and His Messenger before this?... By Allah, in whose hand is the soul of Muḥammad, you are no more capable than they are of hearing what I say.” ‘Ā’ishah rejected this narration, arguing that it is impossible for the dead to hear. However, Al-Ghazālī accepted the ḥadīth, interpreting “hearing” as metaphorical—meaning “understanding.” He argues that such comprehension could indeed occur, with the permission of Allah. Thus, Al-Ghazālī accepts the ḥadīth on the basis of a figurative (*majāzī*) reading (Ghazali, 1989). For Al-Ghazālī, *majāz* (figurative interpretation) may be employed to replace an ambiguous *ẓāhir* (literal) meaning, but it does not constitute an *‘illah qādiḥah*.

In Al-Ghazālī’s hermeneutical approach, he frequently supports his arguments by presenting both historical facts (which he cites from the Qur’an and ḥadīth) and contemporary realities (drawing on examples from his own time or the period close to it). One example he offers is the ḥadīth hermeneutics concerning the status of women in leadership. This discussion stems from a *ṣaḥīḥ* ḥadīth whose *matn* states: “A nation that entrusts its affairs to a woman will surely fail.” Al-Ghazālī highlights the historical

context (*asbāb al-wurūd*) of the ḥadīth, noting that it referred to the Persian Empire, which was on the verge of collapse due to repeated confrontations with Muslim forces. At that time, a capable male general was still available to lead the country, but leadership was handed over to a young and inexperienced woman. Al-Ghazālī further supports his interpretation by citing the example of ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, who appointed a woman named al-Shifā’ as the market supervisor in Madinah. She was tasked with overseeing marketplace activities involving both men and women, upholding justice, and preventing misconduct (Ghazali, 1989).

Al-Ghazālī further elaborates contemporary facts by pointing to women who have successfully held leadership positions. For instance, he mentions Golda Meir, the Jewish leader who played a key role in the establishment of the state of Israel. He also refers to Britain, which reached the height of its power during the reign of Queen Victoria. In India, Indira Gandhi served as Prime Minister, brought suffering upon Muslims, and defeated General Yahya Khan. According to Al-Ghazālī, power is not inherently linked to gender; rather, it concerns leadership attitude, moral character, and exceptional talent. By considering both historical and contemporary realities, Al-Ghazālī affirms that leadership should not be judged by gender. A leader can emerge from either men or women. He also strengthens his argument by stating that female leadership is not in contradiction with the Qur’an. In fact, the Qur’an itself presents the story of Queen Balqīs, the ruler of the Kingdom of Saba’, as a capable female leader. For Al-Ghazālī, discrimination against women is not in line with Islam, which honors and dignifies women.

Al-Ghazālī also employed sound reasoning or a rational approach. This is one of his notable strengths, he did not base his understanding solely on textual literalism, even though he is often categorized as a traditionalist. This becomes evident when he refutes the *matn* of the ḥadīth that narrates how Moses (peace be upon him) struck the Angel of Death in the eye, causing it to become blind. According to Al-Ghazālī, the wording of this ḥadīth is incompatible with sound reason. It is inconceivable, he argued, that Moses would disobey a command from Allah, or that an angel could be physically blinded by a punch. While many earlier scholars attempted to interpret this ḥadīth through various explanations, Al-Ghazālī maintained a distinct approach. He retained a textualist framework—but not in the sense of extracting deeper meanings from the text. Rather, he used the textual form as a criterion for accepting or rejecting a ḥadīth, without necessarily engaging in extensive hermeneutical interpretation beyond what the *matn* clearly suggests.

Based on the foregoing explanation, the researcher attempts to construct Al-Ghazālī’s ḥadīth hermeneutics to identify the distinctive patterns and characteristics of his interpretive approach.

1. Pre-Hermeneutical Stage (Pre-Hermeneutics). In Schleiermacher’s hermeneutics, this stage is also referred to as the stage of grammatical interpretation. It involves

determining whether a ḥadīth is eligible for hermeneutical analysis. The process begins with a textual approach based on the *ẓāhir* (apparent) or literal meaning. If the apparent meaning appears flawed, it may be substituted with a figurative (*majāzī*) interpretation. However, not all *ẓāhir* meanings are open to figurative reading—texts whose meanings are explicitly clear cannot be reinterpreted metaphorically. This initial stage is crucial in assessing whether a ḥadīth contains a defect (*‘illah*). If a ḥadīth is deemed defective, it cannot undergo hermeneutical interpretation. At this grammatical interpretation stage, Al-Ghazālī also refers to Qur’anic verses, other ḥadīths, and reports from the Companions to explore the context of particular words or expressions.

2. Hermeneutical Process Stage. In Schleiermacher’s hermeneutics, this is referred to as the stage of psychological interpretation—not in the sense of purely psychological insight, but rather technical psychological interpretation. At this stage, Al-Ghazālī presents various modes of reasoning in the search for meaning (*meaning*) or understanding (*verstehen*), including historical analysis, *asbāb al-wurūd*, contemporary context, rational reasoning, and even *burhānī* (demonstrative/logical) methods to explore meanings related to metaphysical or unseen matters. These approaches may be employed partially or in combination. This stage reflects that Al-Ghazālī’s hermeneutics is characterized by contextual interpretation. It is important to note that the grammatical and psychological stages in Al-Ghazālī’s hermeneutics do not operate in isolation but function simultaneously.
3. Finalization Stage. At this point, Al-Ghazālī validates his hermeneutical conclusions by reinforcing them with evidence from the Qur’an. If no direct textual evidence is found in the Qur’an, he affirms his interpretation by asserting that the Qur’an does not dispute the issue in question. Thus, it can be said that Al-Ghazālī’s hermeneutical approach is characterized by an affirmative or confirmative model.

The fundamental principles underlying Al-Ghazālī’s hermeneutics include the following:

1. Confirmative Principle. This principle is applied by Al-Ghazālī when affirming his hermeneutical conclusions with Qur’anic verses.
2. Thematic-Comprehensive Principle. In applying ḥadīth hermeneutics, Al-Ghazālī compares a given narration with other relevant ḥadīths. However, he

does not deeply critique the sanad (chain of transmission) of the ḥadīths he uses for comparison.

3. Grammatical Principle. This principle is employed during the pre-hermeneutical stage through a textual approach. If the *ẓāhir* (apparent) meaning of the *matn* is deemed defective, Al-Ghazālī refrains from further hermeneutical engagement. His command of Arabic grammar is also beyond question.
4. Historical Principle. In the interpretive process, Al-Ghazālī considers the context in which the ḥadīth was spoken, including specific circumstances (*asbāb al-wurūd*), the social conditions of the time, and the actions of the Companions.
5. Realistic Principle. This is applied by Al-Ghazālī in assessing contemporary situations—for example, by comparing the leadership of women in countries such as Israel, India, and the United Kingdom.
6. Ethical and Legal Distinction Principle. In interpreting ḥadīths related to singing, Al-Ghazālī adopts a rational approach, arguing that singing has a positive aspect, namely as a beneficial form of entertainment. Here, Al-Ghazālī successfully extracts the ethical dimension of a ḥadīth through hermeneutical analysis.
7. Instrumental and Intentional Distinction Principle. Al-Ghazālī applies this principle through his contextual reasoning and his ability to perceive historical situations as instruments for temporary responses (to issues during the Prophet’s time), while orienting his thinking toward the present and future relevance (intentional) of ḥadīth application.

3. Conclusions

Although Al-Ghazālī does not formulate a formal method of hermeneutics for textual interpretation, his approach to ḥadīth hermeneutics in *Al-Sunnah al-Nabawiyyah* demonstrates a notable methodological affinity with Schleiermacher’s hermeneutical canons. This is due to Al-Ghazālī’s implicit adherence to a strict grammatical canon of interpretation in assessing whether a ḥadīth text is suitable for interpretation—even when its *sanad* is sound. In addition to his grammatical approach, Al-Ghazālī also applies a distinctive form of psychological interpretation, employing a diverse range of methods, including historical analysis, *asbāb al-wurūd*, contemporary context, rational inquiry, and proportionate *‘irfānī* reasoning. Moreover, Al-Ghazālī’s hermeneutical model incorporates a validation or finalization stage characterized by an affirmative or confirmative stance, in which the results of his interpretations are reinforced through Qur’anic evidence. With respect to the foundational principles of ḥadīth hermeneutics, Al-Ghazālī’s interpretive framework satisfies all essential criteria: the confirmative

principle, the thematic-comprehensive principle, the grammatical principle, the historical principle, the realistic principle, the ethical-legal distinction, and the instrumental-intentional distinction.

Based on the findings of this study, the author offers a recommendation to readers—particularly scholars with an interest in ḥadīth studies and hermeneutics—to explore more deeply the hermeneutical construction of Muḥammad al-Ghazālī. This means moving beyond the use of open coding alone and extending the analysis to include theoretical coding and selective coding. By applying these stages, the hermeneutics of Muḥammad al-Ghazālī's ḥadīth thought can be further theorized into a methodologically coherent conceptual framework. To achieve a more comprehensive result, it is essential to draw upon a larger volume of data from his various written works.

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