

Authenticity, Scope, and *Tarjih*: An Operational Framework for Contemporary Hadith Interpretation Applied to Four Ethical Issues

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Received: 2026-06-29; Revised: 2026-09-12; Accepted: 2026-09-15; Published: 2026-09-19

Abstract: Contemporary hadith scholarship continues to face a methodological tension between approaches that prioritise textual authority and those that emphasise historical and socio-contextual interpretation. This study develops an integrative framework for hadith interpretation and examines its analytical utility through four selected hadiths, each representing one contemporary issue: gender equality, religious moderation, human rights, and environmental ethics. Designed as qualitative conceptual library research, the study draws on primary hadith collections, including *al-Kutub al-Sittah*, *Musnad Ahmad*, and *al-Muwaṭṭa'*, together with classical hadith commentaries and relevant contemporary scholarship. The four hadiths were purposively selected as application cases rather than as a representative corpus of contemporary hadith. Each hadith was examined through an integrated sequence comprising *takhrīj al-ḥadīth*, sanad and matn criticism, linguistic and historical-contextual analysis, intertextual reading, *maqāṣid al-sunnah*, and socio-contextual interpretation. Across the four cases, the framework produced distinct interpretive outcomes: the hadith concerning female political leadership was contextualised in relation to competence, justice, and the political circumstances of its transmission; the hadith on *al-ḥanīfiyyah al-samḥah* foregrounded tolerance and non-extremism; the hadith commanding mercy toward those on earth supported the protection of human dignity and non-discrimination; and the hadith on planting even at the approach of the Hour articulated ecological responsibility and sustainability. Rather than claiming empirical validation from this limited corpus, the study demonstrates the analytical applicability of the framework across four thematically different cases while preserving the distinction between hadith authentication and contextual interpretation. Its contribution lies in operationalising classical hadith criticism, contextual analysis, and *maqāṣid al-sunnah* within a single replicable interpretive framework. Further research using larger and more diverse hadith corpora is required to assess its broader applicability.

Keywords: Matn criticism; *asbāb al-wurūd*; Abū Bakrah tradition; *takḥṣīs al-ʿāmm*; Islamic environmental ethics.

Abstrak: Studi hadis kontemporer masih menghadapi ketegangan metodologis antara pendekatan yang mengutamakan otoritas tekstual dan pendekatan yang menekankan interpretasi historis serta sosio-kontekstual. Penelitian ini mengembangkan kerangka integratif interpretasi hadis dan menguji kegunaan analitisnya melalui empat hadis terpilih yang masing-masing merepresentasikan satu isu kontemporer, yaitu kesetaraan gender, moderasi beragama, hak asasi manusia, dan etika lingkungan. Penelitian ini dirancang sebagai penelitian kepustakaan konseptual-kualitatif dengan sumber primer berupa koleksi hadis utama, termasuk *al-Kutub al-Sittah*, *Musnad Ahmad*, dan *al-Muwatta'*, disertai kitab-kitab syarah hadis dan literatur akademik kontemporer yang relevan. Keempat hadis dipilih secara purposif sebagai kasus penerapan kerangka, bukan sebagai corpus yang representatif bagi keseluruhan hadis kontemporer. Setiap hadis dianalisis melalui tahapan integratif yang meliputi *takhrīj al-ḥadīth*, kritik sanad dan matan, analisis linguistik dan historis-kontekstual, pembacaan intertekstual, *maqāṣid al-sunnah*, serta interpretasi sosio-kontekstual. Pada empat kasus tersebut, penerapan kerangka menghasilkan temuan interpretatif yang berbeda: hadis tentang kepemimpinan politik perempuan dikontekstualisasikan dalam kerangka kompetensi, keadilan, dan situasi politik yang melatarinya; hadis tentang *al-ḥanīfiyyah al-samḥah* menegaskan toleransi dan penolakan terhadap ekstremisme; hadis tentang perintah menyayangi makhluk di bumi mendukung perlindungan martabat manusia dan prinsip non-diskriminasi; sedangkan hadis tentang menanam meskipun kiamat mendekat mengartikulasikan tanggung jawab ekologis dan keberlanjutan. Alih-alih mengklaim validasi empiris berdasarkan corpus yang terbatas, penelitian ini menunjukkan aplikabilitas analitis kerangka tersebut pada empat kasus yang berbeda secara tematik dengan tetap membedakan antara autentikasi hadis dan interpretasi kontekstual. Kontribusi penelitian terletak pada operasionalisasi kritik hadis klasik, analisis kontekstual, dan *maqāṣid al-sunnah* ke dalam satu kerangka interpretasi yang dapat direplikasi. Penelitian lanjutan dengan corpus hadis yang lebih besar dan beragam diperlukan untuk menguji aplikabilitas kerangka ini secara lebih luas.

Kata Kunci: *kritik matn; asbāb al-wurūd; hadis Abū Bakrah; takhṣiṣ al-'āmm; etika lingkungan Islam.*

1. Introduction

Global developments in the twenty-first century have brought about fundamental changes in the ways societies understand, interpret, and actualise religious teachings in public life. The digital revolution, the globalisation of information, advances in science and technology, growing awareness of human rights, demands for gender equality, the strengthening discourse of religious moderation, and the global environmental crisis have generated new problems that were not directly encountered during the formative period of hadith. These issues place the hadith of the Prophet

Muhammad (peace be upon him), as the second source of Islamic teachings after the Qur'an, in an increasingly strategic yet problematic position. On the one hand, hadith continues to be regarded as a normative source with strong religious authority. On the other hand, some hadiths have become objects of criticism because they are perceived as no longer relevant to modern social developments and are even considered to be in tension with universal values such as equality, justice, human rights, and environmental sustainability (Rahman, 1982; Brown, 2009; Kamali, 2015; Shihab, 2019).

These developments do not occur only at the academic level; they have also become tangible social phenomena. The expansion of digital media has accelerated the dissemination of hadith across various social media platforms without adequate methodological explanation regarding their context, authenticity, or purpose. Consequently, hadith may be detached from its transmission history, textual relationships, and socio-historical setting, thereby encouraging polarised interpretations concerning male-female relations, interreligious tolerance, the rights of vulnerable groups, and ecological concerns. At the same time, growing global attention to climate change, sustainable development, respect for human dignity, and multicultural life demands a methodology for understanding hadith that can preserve textual authority while accounting for the dynamics of social change (Nasr, 1996; Khalid, 2019; Mangunjaya, 2014; Kamali, 2015).

As the second source of Islamic teachings, hadith functions not only to explain the Qur'an (*bayān al-Qur'ān*), but also to construct norms, ethics, and practices in various aspects of Muslim life. Therefore, a central concern in contemporary hadith studies extends beyond determining the authenticity of transmission to the question of how authenticated traditions should be interpreted, delimited in scope, reconciled with related evidence, and applied to circumstances substantially different from those of their initial transmission. Modern hadith scholarship has consequently expanded from the critique of transmission (*naqd al-sanad*) towards the critique of content and meaning (*naqd al-matn* and *naqd al-ma'nā*), historical inquiry, and contextualisation, so that hadith may continue to perform its normative and transformative functions without severing interpretation from the disciplines that establish its textual authority (Rahman, 1982; al-Qaraḍāwī, 2001; Brown, 2009).

Throughout the history of Islamic thought, various methods have been developed for understanding hadith. The classical tradition established sophisticated instruments of *sanad* and *matn* criticism, *'ilm al-rijāl*, *gharīb al-ḥadīth*, *mukhtalif al-ḥadīth*,

and *asbāb al-wurūd* to assess transmission, resolve apparent contradictions, determine linguistic meanings, and clarify the circumstances surrounding Prophetic statements. Later developments increasingly employed linguistic, historical, *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, hermeneutical, and social-scientific approaches to the interpretation of religious texts (Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, 2001; al-Shāṭibī, 1997; Saeed, 2006; Syamsuddin, 2017). The contemporary methodological problem, therefore, should not be framed as a simple absence of integration. Rather, it concerns how these multiple analytical resources can be ordered, coordinated, and adjudicated within a transparent interpretive procedure when they yield different or apparently competing indications.

This methodological challenge becomes particularly visible when hadith is brought into dialogue with contemporary issues. In the field of gender, for example, certain hadiths are often understood as legitimising the subordination of women, while other studies argue that such bias is more often produced by interpretive methods than by the hadith texts themselves (Wadud, 1999; Barlas, 2002; Umar, 2001). In relation to religious moderation, some hadiths have been used to justify exclusivism, whereas other studies show that the Prophetic tradition contains the principles of *al-ḥanīfiyyah al-samḥah*, ease, balance, and tolerance (Kamali, 2015; Shihab, 2019). In the field of human rights, hadith is sometimes placed in opposition to universal human-rights discourse, although various studies indicate that the protection of life, dignity, religious freedom, and justice constitutes an important dimension of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* (An-Na'im, 2008; Bielefeldt, 1995). Meanwhile, in environmental issues, attention to ecological hadiths remains relatively limited compared with studies on ritual jurisprudence, even though hadith contains principles of conservation, greening, and ecological responsibility that are highly relevant to the global environmental crisis (Nasr, 1996; Foltz, 2003; Khalid, 2019; Mangunjaya, 2014). These divergent applications illustrate that the methodological question concerns not only which interpretive tools should be employed, but also the order in which they should operate and the criteria by which competing interpretive indications should be weighed.

Previous studies have made substantial contributions to addressing this problem. Fazlur Rahman (1982), through his *double movement* approach, emphasised movement from the historical context of revelation towards general moral principles and from those principles towards contemporary circumstances. Yusuf al-Qaradāwī (1993, 2001) developed an explicitly multi-dimensional method for understanding the Sunnah through eight principles, including interpreting hadith in light of the Qur'an, collecting thematically related traditions, reconciling or preferring (*al-jam' wa al-*

tarjīh) apparently contradictory reports, examining historical circumstances and purposes, distinguishing permanent objectives from changeable means, differentiating literal from metaphorical expression, distinguishing the unseen from the observable, and establishing precise lexical meanings. His contribution therefore already represents an important attempt to integrate textual, intertextual, linguistic, historical, and purposive considerations in hadith interpretation (al-Qaraḍāwī, 1993, 2001).

A further development is found in Jasser Auda's systems approach to *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*. Rather than treating legal interpretation as a linear relationship between isolated texts and rulings, Auda (2008) conceptualises Islamic legal reasoning through six interrelated system features: cognition, wholeness, openness, interrelated hierarchy, multidimensionality, and purposefulness. His framework is especially significant because it challenges reductionist and one-dimensional interpretation and situates *maqāṣid* within an open, holistic, multidimensional, and purpose-oriented system of reasoning (Auda, 2008). In this respect, Auda provides a theoretically sophisticated precedent for integrative Islamic interpretation and makes it untenable to claim that integration itself constitutes an unexplored methodological territory.

Other contemporary contributions further expand this interpretive landscape. Jonathan Brown (2009) explains the historical dynamics of hadith authority and the complexity of Muslim engagement with the Prophetic tradition. Abdullah Saeed (2006) develops a contextual approach to religious texts that emphasises the interaction between linguistic meaning, socio-historical context, and contemporary application. In Indonesia, Sahiron Syamsuddin (2017) advances the *ma'nā-cum-maghzā* approach, which seeks to identify historical meaning and significance before developing contemporary significance. At the same time, studies concerning gender-related hadith, human rights, religious moderation, and environmental hadith have expanded considerably, although they are commonly organised around their respective thematic concerns (Wadud, 1999; Umar, 2001; An-Na'im, 2008; Kamali, 2015; Khalid, 2019; Mangunjaya, 2014).

Against this background, the research gap addressed by the present study is not the absence of integrative approaches as such. Al-Qaraḍāwī and Auda, among others, have already demonstrated that textual, contextual, purposive, and systemic dimensions can be brought into a coherent interpretive relationship. The more specific methodological problem lies in operationalisation. Existing integrative approaches do not always specify an explicit sequence through which hadith authentication, textual-semantic analysis, intertextual comparison, historical contextualisation, *maqāṣid*

analysis, and contemporary social analysis should be conducted as successive yet interconnected operations. Nor do they consistently formulate rules of interpretive priority (*tarjīh*) for situations in which these operations generate competing conclusions. Such situations arise when the apparent meaning of an authenticated *matn* seems to conflict with its documented historical particularity, when a literal reading diverges from a broader Qur'anic or Prophetic pattern, or when a proposed contemporary application appears to serve one *maqṣad* while undermining another. The gap therefore concerns the construction of an operational architecture that specifies sequence, interaction, and adjudication among the integrated tools, a task that goes beyond methodological integration as such (al-Qaraḍāwī, 1993, 2001; Auda, 2008; Brown, 2009).

Based on this more specific gap, the present study proposes an integrative framework for hadith interpretation organised as a sequential and recursive analytical process. It brings together *takhrīj al-ḥadīth*, *sanad* and *matn* criticism, linguistic-semantic analysis, intertextual reading, historical and *asbāb al-wurūd* analysis, *maqāṣid al-sunnah*, and socio-contextual interpretation. These components are not treated merely as a collection of parallel perspectives. Instead, they are arranged according to their distinct epistemic functions: authentication establishes the status and evidentiary weight of a report; textual and linguistic analysis determines its semantic possibilities; intertextual analysis situates it within the broader Qur'anic and Prophetic corpus; historical analysis determines the circumstances and possible scope of its address; *maqāṣid* analysis identifies the purposes and normative values implicated by the tradition; and socio-contextual analysis examines the conditions and implications of its contemporary application. Where interpretive indications diverge, preference is not assigned automatically to either textual literalism or contextual flexibility; rather, *tarjīh* is conducted by considering authenticity, textual explicitness, intertextual coherence, historical specificity, and consistency with established *maqāṣid* before contemporary application is formulated.

The novelty of this study, therefore, does not lie in claiming to originate the integration of textual, contextual, and *maqāṣid*-oriented approaches. Rather, it lies in reformulating these established insights into a defined operational framework that makes the sequence of interpretive procedures and the points of methodological adjudication more explicit. Its second contribution lies in applying the same framework consistently to four purposively selected hadiths representing four different contemporary issues: gender equality, religious moderation, human rights, and

environmental ethics. These four cases function as analytical applications through which the framework's operation across different thematic domains can be demonstrated, rather than as a representative corpus capable of establishing its universal validity.

This formulation also clarifies the relationship between the present study and its major methodological predecessors. From al-Qaraḍāwī, it recognises the necessity of Qur'anic guidance, thematic collection, contextual analysis, linguistic precision, *maqāṣid*, and *jam'/tarjīḥ* (al-Qaraḍāwī, 1993, 2001). From Auda, it takes seriously the need for wholeness, openness, multidimensionality, interrelatedness, and purposefulness in avoiding reductionist interpretation (Auda, 2008). From Rahman, Saeed, and Syamsuddin, it recognises the importance of movement between historical meaning and contemporary significance (Rahman, 1982; Saeed, 2006; Syamsuddin, 2017). The proposed framework seeks to extend these contributions specifically within hadith studies by positioning authentication, interpretation, contextualisation, and *tarjīḥ* as distinguishable yet interconnected stages of a single analytical procedure.

Academically, this study is expected to contribute to contemporary hadith methodology by providing a more transparent operational structure for combining established interpretive tools rather than presenting integration itself as unprecedented. Practically, the framework may assist academics, researchers, and educators in distinguishing between questions of hadith authenticity, semantic meaning, historical scope, normative purpose, and contemporary application. Such differentiation is important for reducing interpretive polarisation between readings that absolutise literal wording without sufficient contextual examination and readings that invoke contemporary context without adequate control from hadith criticism and textual evidence. In this way, the study also contributes to ongoing discussions concerning religious moderation, human dignity, gender justice, and ecological responsibility from the perspective of hadith.

Accordingly, this study aims to formulate an operational integrative framework for hadith interpretation that connects the normative authority of hadith with contemporary social realities through a structured combination of *takhrīj al-ḥadīth*, *sanad* and *matn* criticism, linguistic-semantic analysis, intertextual reading, historical and *asbāb al-wurūd* analysis, *maqāṣid al-sunnah*, and socio-contextual interpretation. Its specific contribution is to make explicit both the operational sequence of these tools and the points of interpretive adjudication (*tarjīḥ*) at which they may generate competing indications. The framework is then applied to four purposively selected

hadiths concerning gender equality, religious moderation, human rights, and environmental ethics, which serve as analytically distinct cases for demonstrating its applicability. The article proceeds in three further steps. The next section describes the research design, the criteria for selecting the hadiths, and the analytical procedure. The Results and Discussion section first sets out the epistemological foundations and components of the framework and then applies it to the four cases. The final section summarises the findings, states the limitations of the study, and identifies directions for further research.

This study is a qualitative conceptual study that employs textual analysis of a purposively selected corpus of four hadiths concerning gender equality, religious moderation, human rights, and environmental ethics. The primary textual sources are the major hadith collections, particularly *al-Kutub al-Sittah*, *Musnad Aḥmad*, and *al-Muwaṭṭaʾ*, supplemented by authoritative works of *sharḥ al-ḥadīth* and classical literature on *ʿulūm al-ḥadīth* and *maqāṣid al-sunnah*. Secondary sources comprise scholarly books, peer-reviewed journal articles, dissertations, and previous studies on hadith interpretation and on the four contemporary issues examined here (Rahman, 1982; Mernissi, 1991; Brown, 2009).

The four hadiths were selected as analytical cases and do not constitute a representative corpus of contemporary hadith. Selection followed four explicit criteria: (1) thematic relevance, meaning that each hadith directly addresses, or has generated significant interpretive discussion concerning, one of the four contemporary issues; (2) traceability to recognised hadith collections, so that its transmission history and textual variants can be examined through *takhrīj al-ḥadīth*; (3) interpretive contestability, meaning that the hadith presents a significant textual-contextual problem or has attracted divergent interpretations in classical or contemporary scholarship; and (4) analytical suitability, meaning that the hadith provides sufficient textual, historical, intertextual, and purposive material for applying the proposed framework. On this basis, one hadith was selected for each issue: the hadith on female political leadership for gender equality, the hadith of *al-ḥanīfiyyah al-samḥah* for religious moderation, the hadith commanding mercy toward those on earth for human rights and human dignity, and the hadith on planting even as the Hour approaches for environmental ethics. This purposive strategy provides four thematically distinct cases for examining how the framework operates; it is not designed to support statistical generalisation or claims of representativeness (Zed, 2018; Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The analysis of each hadith followed a defined sequence derived from classical hadith scholarship and contemporary contextual approaches (Rahman, 1982; al-Qaraḍāwī, 2001; Brown, 2009; Kamali, 2015). First, *takhrīj al-ḥadīth* identified the hadith in its primary sources, transmission routes, and relevant textual variants, after which *sanad* and *matn* criticism established its evidentiary status and textual integrity. Second, linguistic-semantic analysis, including attention to *gharīb al-ḥadīth* and key lexical expressions, determined the range and structure of textual meaning. Third, intertextual analysis situated each hadith in relation to relevant Qur'anic verses and thematically related Prophetic traditions. Fourth, historical analysis, including *asbāb al-wurūd* where identifiable, examined the circumstances of transmission and the possible scope of the Prophetic statement. Fifth, *maqāṣid al-sunnah* analysis identified the normative purposes and values implicated in the text, after which socio-contextual interpretation examined their applicability to the contemporary issue under consideration (al-Qaraḍāwī, 1993, 2001; Auda, 2008). Where these stages produced different or apparently competing indications, *tarjīḥ* was conducted by considering, in order, the authenticity and evidentiary weight of the report, the explicitness of its wording, its coherence with the Qur'an and thematically related hadiths, its degree of historical specificity or generality, and its consistency with established *maqāṣid*, before any contemporary application was formulated.

The researchers carried out the identification, classification, interpretation, and synthesis of the textual evidence throughout this process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Analytical rigour was maintained through comparison across primary hadith sources, textual variants, classical commentaries, and relevant contemporary scholarship, and through a documented interpretive sequence that allows the reasoning from authentication to contextual application to be examined and replicated (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Krippendorff, 2018; Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

2. Results and Discussion

Epistemological Foundations of the Integrative Framework for Hadith Interpretation

The framework for hadith interpretation refers to a systematic and structured procedure for establishing the authenticity, semantic scope, historical setting, normative purpose, and contemporary applicability of Prophetic traditions. The quality of interpretation depends not merely on what a hadith appears to say at the textual level, but also on how its transmission, language, intertextual relations, historical circumstances, and normative purposes are methodologically assessed.

Within *'ulūm al-ḥadīth*, this interpretive process involves several interrelated scholarly operations, particularly *takhrīj al-ḥadīth*, *fiqh al-ḥadīth*, *sharḥ al-ḥadīth*, *gharīb al-ḥadīth*, and *ma'ānī al-ḥadīth* (Alfatih Suryadilaga, 2012). Rather than treating these as independent approaches, the present framework positions them as sequential and mutually corrective analytical operations.

Conceptually, one of the earliest formulations of hadith interpretation developed through *fiqh al-ḥadīth*, which later became an important intellectual foundation of *sharḥ al-ḥadīth*. The word *fiqh*, derived from *faqīha–yafqahu–fiqhan*, denotes knowledge accompanied by deep understanding (*al-'ilm bi al-shay' wa al-fahm lahu*). Al-Fairūz Ābādī further associates it with knowledge, understanding, and intellectual discernment (Fauji, 2018). In hadith studies, however, *fiqh al-ḥadīth* should not be reduced to positive jurisprudence. It concerns identifying the intended meaning, normative implications, scope, and practical significance of Prophetic statements (Fauji, 2018).

The term *sharḥ al-ḥadīth*, from *sharaḥa–yashraḥu–sharḥan*, denotes explaining, elucidating, expanding, and interpreting a text. Its development was inseparable from the need to elucidate Prophetic expressions, particularly *jawāmi' al-kalim*, in which extensive meanings are communicated through concise formulations (Akhmad Sagir, 2010). Within the present framework, *sharḥ* is therefore not treated merely as paraphrase, but as a synthetic stage at which textual authenticity, semantics, historical context, intertextual evidence, and normative purpose are brought into dialogue.

Among these operations, *ma'ānī al-ḥadīth* offers a particularly useful conceptual field for contemporary scholarship because it encompasses both textual semantics and the circumstances of transmission (*asbāb al-wurūd*). The capacity in which the Prophet spoke is also relevant here. Al-Qarāfī distinguished between statements issued by the Prophet as Messenger, as *muftī*, as judge (*qāḍī*), and as political leader (*imām*), because these capacities may affect the normative scope of a Prophetic statement (Shihab, 1996). Lexical meaning alone therefore cannot determine whether a hadith establishes a universal norm, responds to a particular event, regulates a specific institutional context, or expresses a broader moral objective.

Before these interpretive operations can begin, the relevant traditions must first be identified. Issue-based *takhrīj al-ḥadīth*, as employed in this study, takes a contemporary thematic problem as its point of departure for identifying relevant Prophetic traditions and then examines their provenance, transmission routes, textual variants, and authenticity. Its thematic orientation is related to *dirāsah mawḍū'iyyah*,

in which relevant traditions are assembled and examined as an interconnected textual corpus instead of being interpreted atomistically (Zainuddin, 2025). Thematic relevance does not, however, replace conventional *takhrīj*. Once a hadith has been identified, its attribution must still be anchored in identifiable primary collections, editions, transmission routes, and, where necessary, variant wordings.

This procedure suits the four cases examined here, namely gender equality, religious moderation, human rights, and environmental ethics, because the contemporary question determines the thematic field while classical hadith criticism determines the evidentiary status of the texts employed. Issue-based *takhrīj* thus functions as an entry point into classical hadith criticism and does not serve as an alternative to it (Zainuddin, 2025).

The Integrative Framework of Contemporary Hadith Interpretation

The framework draws on four clusters of interpretive resources: *maqāṣid*-based reasoning, contextual analysis, interdisciplinary dialogue, and the methodological proposals of contemporary Muslim scholars. Each is outlined below with attention to the function it performs within the framework and to the limits the framework places upon it.

The Maqāṣid-Based Approach

The *maqāṣid* approach examines the universal and specific purposes embedded in the Qur'an and Sunnah in order to realise *maṣlaḥah* and prevent harm. It moves beyond memorisation or literal reproduction of hadith by asking what normative purposes a Prophetic instruction seeks to realise (Lilie Channa AW, 2011). For example, the authentic Prophetic teaching concerning reward for planting cannot be reduced to agricultural encouragement; in contemporary ecological circumstances it may contribute to an ethics of preserving life and ecological sustainability. Such an extension, however, must remain anchored in the authenticated text and its semantic possibilities rather than imposing contemporary concerns retrospectively upon the Sunnah.

The Contextual Approach

Contextual interpretation examines historical circumstances, including identifiable *asbāb al-wurūd*, while remaining attentive to the linguistic structure of the hadith. Historical context can help determine whether wording is general or particular, absolute or qualified, and whether a Prophetic statement addresses a specific circumstance or establishes a transhistorical principle (Lilie Channa AW,

2011; Muin, 2013). Context therefore does not override the text; nor does textual wording render context irrelevant. Their evidentiary relationship must instead be adjudicated.

The Interdisciplinary Approach

Interdisciplinary analysis brings hadith into carefully controlled dialogue with fields such as history, sociology, psychology, economics, medicine, and environmental studies. Its purpose is not to subordinate revelation to changing scientific theories but to clarify contemporary conditions in which Prophetic norms are applied. Accordingly, a hadith concerning disease may be discussed in relation to contemporary medicine, while environmental traditions may be related to ecology and sustainability. Interdisciplinarity operates primarily at the stage of contemporary application rather than determining the authenticity of a Prophetic report.

Contemporary Scholarly Approaches

Among contemporary scholars, Muḥammad al-Ghazālī proposes that hadith be interpreted in the light of the Qur'an, compared with thematically related traditions, assessed alongside reliable historical knowledge, and considered in relation to established empirical knowledge (Suryadi, 2008). Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī similarly formulates eight principles: interpreting the Sunnah according to Qur'anic guidance; assembling traditions on the same theme; reconciling or preferring apparently conflicting reports; considering historical background, circumstances, and purposes; distinguishing variable means from permanent objectives; distinguishing literal from metaphorical language; differentiating the unseen from the observable; and determining vocabulary precisely (al-Qaraḍāwī, 1993).

The present framework builds upon these precedents but places particular emphasis on analytical sequence and adjudication. Authentication precedes contemporary application; linguistic and intertextual analysis constrains contextual interpretation; historical evidence helps determine scope; *maqāṣid* identifies normative orientation; and interdisciplinary knowledge informs application. Where these analytical layers yield competing indications, *tarjīḥ* is undertaken by weighing authenticity, textual explicitness, intertextual coherence, historical specificity, and established *maqāṣid*. This sequence prevents either textualism or contextualism from functioning as an unrestricted interpretive authority.

Implementation of the Integrative Framework on Four Contemporary Issues

Each of the following four cases applies the framework in the same order. The hadith text and translation are presented first, followed by linguistic analysis, *takhrīj* and

sanad evaluation, and an interpretive analysis that combines intertextual, historical, and *maqāṣid* considerations. Each case closes with the *tarjīḥ* reached and its contemporary application. Where the analytical stages yield competing indications, the basis on which they are adjudicated is stated explicitly.

Analysis of Hadith on Gender Equality

The first case concerns the hadith of Abū Bakrah on female political leadership, a report that has long served as a principal textual reference in debates on women's eligibility for public office.

حَدَّثَنَا عُثْمَانُ بْنُ الْهَيْثَمِ حَدَّثَنَا عَوْفٌ عَنِ الْحَسَنِ عَنْ أَبِي بَكْرَةَ قَالَ لَقَدْ نَفَعَنِي اللَّهُ بِكَلِمَةٍ سَمِعْتُهَا مِنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ - صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ - أَيَّامَ الْجَمَلِ ، بَعْدَ مَا كِدْتُ أَنْ أَلْحَقَ بِأَصْحَابِ الْجَمَلِ فَأَقَاتِلَ مَعَهُمْ قَالَ لَمَّا بَلَغَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ - صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ - أَنَّ أَهْلَ فَارِسَ قَدْ مَلَكُوا عَلَيْهِمْ بِنْتُ كِسْرَى قَالَ «لَنْ يُفْلِحَ قَوْمٌ وَلَوْ أَمَرَهُمْ امْرَأَةٌ»

From ‘Uthmān ibn al-Haytham, from ‘Awf, from al-Ḥasan, from Abū Bakrah, who said: ‘Allah benefited me through a statement that I heard from the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) during the days of the Battle of the Camel, after I had almost joined the Companions of the Camel and fought alongside them. When the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) was informed that the people of Persia had appointed the daughter of Kistrā as their ruler, he said: “A people who entrust their affairs to a woman will never prosper.” (al-Bukhārī).

Gharīb al-Ḥadīth and Ma’ānī al-Ḥadīth

The expression لَنْ يُفْلِحَ derives from *falāḥ*, denoting success, prosperity, or attainment of an intended objective. قَوْمٌ designates a people or political community, while وَلَوْ أَمَرَهُمْ denotes entrusting collective authority or public affairs. At the lexical level, امْرَأَةٌ is indefinite and the sentence has a formally general construction. Consequently, a contextual interpretation cannot simply erase its linguistic generality; it must explain, through recognised hermeneutical mechanisms, why and to what extent that generality may be specified.

The report itself supplies an immediate historical context: the Prophet's statement followed news that the Persians had appointed Kistrā's daughter amid the political crisis of the Sasanian monarchy. Classical jurists frequently treated the report as evidence concerning women's eligibility for supreme political authority. Contemporary contextual approaches, by contrast, have asked whether its apparent generality should be applied universally or specified in light of its occasion, other scriptural evidence, and the institutional character of political authority (Rahman, 1982; al-Qaradāwī, 2001; Brown, 2009; Wadud, 1999; Umar, 2001).

Takhrīj al-Ḥadīth and Sanad Evaluation

The report is transmitted in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, including in *Kitāb al-Maghāzī* and *Kitāb al-Fitan*, and is also transmitted by al-Nasā'ī. Its status within Sunni hadith criticism is therefore not appropriately challenged merely by questioning Abū Bakrah's personal reliability after al-Bukhārī accepted his transmission. The relevant methodological issue is instead how an authenticated report's scope of application is determined (Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, 2001; Brown, 2009).

Table 1. Transmission Layers of the Hadith of Abū Bakrah

Transmission layer	Name	Function
Prophetic source (<i>maṣḍar al-ḥadīth</i>)	Messenger of Allah	Source of the Prophetic statement
Ṣaḥābī	Abū Bakrah	Companion transmitting from the Prophet
Tābi'ī	al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī	Transmits from Abū Bakrah
Later transmitter	'Awf ibn Abī Jamīlah	Transmits from al-Ḥasan
Teacher of al-Bukhārī	'Uthmān ibn al-Haytham	Transmits the report to al-Bukhārī
Muṣannif/Compiler	Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl al-Bukhārī	Records the report in <i>Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī</i>

Fiqh al-Ḥadīth: Authenticity and Interpretive Scope

Within *fiqh al-ḥadīth*, this report has generated a long-standing debate in Islamic political jurisprudence. Some classical scholars read it as evidence that women may not hold the highest political office (*al-imāmah al-'uẓmā*). This reading was shaped by classical socio-political structures in which state leadership was bound up with warfare, adjudication, diplomacy, and public authority, domains that were at the time constructed almost entirely as masculine political space (Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, 2001).

Several contemporary thinkers, by contrast, distinguish between the normative principle of the hadith and its socio-political setting. On their reading, the hadith responded to political instability in Persia and was not formulated as a legal text addressing every form of women's leadership. The legal meaning to be derived is therefore the importance of leadership that meets the requirements of competence, political stability, justice, trustworthiness, and public welfare. If Persia's failure resulted from dynastic crisis, power struggles, and institutional weakness, its cause cannot be reduced to the gender of its ruler.

The framework adjudicates between these readings by separating two analytical levels. At the level of authenticity, the report is accepted within the Sunni hadith

tradition as a *ṣaḥīḥ* narration transmitted by al-Bukhārī. At the level of interpretation and legal scope, authenticity does not by itself determine whether the wording must be applied universally and without qualification. The historical setting is significant, since the Prophet's statement followed news that the Persians had entrusted authority to Kisrā's daughter during a period of dynastic instability. Historical context alone, however, cannot convert a formally general statement into a contextually restricted one. The decisive question is whether Islamic interpretive theory provides legitimate mechanisms for maintaining, specifying, or contextualising the apparent generality of the statement in light of its occasion, related Qur'anic principles, other Prophetic traditions, and the established tools of *uṣūl al-fiqh*.

Intertextual reading supplies the first of these resources. Q.S. al-Tawbah [9]: 71 presents believing men and believing women as mutual allies in moral and social responsibility; Q.S. al-Ḥujurāt [49]: 13 grounds human nobility in piety rather than biological identity; and Q.S. al-Naml [27]: 23–44 depicts Queen Bilqīs as a deliberative political actor capable of consultation, strategic judgement, and rational decision-making. These texts do not automatically invalidate the hadith of Abū Bakrah, yet they complicate any interpretation that converts it into an ontological proposition about the inherent incapacity of women to exercise public authority.

Maqāṣid analysis points in the same direction. Leadership exists to preserve religion, life, intellect, lineage, property, and honour and to secure justice and public welfare. Its criterion is therefore ethical and competence-based, so that a leader is assessed by the ability to establish justice, uphold trust, manage society, and protect public welfare. This principle accords with Q.S. al-Nisā' [4]: 58, which commands that trusts be delivered to those entitled to them and that judgement be made with justice; the criteria the verse names are trust and justice, and gender is not among them. Gender equality in this sense does not require the erasure of biological difference. It requires that biological difference not serve as an automatic basis for discrimination, subordination, or exclusion from public responsibility where competence, integrity, and public welfare are otherwise present (Umar, 2001; Wadud, 1999; Barlas, 2002).

Mernissi, Fadel, and the Problem of Historicisation

Whether historical analysis can legitimately narrow the scope of the report has been answered in sharply different ways. Fatima Mernissi made an influential contribution by shifting attention from the apparent wording of the hadith to its socio-political use

and transmission history. In *The Veil and the Male Elite*, published in another English edition as *Women and Islam: An Historical and Theological Inquiry*, Mernissi examines the circumstances in which Abū Bakrah invoked the hadith during the political conflict surrounding the Battle of the Camel. She also questions his moral authority by referring to the episode in which he was punished in connection with testimony against al-Mughīrah ibn Shu'bah (Mernissi, 1991). Her approach is significant because it shows how hadith may acquire political functions in later historical settings and how questions of power, gender, and transmission can shape interpretation.

Nevertheless, Mernissi's method encounters a serious problem within mainstream Sunni hadith epistemology. Her critique of Abū Bakrah's moral reliability challenges the principle of *'adālat al-ṣaḥābah*, according to which the Companions are generally treated as upright transmitters, and it also conflicts with the fact that al-Bukhārī accepted the report within his *Ṣaḥīḥ* (Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, 2001; Brown, 2009). For this reason, Mernissi's intervention is more persuasive as a critique of the later use and political deployment of the hadith than as a definitive invalidation of its authenticity.

A methodologically stronger alternative is offered by Mohammad Fadel (2011), who analyses precisely this hadith and asks whether an egalitarian reform can be achieved without rejecting the classical hadith tradition. Fadel argues that the problem need not be resolved by attacking Abū Bakrah's reliability. Instead, the formal generality of the statement may be examined through the internal juristic mechanism of *takhsīṣ al-'āmm*, namely the specification of an apparently general proposition through other relevant evidence and recognised principles of legal interpretation. This move is methodologically important because it allows the interpreter to preserve the authenticated status of the report while reconsidering the scope of its legal application from within the resources of *uṣūl al-fiqh* itself (Fadel, 2011). Fadel's study is especially relevant to the present integrative framework because it demonstrates that contextualisation need not depend on external historicist rejection; it can proceed through internal mechanisms of juristic reasoning.

Fadel also strengthens the historical dimension of the debate by directing attention to the report's transmission milieu, especially its Basran circulation, rather than relying primarily on speculation regarding Abū Bakrah's individual motives. This distinction is important. Historical interpretation is methodologically stronger when it reconstructs demonstrable patterns of transmission, geographical circulation, factional context, and reception history than when it attributes unverified intentions to a transmitter. Thus, the relevant historical question is not merely why Abū Bakrah may

have cited the hadith, but how the report circulated, how it was received, and how its legal meaning was subsequently constructed within Islamic scholarship (Fadel, 2011).

Jonathan A. C. Brown's discussion of controversial hadith further reinforces the need to distinguish between authenticity, interpretation, and moral-legal application. In *Misquoting Muhammad*, Brown shows that difficult hadiths are rarely resolved responsibly by choosing between simple acceptance and outright rejection; rather, Muslim scholarly traditions have historically employed layered mechanisms of interpretation, reconciliation, specification, contextualisation, and juristic reasoning (Brown, 2014). This perspective supports the present article's contention that an integrative approach should not collapse *ṣiḥḥat al-ḥadīth* into a single predetermined contemporary application.

The history of women's participation in hadith transmission further complicates any assumption that Islamic religious authority was structurally or essentially male. Asma Sayeed shows that women participated significantly in the transmission and cultivation of religious knowledge across different periods of Islamic history, particularly within hadith scholarship (Sayeed, 2013). Her work provides an important historical corrective: a reading of the Abū Bakrah hadith that excludes women from public or intellectual authority in an absolute sense sits uneasily with the documented history of women as recognised transmitters and teachers of hadith.

Khaled Abou El Fadl adds a further dimension through his analysis of legal and religious authority. In *Speaking in God's Name: Islamic Law, Authority and Women*, he argues that claims made in the name of divine law must be disciplined by epistemic responsibility, moral integrity, and restraint against the authoritarian appropriation of religious texts (Abou El Fadl, 2001). His contribution is pertinent because the problem concerns both what the hadith says and how interpreters claim the authority to turn a contested reading into a binding judgement about women's public capacity.

Taken together, Mernissi, Fadel, Brown, Sayeed, and Abou El Fadl illuminate complementary dimensions of the same interpretive problem. Mernissi foregrounds political context and power; Fadel shows how *takhṣīṣ al-'āmm* permits reform through mechanisms internal to *uṣūl al-fiqh*; Brown emphasises the distinction between authenticity and interpretive application; Sayeed documents that women held authoritative positions in hadith transmission; and Abou El Fadl highlights the ethical responsibility entailed in claiming religious authority. These perspectives support a more robust integrative reading than either literal generalisation or transmitter-focused historicism can provide.

Tarjīḥ and Contemporary Application

The resulting *tarjīḥ* does not require declaring the hadith inauthentic, nor does it allow its apparent wording to prohibit every form of female leadership automatically. Authenticity and normative scope remain distinct questions. When *takhṣīṣ al-’āmm*, intertextual reading including Q.S. al-Naml [27]: 23–44, historical contextualisation, and *maqāṣid*-based reasoning are considered together, the strongest conclusion is that the report addresses a specific configuration of political authority and does not establish an ontological judgement on women’s capacity as such (Fadel, 2011; Brown, 2014). Leadership in Islam is more fundamentally related to *amānah*, justice, competence, consultation, moral integrity, and public welfare. Gender therefore cannot function as the sole and self-sufficient criterion for excluding a person from public leadership when these substantive conditions are fulfilled (Umar, 2001; Wadud, 1999; Barlas, 2002; Abou El Fadl, 2001).

Contemporary application must also take account of how the structure of political authority has changed. Leadership in modern political systems is no longer identical with the personal and dynastic sovereignty of late antique monarchy; it is exercised through constitutional structures, differentiated institutions, separation of powers, legal accountability, public participation, and collective decision-making. The normative value of the hadith can thus be retained as a warning about the quality and legitimacy of political authority, while its application is mediated through *shūrā*, competence, justice, institutional responsibility, and public welfare. In this case, the integrative framework neither neutralises the text through contextualism nor absolutises its apparent generality through literalism. It adjudicates among authenticity, linguistic form, historical evidence, intertextual coherence, *uṣūl al-fiqh*, and *maqāṣid* before formulating a contemporary judgement.

Analysis of Hadith on Religious Moderation

The second case moves from political authority to the ethics of religious life in plural societies. The hadith selected for religious moderation is the report in which the Prophet identified *al-ḥanīfiyyah al-samḥah* as the religion most beloved to God.

حَدَّثَنِي يَزِيدٌ ، قَالَ : أَخْبَرَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ إِسْحَاقَ ، عَنْ دَاوُدَ بْنِ الْحُصَيْنِ ، عَنْ عِكْرِمَةَ ، عَنْ ابْنِ عَبَّاسٍ قَالَ : قِيلَ لِرَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ : أَيُّ الْأَدْيَانِ أَحَبُّ إِلَى اللَّهِ ؟ قَالَ : الْحَنِيفِيَّةُ السَّمْحَةُ

Yazīd narrated to me, saying: Muḥammad ibn Ishāq informed us, from Dāwūd ibn al-Ḥuṣayn, from ‘Ikrimah, from Ibn ‘Abbās, who said: The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) was asked, “Which religion is most beloved to Allah?” He

replied, “*Al-ḥanīfiyyah al-samḥah*,” that is, the upright and tolerant religion (Aḥmad).

Gharīb al-Ḥadīth and Ma’ānī al-Ḥadīth

The expression *al-ḥanīfiyyah* signifies orientation toward monotheistic truth, whereas *al-samḥah* denotes ease, generosity, openness, and the absence of unnecessary hardship (Ibn Manẓūr, 1993; al-Rāghib al-Aṣḥānī, 2009; Ibn al-Athīr, 1979; Ibn Ḥajar al-’Asqalānī, 2001). The combination is methodologically important: *samāḥah* is not theological relativism, while *ḥanīfiyyah* does not entail social harshness. The hadith therefore combines confessional commitment with ethical openness and is consistent with Prophetic teachings such as *يَسْرُوا وَلَا تُعَسِّرُوا* and *إِنَّ الدِّينَ يُسْرٌ* (Al-Bukhārī, 2002; Muslim, 2006; Kamali, 2015; Shihab, 2019).

The two terms thus name complementary characteristics of the religion most beloved to God. *Al-ḥanīfiyyah* derives from *ḥanīf*, literally “inclining towards truth” or “turning away from error”, and in Islamic usage designates an upright monotheism free from deviation and polytheism, the *tawḥīd* taught by the prophets and associated above all with Abraham (Maulana, 2022). *Al-samḥah* denotes tolerance, ease, and openness. In the interpretation of this hadith, it describes a religion practised without harshness or extremism, a quality that extends to ease in worship, gentleness in social relations, and respect for the rights of others.

Takhrīj al-Ḥadīth and Sanad Evaluation

The hadith is narrated by Aḥmad in *Musnad Aḥmad* and appears in al-Bukhārī’s *al-Adab al-Mufrad* and al-Ṭabarānī’s *al-Mu’jam al-Kabīr* (Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, 2001; al-Bukhārī, 2011; al-Ṭabarānī, 1994). Its grading varies among modern critics. Shu’ayb al-Arna’ūṭ assessed it as *ṣaḥīḥ li ghayrih*, al-Albānī as *ḥasan li ghayrih*, and Aḥmad Shākir considered its chain *ṣaḥīḥ*.

Table 2. Chain of Transmission of the Hadith of Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal on al-Ḥanīfiyyah al-Samḥah

Transmission layer	Name	Function
Prophetic source (<i>maṣḍar</i>)	Messenger of Allah	Source of the statement
Ṣaḥābī	‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abbās	Transmits from the Prophet
Tābi’ī	‘Ikrimah	Transmits from Ibn ‘Abbās
Later transmitter	Dāwūd ibn al-Ḥuṣayn	Transmits from ‘Ikrimah
Later transmitter	Muḥammad ibn Ishāq	Transmits from Dāwūd
Teacher of Aḥmad	Yazīd ibn Harūn	Transmits to Aḥmad
Muṣannif/Compiler	Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal	Records of the report

These divergent gradings reflect specific points in the chain. First, Muḥammad ibn Ishāq, a well-known authority in *sīrah*, was assessed as *ṣadūq* but was also known

for *tadlīs*, so his transmission through ‘*an’ānah*, as in this route, requires scrutiny (Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, 1995; al-Dhahabī, 1985). Second, Dāwūd ibn al-Ḥuṣayn is generally accepted, although hadith critics gave particular attention to his narrations from ‘Ikrimah. Third, ‘Ikrimah, the client of Ibn ‘Abbās, narrated extensively from his master in *tafsīr* and hadith; despite the controversies surrounding him, the majority of hadith scholars accepted his narrations with certain qualifications (al-Mizzī, 1980; Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, 1995).

Because of these observations, not all critics graded the hadith *ṣaḥīḥ* in its own right. It is, however, strengthened by supporting routes and by its consistency with the general principles of the *sharī‘ah*, so that the gradings *ṣaḥīḥ li ghayrih* and *ḥasan li ghayrih* are proportionate. The ethical argument for moderation should accordingly not rest on this single route alone. It is reinforced by the wider authenticated Prophetic corpus on *yusr*, the avoidance of unnecessary hardship, mercy, and non-repulsion.

Matn Analysis and Classical Commentary

At the level of the *matn*, the hadith does not conflict with the Qur’an, authentic hadith, sound reason, or *maqāṣid al-sharī‘ah*. Its content accords with Q.S. al-Baqarah [2]: 143 on the middle community (*ummataṇ wasaṭan*), Q.S. al-Ḥajj [22]: 78 on the absence of undue hardship in religion, and Q.S. al-Anbiyā’ [21]: 107 on the Prophet’s mission as mercy to all creation. The *matn* therefore provides a sound normative foundation for religious moderation.

Classical commentary extends this ethic beyond the Muslim community. According to Ibn Rajab al-Ḥanbalī in *Jāmi’ al-‘Ulūm wa al-Ḥikam*, *al-samḥah* implies good conduct towards non-Muslims as well as fellow Muslims, and indeed towards anyone in one’s social environment. It reflects the conduct of the Prophet, who consistently taught kindness, respect, and the fulfilment of every person’s rights regardless of religious or doctrinal difference (Ibn Rajab al-Ḥanbalī, 1999).

The Prophet’s own practice gave this principle concrete form. The Constitution of Medina, as preserved in Ibn Ishāq’s *Sīrah*, recognised the religious autonomy of the groups it bound together, allowing each to practise its faith without interference and guaranteeing security and protection to all parties (Ibn Ishāq, 1955). It thus represents an early instance of institutionalised tolerance in a plural society.

The hadith of al-ḥanīfiyyah al-samḥah is highly relevant to religious moderation because it contains two central pillars: firmness in principle and openness in attitude. Religious moderation does not mean moderating religious teachings until they lose their identity; rather, it means moderating ways of thinking, behaving, and acting so

that they do not fall into extremism, violence, or intolerance.

As a religion of *rahmatan li al-'ālamīn*, Islam emphasises harmonious living, mutual respect, and the fulfilment of every individual's rights regardless of religion, ethnicity, or culture. The way the Prophet taught tolerance to his community is therefore directly relevant to national and civic life.

This hadith also provides a basis for critiquing religious understandings that are merely textual and fail to consider maqāṣid, context, and social consequences. A rigid textual understanding may produce harsh religiosity, while an uncontrolled contextual reading may lead to relativism. Therefore, this hadith should be understood through an integrative approach: the text should be read together with historical context, maqāṣid al-sunnah, principles of public welfare, and contemporary social realities (Rahman, 1982; al-Qaraḍāwī, 2001; Brown, 2009).

The hadith thus requires Muslims to remain firm in *tawḥīd* while being gentle, open, and respectful of difference. In societies where intolerance and discrimination persist, this balance offers a resource for sustaining peace amid diversity. Tolerance in this sense does not mean approving every view or belief. It means respecting the right of others to live according to their beliefs without fear of discrimination or violence.

The hadith should nevertheless not be reduced to a slogan of tolerance, and the analysis yields three boundaries. First, *al-samḥah* does not entail theological approval of all beliefs. Second, it does not permit injustice or social harm. Third, it cannot be separated from justice. Within these boundaries, *al-samḥah* supports tolerance, proportionality, non-coercive social relations, and the rejection of religious harshness, as a form of moral openness grounded in truth, justice, and public welfare. Religious moderation is thus better understood as an ethical mode of living religious commitment than as a dilution of theological conviction (Rahman, 1982; al-Qaraḍāwī, 2001; Brown, 2009).

Analysis of Hadith on Human Rights

The third case concerns human rights, understood here as respect for human dignity and the principle of compassion in social relations. The selected hadith is the narration of 'Abdullāh ibn 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ, which makes compassion towards all who are on earth the condition for receiving God's mercy (Tashdiq, 2025). It was chosen because of its direct bearing on the protection of human beings, its inclusive semantic scope, which draws no distinction among human backgrounds, and its relevance to humanitarian ethics in Islam.

حَدَّثَنَا ابْنُ أَبِي عُمَرَ حَدَّثَنَا سُفْيَانُ عَنْ عَمْرِو بْنِ دِينَارٍ عَنْ أَبِي قَابُوسَ عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عَمْرٍو قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ: الرَّاحِمُونَ يَرْحَمُهُمُ الرَّحْمَنُ، اَرْحَمُوا مَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ يَرْحَمَكُمُ مَنْ فِي السَّمَاءِ، الرَّحِمُ شُجْنَةٌ مِنَ الرَّحْمَنِ، فَمَنْ وَصَلَهَا وَصَلَهُ اللَّهُ وَمَنْ قَطَعَهَا قَطَعَهُ اللَّهُ

Ibn Abī ‘Umar narrated to us: Sufyān narrated to us, from ‘Amr ibn Dīnār, from Abū Qābūs, from ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Amr ibn al-’Āṣ, who said: The Messenger of Allah said, “Those who show mercy will be shown mercy by the Most Merciful. Show mercy to whoever is on the earth, and the One in the heaven will show mercy to you. The womb-tie is an intimate connection from the Most Merciful. Whoever maintains it, Allah will maintain him; and whoever severs it, Allah will sever him.”

Al-Tirmidhī said: This hadith is *ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ* (al-Tirmidhī).

Gharīb al-Ḥadīth and Ma’ānī al-Ḥadīth

The semantic centre of the report is *rahmah*. The expression *مَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ* has deliberately broad wording and therefore provides a basis for an expansive ethic of compassion, although moving from compassion to a complete modern theory of legally enforceable human rights requires an additional normative argument rather than simple lexical equivalence (Ibn Manzūr, 1993; al-Rāghib al-Aṣfahānī, 2009).

Read as a principle, *irḥamū man fī al-arḍ* grounds a universal ethic in which whoever exists on earth is entitled to compassionate treatment. This entitlement can be articulated as the right to life, to safety from violence, to honour, to family protection, to justice, and to freedom from discrimination. The wording also transcends narrow identity boundaries. The Prophet did not restrict the command to fellow Muslims; he commanded mercy towards whoever is on the earth.

Takhrīj al-Ḥadīth and Sanad Evaluation

The hadith is recorded by al-Tirmidhī in his *Sunan*, where he grades it *ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ* (al-Tirmidhī, 1998). Its chain runs through Sufyān ibn ‘Uyaynah and ‘Amr ibn Dīnār to Abū Qābūs, as set out in Table 3.

Table 3. Chain of Transmission of the Hadith Narrated by al-Tirmidhī No. 1924

Transmission layer	Name	Critical function/status
Prophetic source (<i>maṣḍar</i>)	Messenger of Allah	Source of the statement
Ṣaḥābī	‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Amr ibn al-’Āṣ	Companion transmitter
Tābi‘ī	Abū Qābūs, <i>mawlā</i> of ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Amr	Ibn Ḥajar: <i>maqbul</i>
Later transmitter	‘Amr ibn Dīnār	Transmits from Abū Qābūs
Later transmitter	Sufyān ibn ‘Uyaynah	Transmits from ‘Amr

Teacher of al-Tirmidhī	Ibn Abī ‘Umar	Transmits to al-Tirmidhī
Muṣannif/Compiler	al-Tirmidhī	Records and evaluates the report

Abū Qābūs is the critical transmitter in this chain. Ibn Ḥajar classifies him as *maqbul*, a technical designation that does not justify treating the individual isnād as unproblematic merely because later transmitters are reliable. In Ibn Ḥajar’s terminology, a *maqbul* transmitter is accepted when corroborating evidence supports his report; without such support his solitary narration requires caution. Accordingly, al-Tirmidhī’s judgement ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ should be reported, but it should not replace transmitter-level analysis.

Fiqh al-Ḥadīth and Normative Analysis

Classical commentators read the hadith as an affirmation of *raḥmah* in social interaction. Al-Mubārakfūrī explains that the command to show mercy to creatures on earth expresses a universal ethical teaching that encompasses human relations regardless of social status, background, or position. Compassion here is more than an emotional disposition, since it is realised in just treatment, respect for human dignity, and the avoidance of injustice and violence. In this commentarial tradition, the hadith functions as an ethical foundation for just social life and for respect for the basic rights of every individual (al-Mubārakfūrī, 1993).

At the normative level, *raḥmah* functions as a foundational Islamic ethic that can support the protection of human dignity, life, security, family relations, and freedom from unjust harm. This interpretation coheres with Q.S. al-Isrā’ [17]: 70 on human dignity, Q.S. al-Mā’idah [5]: 32 on life, Q.S. al-Ḥujurāt [49]: 13 on human diversity, and Q.S. al-Anbiyā’ [21]: 107 on Prophetic mercy. It may also be related to *ḥifẓ al-nafs*, *ḥifẓ al-’aql*, *ḥifẓ al-dīn*, *ḥifẓ al-nasl*, *ḥifẓ al-māl*, and protection of dignity (al-Shāṭibī, 1997; Ibn ‘Āshūr, 2001; Kamali, 2008).

In the context of modern human rights, the hadith can enter into dialogue with the principle of universal dignity. The Qur’anic notion of *karāmat al-insān* affirmed in Q.S. al-Isrā’ [17]: 70 implies that human dignity may not be violated through violence, racism, religious or gender discrimination, economic exploitation, or political oppression. *Raḥmah* supplies the ethical force that prevents law from becoming a dry instrument of power devoid of humanity.

Sociologically, the message of this hadith concerning compassion and reciprocal care does not focus only on interpersonal relationships but also reflects a social ethical foundation that encourages communal solidarity in facing modern social challenges. From this perspective, reciprocal compassion among citizens strengthens social capital,

contributes to social cohesion and community resilience, and builds networks of social support within society (Prasetyo, 2020). Other studies show that the values of compassion in hadith contribute to the formation of social harmony and inclusive interpersonal relations, which are sociologically important in reducing conflict and maintaining social relations in diverse societies (Tashdiq, 2025). Studies on hadith-based social education also explain that Prophetic teachings on empathy, compassion, and care foster strong social engagement; thus, this hadith can be read as a normative basis for practices of mutual respect and shared social responsibility in contemporary society (Mutmainnah et al., 2024).

Read together with Q.S. al-Mā'idah [5]: 32 and the *maqāṣid* of protecting life and dignity, the ethic of *raḥmah* also implies a collective responsibility not to leave injustice unaddressed. Silence in the face of injustice then becomes a social failure with broad consequences, including the loss of security and protection for vulnerable groups. In this respect, the hadith resonates with the human-rights principle of the right to protection, namely the obligation of society and government to prevent injustice and to ensure that every person is treated fairly.

The *tarjīḥ* in this case concerns the limits of the claim. An integrative interpretation should not present *irḥamū man fī al-arḍ* as a premodern codification of modern international human-rights law. The stronger claim is that its universal ethic of *raḥmah*, read alongside Qur'anic *karāmah*, justice, and *maqāṣid*, supplies normative resources capable of constructive dialogue with contemporary human-rights discourse (al-Mubārakfūrī, 1993; Prasetyo, 2020; Mutmainnah et al., 2024; Tashdiq, 2025). This formulation preserves the historical integrity of the hadith while avoiding anachronism.

Analysis of Hadith on Environmental Ethics

The fourth case turns to environmental ethics. The selected hadith, narrated by Anas ibn Mālik, commands a person holding a sapling to plant it even if the Hour is established. It was chosen because it links a concrete act of cultivation to an eschatological horizon and thereby raises, in compressed form, the question of how Prophetic teachings on agriculture may inform contemporary ecological responsibility.

حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ اللَّهِ، حَدَّثَنِي أَبِي، ثَنَا بَهْزُ، ثَنَا حَمَّادٌ، ثَنَا هِشَامُ بْنُ زَيْدٍ، قَالَ: سَمِعْتُ أَنَسَ بْنَ مَالِكٍ، قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ إِنَّ قَامَتِ السَّاعَةُ، وَبَيَدِ أَحَدِكُمْ فَسِيلَةٌ، فَإِنْ اسْتَطَاعَ أَنْ لَا يَقُومَ حَتَّى يَغْرِسَهَا، فَلْيَفْعَلْ

‘Abdullāh narrated to us: my father narrated to me: Bahz narrated to us: Ḥammād narrated to us: Hishām ibn Zayd narrated to us, saying: I heard Anas ibn Mālik

say: The Messenger of Allah said, “If the Hour is established while one of you has a sapling in his hand, and if he is able not to stand until he has planted it, then let him do so” (Aḥmad).

Gharīb al-Ḥadīth and Ma’ānī al-Ḥadīth

The word السَّاعَةُ linguistically means “time” or “a particular moment”. In this hadith, al-sā’ah refers to the Day of Resurrection or the final moment of worldly destruction. The reference to the Hour indicates the most extreme situation, in which rationally one might assume that all worldly activity has lost its purpose. Yet the Prophet commands one to continue planting. This conveys the message that good deeds should not be abandoned merely because their results may not be immediately enjoyed.

The phrase بِيَدٍ أَحَدِكُمْ means “in the hand of one of you”. This expression indicates immediacy and readiness for action. Since the sapling is already in one’s hand, the moral obligation is no longer merely to intend good, but to perform a concrete action. The term فَسِيلَةٌ (*fasīlah*) refers specifically to a young date-palm shoot. The hadith therefore begins with a concrete agricultural act rather than an abstract ecological proposition. Its striking eschatological construction places productive action at the moment when worldly utility appears least calculable. The moral force of the text lies precisely in this paradox: righteous and life-sustaining action retains value even where the actor cannot expect to enjoy its outcome.

The word يَغْرِسُهَا derives from gharasa, meaning to plant a tree or place a seedling into the soil so that it may grow. It differs from merely placing something on the ground, for it implies productive activity, care, and hope for the future. The phrase فَلْيَفْعَلْ means “let him do so”. This imperative form provides ethical emphasis that planting a tree is a righteous act that retains value even when its benefit may not be immediately obtained by the one who plants it.

Takhrīj al-Ḥadīth and Sanad Evaluation

The hadith is recorded by Aḥmad in his *Musnad* through Bahz ibn Asad, from Ḥammād ibn Salamah, from Hishām ibn Zayd, from Anas (Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, 2001). Al-Bukhārī transmits the same report in *al-Adab al-Mufrad* (no. 479) through Abū al-Walīd, from Ḥammād ibn Salamah, from Hishām ibn Zayd, from Anas (al-Bukhārī, 2011). Both routes thus converge on Ḥammād ibn Salamah. The transmitters in these routes are generally assessed as reliable in the *rijāl* literature, and the chain is widely accepted as sound (Ibn Ḥajar al-’Asqalānī, 1995).

Table 4. Chain of Transmission of the Hadith Narrated by Aḥmad from Anas ibn Mālik

Transmission layer	Name	Function
Prophetic source (<i>maṣḍar</i>)	Messenger of Allah	Source of the statement
Ṣaḥābī	Anas ibn Mālik	Companion transmitter
Tābiʿī	Hishām ibn Zayd ibn Anas	Transmits from Anas
Later transmitter	Ḥammād ibn Salamah	Transmits from Hishām
Teacher of Aḥmad	Bahz ibn Asad	Transmits to Aḥmad
Muṣannif/Compiler	Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal	Records the report in the <i>Musnad</i>
Rāwī al-Musnad	ʿAbdullāh ibn Aḥmad	Transmits the <i>Musnad</i> from his father

Fiqh al-Ḥadīth and Maqāṣid Analysis

The ecological significance of the hadith lies in the way it connects the future of the earth with a small human act. The Prophet did not say, “If the Hour comes, abandon worldly affairs”; he said, “plant it.” Ecological work thus retains value even when human beings cannot guarantee its final outcome, a message of evident relevance to contemporary crises such as climate change, deforestation, drought, water pollution, and biodiversity loss.

The hadith achieves this effect through a hyperbolic, and arguably metaphorical, construction. The Prophet, who knew the condition of humanity at the approach of the Hour, urges planting at precisely the moment when planting seems least meaningful. The hyperbole underscores that protecting and restoring the environment never loses its relevance, even in the most extreme circumstances. Read in this way, the hadith provides a theological basis for Islamic environmental ethics that charges human beings, as God’s vicegerents on earth, both to avoid destruction and to generate ecological welfare. It also supports contemporary readings of *fasād* in Q.S. al-Rūm [30]: 41 that extend the term beyond social corruption, as understood by some classical exegetes, to ecological degradation such as deforestation, water crises, biodiversity loss, and global warming (Kuswandi et al., 2025).

Three interconnected meanings follow. First, the hadith rejects fatalism, since impending crisis does not eliminate ethical agency. Second, it separates the value of constructive action from immediate personal benefit. Third, when read intertextually with traditions promising the reward of charity for planting and with Qur’anic prohibitions of *fasād*, it provides a normative resource for environmental responsibility (Nasr, 1996).

Theologically, this hadith affirms that the earth is not an object of unlimited exploitation but a trust from Allah. Human beings occupy the position of vicegerents whose task is to cultivate and preserve the earth, not to destroy it. Therefore, economic activities that destroy forests, pollute rivers, damage soil, and eliminate sources of life

contradict the ecological ethics of this hadith.

The *maqāṣid* connection requires careful formulation. Environmental protection contributes instrumentally to *ḥifẓ al-nafs*, because ecological conditions sustain life; to *ḥifẓ al-nasl*, because future generations depend on a habitable environment; to *ḥifẓ al-māl*, because ecological systems sustain livelihoods; and, indirectly, to the other recognised necessities. The contemporary notion of *ḥifẓ al-bī'ah* may therefore be understood either as an extension of these established purposes or as a higher-order ecological articulation of their interdependence. It should not be projected uncritically back into classical *maqāṣid* terminology (al-Shāṭibī, 1997; Ibn ‘Āshūr, 2001; Kamali, 2008; Nasr, 1996).

The *tarjīḥ* reached in this case therefore goes further than treating the hadith as an environmental slogan. The authenticated text establishes an ethic of constructive, future-oriented action; intertextual evidence broadens its ethical horizon; *maqāṣid* explains why environmental integrity matters for human and non-human flourishing; and contemporary ecological knowledge specifies how that ethic may be operationalised today. The hadith thus contributes to an eco-hadith hermeneutic without the anachronistic claim that the Prophet explicitly addressed modern categories such as climate change, biodiversity loss, or carbon emissions.

Contemporary Application

The most immediate application concerns forests. Their continued reduction is one of today’s major environmental problems, even though the supply of clean water, healthy air, erosion control, protection against coastal abrasion, and the mitigation of floods and landslides depend heavily on the quality and extent of forest cover. Forests are often described as the “lungs” of the earth, and restoring damaged forests requires sustained replanting. The hadith’s encouragement to plant speaks directly to this need (Zahra et al., 2025).

Socially, this hadith cultivates an ethos of sustainability. Planting a tree creates benefits that extend beyond the self. Trees produce oxygen, absorb water, prevent erosion, provide fruit, become habitats for other creatures, and improve environmental quality. Therefore, planting a tree constitutes a form of ecological charity.

The hadith should not, however, be read narrowly as an encouragement to plant date palms. The date palm is a concrete example drawn from the Arabian context, and the substance of the command is productive action that sustains life. In the Indonesian context, its meaning may extend to planting local trees, forest conservation, waste management, water-source protection, coastal preservation, and

the development of green *pesantren*. These applications are contextual extensions of the Prophetic ethic and do not belong to the lexical meaning of *fasīlah* itself (al-Shāṭibī, 1997; Ibn ‘Āshūr, 2001; Kamali, 2008; Zahra et al., 2025).

This hadith may also serve as a critique of religious understandings that focus exclusively on ritual while neglecting ecological responsibility. A Muslim should not be pious only at the individual level but must also be ecologically pious. Ecological piety means protecting nature as a trust from Allah, avoiding wastefulness, preventing destruction, and actively participating in environmental restoration.

The hadith thus grounds an eco-hadith paradigm, a reading that positions the Sunnah as a source of ecological ethics. This paradigm accords with the Qur’anic description of the Prophet’s mission as *rahmatan li al-’ālamīn*, a mercy for all creation and not for human beings alone.

3. Conclusion

This study formulates an integrative framework for hadith interpretation that moves beyond the textual–contextual divide by organising *sanad* criticism, *matn* criticism, linguistic analysis, historical contextualisation, intertextual reading, *maqāṣid al-sunnah*, and socio-contextual analysis into interconnected stages of interpretation. Its methodological contribution does not lie in claiming that these approaches have never previously been integrated, but in making their relationship more operational by distinguishing authentication, textual-semantic analysis, historical contextualisation, intertextual examination, identification of Prophetic objectives, and contemporary contextualisation, together with the need for explicit *tarjīḥ* when these analytical dimensions produce competing interpretations. The application of this framework to four purposively selected hadiths—one each concerning gender, religious moderation, human rights, and environmental ethics—illustrates how authenticity can be distinguished from the scope and contemporary application of meaning. The gender case, in particular, demonstrates how historical context, Qur’anic intertextuality, *maqāṣid*, and *takhṣīṣ al-’āmm* can be brought into dialogue without either rejecting an authenticated hadith or automatically universalising its apparent wording (Mernissi, 1991; Fadel, 2011; Brown, 2014). Similarly, the other three cases illustrate how Prophetic teachings may be examined in relation to religious tolerance, human dignity and compassion, and ecological responsibility. These applications, however, should be understood as illustrations of the framework’s analytical procedure rather than empirical proof of its theoretical superiority, universal validity, or practical effectiveness.

This study is subject to several important limitations. Its corpus is deliberately small, consisting of only four hadiths, with one hadith representing each contemporary issue, and their application is illustrative rather than comparative or experimental. The study employs neither a competing interpretive framework nor predetermined criteria of success or independent validation; therefore, no claim is made that the proposed framework has been empirically validated or demonstrated to be superior to existing approaches. More importantly, the framework has not yet been systematically tested against a larger corpus of difficult hadiths whose apparent meanings conflict sharply with contemporary moral intuitions or normative commitments—cases that constitute a more demanding test of whether its procedures and rules of *tarjīḥ* can genuinely constrain interpretation rather than merely generate conclusions compatible with contemporary ethical expectations. Future research should therefore test the framework on larger and more diverse corpora, including hadiths of different authenticity grades, multiple transmission routes, *mukhtalif al-ḥadīth*, contested historical contexts, and morally difficult texts, and compare its results with textualist, contextualist, and *maqāṣid*-based approaches using explicit criteria of methodological consistency, transparency, reproducibility, and interpretive constraint. Such testing is necessary before the framework's broader applicability to areas such as bioethics, artificial intelligence, digital economies, healthcare, and cultural pluralism can be established.

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