

THE DISCOURSE ON CONTEMPORARY TA'LÎL AL-ḤADÎTH: The Thoughts of al-Ḥuwaynî, Mamdûh, and al-Malîbârî

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Abstract

Ta'lîl al-Ḥadîth has been practiced since the formative period of Islamic scholarship and has undergone renewed expansion since the mid-14th/20th century. In this contemporary phase, distinct methodological orientations have emerged around leading figures such as Abû Ishâq al-Ḥuwaynî (Salafî), Saïd Mamdûh (Ash'arî-traditionalist), and Ḥamzah al-Malîbârî (Ihyâ Manhâj al-Mutaqaddimîn). This article presents a comparative analysis of their thought, utilizing library research and thematic interpretation, and highlights the methodological, epistemological, and socio-religious implications of current debates. The study argues that contemporary discourse on ta'lîl al-ḥadîth is no longer confined to technical isnâd criticism but has become a site of ideological contestation and the renegotiation of religious authority within global Muslim communities. Al-Ḥuwaynî rejects tafarrod (solitary transmission) as a valid 'illah and emphasizes strict mu'āsarah (narrator contemporaneity); Mamdûh also rejects tafarrod but fully accepts ziyâdat al-thiqah (trustworthy narrators' additions); whereas al-Malîbârî regards all 'ilal as potentially qâdîhah (damaging) and widens criticism to include weak transmitters. These positions implicitly respond to pressing contemporary concerns: al-Ḥuwaynî to the global spread of Salafism, Mamdûh to sectarian tensions and calls

for social justice, and *al-Malibârî* to rising spiritual disorientation and permissive cultural trends. By mapping these orientations and their implications for academic scholarship, religious practice, and communal dynamics, this article highlights the need to reassess *Ta'lil al-Hadīth* as both a technical discipline and a significant influence on shaping authority, orthodoxy, and Muslim public life today. The study thus contributes a critical framework for understanding the evolving epistemology of *ḥadīth* criticism in the modern era.

Keywords: *ḥadīth; al-ḥuwaynî; al-malibârî; mamdûḥ; ta'lil*

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Introduction

The widely spread of fabricated hadiths is the key factors to the emergence of the study of hadith, reaching its peak in the third century AH (Sopian & Fuadi, 2024). In the Islamic scientific tradition, the study on *‘illah al-ḥadīth* serves as the most crucial part of *sanad* (hadith’s chain of transmission) and *matn* (hadith text) criticism (Huda 2015). Hadith scholars have long devoted to the in-depth study of detecting the existence of *‘illah* (defect) in a hadith; the study is then called *ta'lil al-ḥadīth*. Through their study, the scholars attempted to explore the causes that could describe a hadith defective (*ma'lûl*), whether due to issues in its *sanad* or its *matn* (Ansori et al. 2020, 2). A hadith detected as containing *‘illah* (Hartati et al. 2025), even if apparently it looks *muttasil* (continuous *sanad* to the Prophet) and its *rawi* (narrators or transmitters) are reliable—possessing *âdl* and *dabt* characteristics—cannot be used as *hujjah* (legal proof) or *dalil* (evidence) in establishing certain law or doctrine, until it is proven to be free from *‘illah* or the *‘illah* does not affect the authenticity of a hadith (Maulanida & Kamalia 2022, 272). *‘Illah* in hadith is often found in the transmission of *thiqqat* narrators. They narrated hadiths which contain *‘illah*, but are unaware of defects causing the hadiths *ma'lûl* (Najib 2014, 39-40).

In detecting *‘illah*, hadith scholars are divided into two major groups: classical and contemporary scholars (Yaakob & Shamsudin 2019). Hadith study started to develop from the mid-20th century, when it once again reached its revival peak. The enthusiasm for *ijtihâd* (independent

reasoning) and *tajdid* (renewal) enlivened discourses of hadith during the period, initiating diversity of opinions and even provoking heated debates among groups (Hafidhuddin 2022, 60). The situation led to the emergence of schools/movements that have specific discourses and fanatic adherents. In this era, hadith scholars were polarized into intellectual formations (*madâris*) affiliated with certain figures. Generally, they excessively glorify their own teachers/scholars and criticize the opposition.

The schools (*mazhab*) dominating the debates on hadith criticism during the era are *Salafi* and *Ash'ari* (Mamdûh 2009, 45). As a reform movement, the main goal of *Salafi* is to reconstruct Muslim's belief and worship, as well as emulate the generations of Islam in the first three centuries (Qodir et al. 2024). From different perspective, *Ash'ari* attempts to preserve the mid-century traditions and institutions grounded in *Ash'ari* theology, the *mazhab* of fiqh (Islamic Jurisprudence), and authoritative form of Sufism (Wendry et al. 2020). In addition to the two aforementioned schools, modern hadith discourse also leads to the emergence of a movement seeking to revitalize the study of classical hadith scholar's criticism, showing skeptical stance toward hadith studies conducted by *muta'akhirîn* (later generation) and *mu'âsirîn* (contemporary) hadith scholars. The third camp is referred to as the *iḥyâ' manhaj al-Mutaqaddimîn* movement, which aims to revive the methodological approach of classical scholars (Dzulraidi et al. 2024, 175).

One of the prominent figures of *salafi* school is Abû Ishâq al-Huwaynî, a disciple of al-Albânî (d. 1999 CE). Meanwhile, one of the *Ash'ari* figures who actively challenges *Salafi* discourse is Sa'îd Mamdûh, a disciple of al-Ghumârî (Rezi et al. 2023) and Yasin al-Fadani (Imawan 2024). His traditional hadith knowledge were taught by the Sufi-oriented teachers, who were often involved in a polemical debate with *Salafi* hadith scholars (Noor 2016). Among the significant figures from *Iḥyâ' Manhâj al-Mutaqaddimîn* is Ḥamzah ibn 'Abdullâh al-Malibârî (Mala et al. 2020), who has been the most prolific in producing critical hadith studies, particularly on the 'illah of hadith, within *muta'akhirîn* and contemporary communities.

Even though *ta'lîl al-ḥadîth* study has been widely discussed by classical scholars, challenges are still found in contemporary study. First, the fragmentation of hadith authority—marked by the emergence of the three major schools of thought, namely Salafism, Traditionalism, and Reformism—causes the standards of hadith authenticity no longer

consistent. Second, the evolution of time demands a more relevant *ta'lil* methodology to respond actual problems in academic, religious, and social spheres. Third, most contemporary hadith research tends to focus on *Salafî* figures such as al-Albânî. Meanwhile, other influential figures, like Abû Ishâq al-Huwaynî, Sa'id Mamdûh, and Hamzah al-Malibârî, got comparatively less attention, particularly in relation to *ta'lil al-hadîth* discourses.

Therefore, this article fills the gap by mapping three contemporary figures' thinking styles, representing various ideological orientation—al-Huwaynî is characterized by *Salafî* purification, Mamdûh by a traditionalist-defensive stance, and al-Malibârî by a reformist-critical approach. This study affirms that *ta'lil al-hadîth* functions not only as a technical instrument for *sanad* and *matn* criticism, but also as a contestation site for negotiating religious authority in the modern era. In analyzing academic implications, religious practices, and social dynamics of the three figure's intellectual perspectives, this current study proposes a novelty in the form of an integrative reading of *ta'lil al-hadîth* as a scholarly discourse and a socio-religious praxis in the contemporary Islam.

The study of hadith criticism is not a new subject in the academic sphere. Noor (2018) explored the comparison of hadith criticism by the three aforementioned figures in general. Yaakob and Shamsudin (2019) explained the difference on the 'illah of hadith disclosed by *mutaqaddimîn* and *mutakhirîn* scholars. A study focusing on the al-Malibârî method in hadith analysis was conducted by Mala et al. (2020). Meanwhile, Rezi et al. (2023) presented a hadith criticism study from the perspectives of al-Ghumârî and al-Albânî, recognized as the respective teachers of Sa'id Mamdûh and Abû Ishâq al-Huwaynî. The results of the study did not see the discrepancy on the theological principles as a significant matter. Accordingly, this current study proposes distinct focus by highlighting contemporary discourse on 'illah studies and unveiling the implicit dimensions of these studies in responding contemporary issues.

Research Method

This article adopts a qualitative methodology, particularly a descriptive-analytical approach grounded in library research. The primary data are obtained from the literary works of Abû Ishâq al-Huwaynî, Sa'id Mamdûh, and Hamzah al-Malibârî which are relevant to *ta'lil al-hadîth*. These figures are chosen to represent the three major trends in

contemporary hadith discourse: Salafism, Traditionalism, and Reformism. Al-Ḥuwaynī is characterized by the *Salafī* purification, Mamdūh maintains the classical scholars' legacy, and al-Malibārī offers a reformist methodological critique. This study frames them within a unified spectrum through which the dynamics of *ta'līl al-ḥadīth* can be comprehended. To enrich this article, secondary sources from classical hadith literature and contemporary study on hadith criticism are used.

The data are collected through documentation study and analyzed using content analysis technique to identify and explore main themes, including examples of hadiths featuring *tafarrud* (singularity), *mukhālafah* (contradiction), *ziyādah al-thiqah* (addition of a reliable narrator), and *sanad mu'an'an* (transmission using the term '*an*'). From all aspects of identified '*illah*', the authors will analyze the hadiths' thematic content included in the discussions of '*illah*'. So, the focus is on the aspects of hadith '*illah*', without discussing each figure's overall approach to hadith criticism. Furthermore, the authors will analyze hadiths included in the three figure's works to figure out the implicit contemporary discourses in the writings on '*illah* criticism of hadith in response to contemporary issues.

Results and Discussion

The Classical and Contemporary Ta'līl al-Ḥadīth Discourses

Discourses on hadith '*illah*' have existed from the earliest Islamic century to the contemporary era. During the period of the Prophet Muhammad, discussions centered on hadith comprehension, while the term '*illah*' was not formally addressed. As the sole authoritative source, the Prophet served as the main reference for the Companions (*ṣaḥābah*) in comprehending the meaning and purposes of his words and actions. As a result, the Companions neither misinformed nor misinterpreted what the Prophet meant.

After the death of the Prophet Muhammad, discourses on hadith '*illah*' concerned on the prevention of fabrication and forgery in his name. The core discussion was to determine whether the circulating transmissions were truly from the Prophet, without mutual suspicion, blame, and reprimand among the Companions (Osman & Ramle, 2025). During the period, the Companions actively justified, *tabāyun* (clarified), and cross-checked their transmissions with fellow Companions. Those were conducted to ensure the validity and coherence of circulating hadiths

(Isnaeni et al. 2023). However, discussions on hadith comprehension also continued as they had in the Prophet's lifetime.

Since the Companions are not safeguarded as the Prophet was, they are not free from mistakes. 'Abdullâh ibn al-Mubâarak said, "Who can be free from mistakes (*wahm* or inaccuracy)." Imam 'Abd al-Raḥmân ibn Mahdî stated, "Those who boast to be free from *wahm* are irrational." Imam Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal expressed, "Who are able to be entirely free from *wahm* and *taṣhîf* (mistranscription)." Imam al-Tirmidhî remarked, "None of the *Imams* (scholars) are free from inaccuracy, even though they possess a strong memorization skill." Lastly, Imam Ibn 'Adî al-Jurjânî asserted, "Even the most reliable narrator inevitably makes mistakes at least once or twice."

During the *tabi'in* (Successors to the Companions) period, 'illah of hadith discussion had mostly different atmosphere. After the death of 'Uthmân ibn 'Affân, Muslims were split into groups, each following its own political agenda (Nadia & Faoziah 2024). Consequently, fabricated hadiths were propagated widely to support each group (Afandi 2023, 180). In this period, the major discussion centered on hadith verification or criticism. Hadith scholars began to criticize the narrators. Their background was investigated to identify which group they belonged to and the movement's dynamics it strived for. Moreover, critique on hadiths' content were also conducted, whether the circulating text of hadith genuinely originated from the Prophet Muhammad, or a merely fabricated text produced for their groups' interests (Pulungan 2023).

Furthermore, *madrasah* (school) or intellectual tradition of hadiths were widely established in several regions during the *tabi'in* period. As the primary hubs, *madrasah* in Madinah and Makkah had distinct advantages compared to others. Apart from the two regions, there were many prominent *madrasah* in Iraq (especially in Kufa and Basra) and Egypt (Wendry et al. 2020). To obtain a more comprehensive understanding of hadith discourse, scholars traveled around the world to visit the established hadith *madrasah*. From each institution, they also curated hadiths. Later, these hadith *madrasah* were the pioneer to contemporary current of hadith scholarship.

Afterward, the discourse on 'illah criticism evolved into a scholarly discourse within hadith studies. The era was marked by many hadith scholars who began to codify hadiths and sciences of hadith, including the study of hadith 'illah. The hadith sciences both *riwâyah* (transmission) and

dirayah (criticism) were systematically codified during this era. This documentation of hadiths has led to the development of foundations for its study, ensuring that its understanding adhered to the inherited teachings of earlier scholars (Masruhan & Hasyim 2024). These documentations become a lasting intellectual heritage from classical hadith scholars to contemporary ones serving as accessible sources for study at any time.

Alois Sprenger initiated hadith ‘*illah*’ discourses among orientalists in the 19th century CE (Anwar 2020, 42), though they did not explicitly discuss about the concept itself. They instead suspected the hadiths’ narrators who might have ulterior motives in the hadiths’ transmission (Zuhri, 2015), such as power dynamics, political interests, or personal affiliation with influential leaders (Rofi’i 2019, 96-100). They, for example, casted suspicion on Abū Hurairah who transmitted a greater number of hadiths than the Prophet’s Companions, particularly the senior ones (Zubaidah 1995, 89-91). Among the orientalists, there are some hadith critics such as Goldziher, Schacht, and Jonathan Brown (Budiman & Handayana 2022, 83). During the period, the vigorous discourses of hadith undermining triggered the emergence of numerous scholars (hadith critics) who collectively safeguard it (Hidayah 2015).

In that era, the rise of colonialism and Western hegemony continues to give an enduring impact in hadith study development on the present time (Siswanto 2020). In Indonesia, discourses on ‘*illah al-ḥadith*’ has become one of significant discussion topics, although, in Indonesian context, the recently adopted terms are “hadith criticism” and “hadith interpretation” that have been practiced by Nusantara scholars (Langaji et al. 2024). One of influential figures, Kiai Hasyim Asy’ari, has urged a truthful discourse of hadith interpretation. He also promoted hadith as a pillar in the movement of Muslims toward national liberation of Indonesia. Other figures have also contributed to the establishment of hadith criticism in Indonesia and encouraged the intellectually honest interpretation of hadith, such as Syuhudi Ismail and Ali Mustafa Yaqub. Their initiatives respond to the concerning tendency of people misusing hadiths for personal interests (Baiquni 2022, 683).

Al-Ḥuwaynî, Mamdûḥ, and al-Malibârî's Approaches to Ta'lil al-Ḥadîth

In the study of *ta'lil al-ḥadîth* (identification of 'illah in a hadith) by contemporary scholars, the authors will elaborate the thoughts of Abû Ishâq al-Ḥuwaynî, Sa'id Mamdûḥ, and Ḥamzah al-Malibârî. The elaboration includes the instruments of 'illah *al-ḥadîth* based on the perspectives of each scholar. Their frameworks do not significantly differ from those of *mutaqaddimîn* hadith scholars since their *ta'lil* instruments have compatibility with Imam al-Dâruqutnî's study. He claimed that hadith study, particularly *al-jarḥ wa al-ta'dîl*, also belongs to the scope of 'illah *al-ḥadîth* because 'illah has two types: *khafiyah* (hidden) and *ẓāhirah* (apparent) (Nursyahbani et al. 2024).

The development of thought obviously happens, for example al-Ḥuwaynî and Mamdûḥ who reject *tafarrud* as a hadith 'illah. They do not regard *tafarrud* as a problem in the transmission of hadith because it is highly possible for a narrator to differ from others. They also frequently dismiss the ideas and provisions of earlier hadith scholars, preferring instead to uphold their own judgments. Moreover, al-Ḥuwaynî explains that the meaning *mu'âsarah* (contemporaneity) is the narrator and teacher belonged to the same period and spatial context. This highlights the importance of temporal and geographic proximity in transmission. In the same spirit, Mamdûḥ argues that *ẓiyâdat al-thiqah* (the addition of a trustworthy narrator) must be accepted absolutely, emphasizing the credibility of the narrator in authenticating the hadith.

Unlike the two aforementioned figures, al-Malibârî tends to refer to the earlier scholars' verdicts regarding ruling of a hadith. However, it does mean that he has no renewal of thought. He states that all forms of 'illah are *qâdiḥah* (invalidating flaws) (Ramle et al. 2022), and suggest that research on 'illah does not apply solely to *rawi thiqah* (trustworthy narrators), but also extends to *rawi ḍa'îf* (weak narrators), as can be seen in his study on Ibn Lahî'ah. It is indeed true and logical that even the most virtuous people are still liable to make mistakes, while even the most reprehensible may at times be correct. The three figures' thoughts are concluded in Table 1.

Table 1
The Comparative Judgments of al-Ḥuwaynî, Mamdûḥ, and al-Malibârî
on Hadith Authentication

No.	Statements	Al-Ḥuwaynî	Mamdûḥ	Al-Malibârî
1	<i>Majhûl</i> can weaken the status of a hadith	Agree	Agree	Agree
2	Two types of <i>majhûl</i> : <i>majhûl al-ain</i> (unknown by identity) and <i>majhûl al-hâl</i> (unknown by status/reliability)	Agree	Agree	Agree
3	A narrator classified as <i>majhûl al-ain</i> may shift to the category of <i>majhûl al-hâl</i> .	Requires the support of at least 2 narrators	Requires the support of 2 or even 1 narrator	Requires the support of at least 2 narrators
4	A narrator not commented by Imam Abî Ḥatim	<i>Majhûl</i>	Not <i>majhûl</i>	<i>Majhûl</i>
5	<i>Ikhtilâf</i> is regarded as an 'illah that invalidates a hadith.	Agree	Agree	Agree
6	The narration of a <i>mukhtalif</i> narrator is accepted, if it was transmitted before experiencing <i>ikhtilâf</i>	Agree	Agree	Agree
7	<i>Sanad mu'an'an</i> does not indicate the certainty of <i>al-samâ'</i> (direct listening)	Agree	Agree	Agree

8	Conditions for an acceptable <i>sanad mu'an'an</i>	Requires <i>mu'āṣarah</i> , the possibility of meeting, and the <i>tadlīs</i> absence. This argument persists even if it is not in line with the earlier hadith scholars' rulings	Similarly, requires <i>mu'āṣarah</i> , the possibility of meeting, and the <i>tadlīs</i> absence, even when it differs from the early hadith scholars' principles	Requires <i>mu'āṣarah</i> , actual meeting, and the absence of <i>tadlīs</i> . The conditions must align with the rulings of the early hadith scholars
9	<i>Tadlīs</i> is an 'illah that can invalidate a hadith	Agree	Agree	Agree
10	<i>Mudalīs</i> narrators are classified based on the degree of their <i>tadlīs</i>	Agree	Agree	Agree
11	The status of <i>tafarrud</i> (singularity in transmission)	It does not invalidate a hadith and is not considered an 'illah	Similarly, it does not render a hadith weak and is not regarded as an 'illah	It constitutes an 'illah, and a sign of a defect in a hadith which can affect its authenticity
12	<i>Iḍtirāb</i> is regarded as an 'illah that invalidates a hadith	Agree	Agree	Agree
13	The method for resolving a <i>muḍṭarib</i> hadith	Resolving the conflicting hadith through <i>al-jam'</i> (harmonization) and <i>al-tarjīḥ</i> (prioritizing the stronger narration), even if based only on	Employing <i>al-jam'</i> and <i>al-tarjīḥ</i> , even when it is merely grounded in speculative hypotheses	It is resolved through <i>al-jam'</i> and <i>al-tarjīḥ</i> , but the process must be based on concrete evidence

		speculative hypotheses		
14	The acceptance of <i>ziyâdat al-thiqah</i>	Not accepted absolutely. It depends on <i>qarînah</i> (contextual evidence)	Accepted absolutely	Not accepted absolutely. It depends on <i>qarînah</i>

Table 1 shows that the discourse on *ta’lil al-ḥadīth* by contemporary scholars has several renewals as shown in the arguments of al-Ḥuwaynî, Sa’îd Mamdûḥ, and al-Malibârî. The three figures share common ground on foundational aspects of *ta’lil al-ḥadīth*, including the status of *majhûl* (unknown narrators), *ikhtilâṭ* (confusion due to a narrator’s deterioration of memory or accuracy), *sanad mu’ân ‘an* (transmission using the term ‘an), *tadlīs* (concealment/hidden defect), and *idṭirâb* (contradiction or inconsistency). Their notable differences emerge in the aspect of *tafarrud* (singularity), the resolving method of a *muḏṭarib* ḥadīth, and the conditions to accept *sanad mu’ân ‘an* and *ziyâdat al-thiqah*. Al-Ḥuwaynî and Mamdûḥ tend to be more lenient, while al-Malibârî is critical and stringent. As a result, the three ḥadīth scholars reflect distinct methodological approaches: *Salafî* purification, traditionalist-defensive, and reformist-critical stances. Although such renewals are not significant, they realize that the study on ‘illah should refer to *mutaqaddimîn* scholars’ thoughts. Accordingly, most of their approaches remain aligned with earlier scholars’ positions, though they also contribute to several new perspectives enriching the evolving discourse on ‘illah of ḥadīth.

Discourses of Abû Ishâq al-Ḥuwaynî

Countering Islamophobia and Horizontal Conflict

Abû Ishâq al-Ḥuwaynî focuses on socially oriented ḥadīths, including those concerning neighborly conduct. He aims at portraying Islam as compassionate and gracious to mitigate public negative stereotypes and anxieties about Muslims (Zulfikar 2024). The discourse is relevant in Muslim minority context (such as in India and Europe), or even in intercommunal conflicts within Muslim-majority societies. He is eager to promote the authentic message of Islam by directly referencing ḥadīths containing the religion’s friendliness in social interactions and by

explaining textual interpretations in accordance with the principles of the Salafi school.

One of the examples is a hadith recorded in *al-Nâfilah fî al-Aḥādīth al-Ḍa'ifah wa al-Bâtilah*. Upon performing *takhrij* (critical verification), the hadith was narrated by al-Ṭabarânî in *al-Mu'jam al-Kabîr*,

“Even the slightest harm inflicted upon a neighbor should not be taken lightly” (Al-Ṭabarânî 1994, 23:258).

Al-Haithamî stated that the hadith is *ṣaḥiḥ* (authentic) and all its narrators were reliable. The statement was later refuted by al-Ḥuwaynî who considered the one who authenticated the hadith was dishonest. He followed Ibn al-ʿAdî who claimed that al-Ṭabarânî's teacher, Aḥmad ibn Risydîn, was a deceitful person. Other transmitters, al-Walîd and Yaḥyâ, also frequently involved in *tadlîs* practices. Hence, al-Ḥuwaynî graded this hadith as *ḍa'if jiddan* or very weak (al-Ḥuwaynî 1988a, 1:105).

From a substantive perspective, al-Ḥuwaynî's opinion does not significantly differ from that of al-Albânî, who had already considered this hadith weak. The main distinction is in al-Ḥuwaynî's criticism style which appears more aggressive and radical in rejecting the authority of scholars who authenticated the hadith, even framing them of being fabricators. Thus, the novelty of al-Ḥuwaynî's approach does not lie in his hadith assessment or its relevance to contemporary social discourse. It lies instead in the stern rhetorical tone of his *sanad* criticism through which he asserts his own authority as a hadith critic.

Responding to Modernity and Salafi Challenges

Several modern Salafi movements emphasize on purity in worship grounded in *ṣaḥiḥ* hadiths. As a Salafi hadith scholar, al-Ḥuwaynî is active in discussing *fiqh* (legal rulings) aiming to realign religious practice with narrations perceived as the most authentic. This is a form of criticism toward *fiqh* tradition which is considered being distorted by logic and local custom.

Another case in al-Ḥuwaynî's *fiqh*-themed hadith discussion is written in his work *Badhl al-Iḥsân bi Taqrîb Sunan al-Nasâi Abî ʿAbdirrahmân*—presenting his *takhrij* of *Sunan al-Nasâi*. In the chapter *al-Bawl fî al-Inâʾ* (Urinating in a Vessel), he mentions a narration which states,

“The Prophet Muhammad had a small wooden vessel in which he would urinate, and he kept it beneath his bed” (al-Ḥuwaynî 1990, 1:304).

Al-Ḥuwaynî deemed this hadith weak due to several *'illahs* possessed by its transmitters. The first transmitter is Ḥajjâh ibn Muḥammad al-A'war al-Maṣṣî. According to Shaikh 'Abd al-Qadîr ibn Ḥabîb al-Sindî, all hadiths transmitted by Ḥajjâj are considered weak in status because, at the end of his life, he experienced *ikhtilâṭ*. However, al-Ḥuwaynî denounced the statement and argued that Ḥajjâj did not transmit any hadiths after his *ikhtilâṭ* condition, thus the hadith remain acceptable.

Furthermore, Ḥajjâj was not the reason why the aforementioned hadith is considered weak. Al-Ḥuwaynî stated that the issue was on other transmitters. The first one is Ibn al-Juraij who, according to al-Dâruqutnî, is a *mudallis* transmitter. In fact, his level of *tadlîs* is the most severe type, namely *tadlîs al-taswiyah* (concealment by omission within the *sanad*). Another transmitter regarded as unreliable is Ḥukaimah bint Umaymah. Al-Ḥuwaynî stated that she is *majhû al-'ain* since her student, Ibn Juraij, is the only one who transmitted hadiths from her (*tafarrud*). Consequently, her hadiths are deemed weak (al-Ḥuwaynî 1990, 1:308-310).

Shifting the Authority of Fiqh toward the Authority of Ḥadith

In contemporary Islamic tradition, fiqh has been regarded as the domain of the *mazhab* scholars (jurists), while the hadith scholars are frequently viewed only as supporters (data providers) for legal reasoning. The phenomena can be observed in the *baḥṭs al-masâil* events hosted by Indonesian pesantren (Islamic boarding schools) (Nursyahbani et al. 2025, 350). In discussing fiqh-related hadiths, al-Ḥuwaynî's understanding and legal conclusion are directly derived from the hadiths. He probably wants to claim that his expertise in hadith gives him authority to deliver the legal opinions straightforwardly. This is in line with Salafî's jargon "returning to the Quran and Hadith."

Al-Ḥuwaynî in his work *Nahyu al-Ṣuḥbah 'an al-Nuzûl bi al-Rukbah*, for example, cited a hadith which states:

"When one of you prostrates (*sujud*), he should not kneel in the manner of a camel, but should put down his hands before his knees."

In performing *takhrij*, he found that this hadith is transmitted by Abû Dâwud in *Sunan Abî Dâwud* (al-Sijistânî n.d., 1:222), Aḥmad in *Musnad Aḥmad* (al-Syaibânî 2001, 14:515), and al-Baihaqî in *Sunan al-Kubrâ* (al-Baihaqî 2003, 2:143).

Responding to the debate whether one should put his hands or knees down first when performing *sujud*, al-Ḥuwaynî prefers the former

option and uses the aforesaid hadith as *dalil* (evidence). He, therefore, refuted the opinion of Ibn al-Qayim who argued that the hadith exhibits *iḍtirāb* in its *matn*. The claim is grounded in the existence of three narrations sharing a similar *sanad* but differ in their *matn* (hadith text), leading to their classification as weak hadith. In addition to his refusal to *muḍṭarib* status of the hadith, al-Ḥuwaynī claims that he did not find any differences in the hadith *matn* (al-Ḥuwaynī 1988b, 37–38).

Discourses of Sa'īd Mamdūḥ

Responding to Sectarianism Issues

Aqida-related hadiths are frequently used as topics in debates among Sunni-Shia communities (Umam et al. 2023). As a contemporary scholar, Mamdūḥ also engages with hadiths carrying such polemical potential. He needs to be very considerate in dealing with their ideological implications. Such issues, definitely, are not confined to India, although they tend to be more notable there.

One of Sa'īd Mamdūḥ's hadith analysis can be seen in his critical study of the hadiths contained in *Majma' al-Zawā'id wa Manba' al-Fawā'id*, the work of Abū al-Ḥasan al-Haithamī (d. 807 AH/1404 CE), entitled *Takhrīj al-Aḥādīth Majma' al-Zawā'id wa Manba' al-Fawā'id* (al-Haithamī 1994, 1:15). The narration states,

“Uthman ibn Affan said ‘I heard the Prophet say I know a word which no one says sincerely from the heart, but he will be forbidden to the Fire (of hell).’ Umar ibn al-Khattab said to him, ‘I will tell you what it is. It is the word of *alikhlas* required by Allah to the Prophet Muhammad and his Companions. And it is the word of *taqwa* that the Prophet urged his uncle, Abu Thalib, to say when he was dying, the testimony that there is no god but Allah.”

After performing *takhrīj*, Mamdūḥ concluded that the hadith was transmitted by Imām Aḥmad in his *musnad*, with the full text and a complete *sanad* (al-Syaibānī 2001, 1:499).

Mamdūḥ figured out that the hadith had polemical issues in one of its transmitters, ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Khaffāf, who once was in *ikhtilāf* condition. Another transmitter, namely Qatādah, was deemed *mudallis*. Other than the two mentioned transmitters, the rests were considered reliable. Mamdūḥ argued that the *ikhtilāf* did not invalidate the hadith status because he claimed that ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Khaffāf heard the narration before his *ikhtilāf* condition. Meanwhile, for Qatādah's

situation, Mamdûḥ affirmed that the *tadlīs* did not impact hadith's authentication. He further quoted the statement of al-A'masy that Qatādah's condition as a *mudallis* transmitter was acceptable. Mamdûḥ's final decision is that the hadith's status is *sālim* and therefore *maqbul* or acceptable (Mamdûḥ et al. 2010, 80-82).

Abolishing Social Hierarchy

Sa'īd Mamdûḥ uses hadiths to criticize religious institution or groups which monopolize claims to piety and religious truth based on outward symbols such as *nasab* (lineage), social status, titles, or *mazhab* identity. Similar cases can still be observed in the remnants of hierarchical caste structures in Indian Muslim community, in which the "*Ashraf-Ajlaf-Arzal*" distinction persists. Gender differences become a cause for dividing social roles (Zain et al. 2025), even physical attributes were used to justify such distinction (Alwi et al. 2021).

Regarding the topic, Mamdûḥ discussed a hadith transmitted by al-Haithamī (al-Haithamī 1994, 1: 52). According to the book's author, the hadith was transmitted by a *majhūl* narrator, namely Abū 'Ubaidah ibn al-Asyja'ī. The rests of the narrators were reliable. The hadith was recorded in *al-Mu'jam al-Ṣaghīr*, the work of Imām al-Ṭabarānī, which states,

"There is nothing in existence that is not more obedient to Allah than the human being" (al-Ṭabarānī 1985, 2:131).

Three transmitters of this hadith possessed *'illah*. Abū Zuhair al-Marwazī was indicated to perform *tafarrud* in the hadith transmission. The next transmitters were Abū 'Ubaidah ibn al-Asyja'ī and his father, al-Asyja'ī. The son was considered both *majhūl* and *tafarrud*, because he only transmitted hadiths from his father. Similarly, the father had only one transmitter of his hadiths, namely his son. This shows that the father was also a *majhūl*. However, Mamdûḥ disagreed with all those arguments and remained firm in his belief that all transmitters were trustworthy. Moreover, he did not consider *tafarrud* as an *'illah* that renders the hadith weak because, in his point of view, such type of *'illah* is reasonable. Regarding the *majhūl* accusation, Mamdûḥ stated that this was a mistake from Al-Haithamī, and considered the hadith acceptable (Mamdûḥ et al. 2010, 1: 328-329).

Responding to the Secularism Challenge and the Value-Neutral Knowledge

Through his discourse, Mamdūḥ asserts that in Islam, knowledge is fundamentally ethical and theocentric in purpose, not neutral. His argument is a form of criticism to the secular approach of modern knowledge. In essence, knowledge must be oriented toward *taqwa* (piety), *zuhd* (spiritual detachment), *adab* (ethics), and spiritual purposes, rather than mere accumulation of information (Abitolkha et al. 2025). By raising the hadith, scholars are eager to strengthen the idea that knowledge is not without values, but aims at piety. One of hadiths discussed by Mamdūḥ is recorded in Al-Haithamī's work (al-Haithamī 1994, 1:119). Numerous hadith scholars transmitted this hadith, one of them is a-Ṭabarānī in *al-Mu'jam al-Ausāt* (al-Ṭabarānī n.d., 6:96). The hadith states,

"Seeking knowledge is a duty upon every Muslim."

Due to numerous transmitters for this single hadith, some issues were discovered in its *sanad*. Mamdūḥ stated that a transmitter named al-Hudhail was a *majhūl al-ḥāl* transmitter, besides performing *tafarrud*, when narrating this hadith. Another transmitter, called 'Uthmān, was considered weak, thus no hadith scholars recorded his narration. He also transmitted a hadith from Hammād, who was a *mukhtalif* transmitter and his narration was transmitted after he had experienced *ikhtilāf*.

As a result, most scholars regarded this hadith weak due to multiple 'illah in its *sanad*, even though the *matn* is authentic. Mamdūḥ has different argument regardless, he considered the hadith authentic because of the existence of supporting hadith with better *sanad*—the one recorded in Musnad Abi Ya'lā. Supported by this hadith, Mamdūḥ asserted that the original narration became acceptable and practicable. Thus, the hadith status is classified as *sālim* or free from ('illah) (Mamdūḥ et al. 2010, 2:289-297).

Discourses of Ḥamzah al-Malībārī*Resistance to the Crisis of Modern Spirituality*

Al-Malībārī essentially maintains that all forms of 'illah can invalidate a hadith, without differentiating between *qadihah* (defective) and *ghairu qadihah* (non-defective) types. In his study of the 'illah found in the hadith concerning night prayer, he implicitly affirms that night prayer can be spiritual resistance against hedonism culture, existential fatigue, and spiritual alienation in modern life (Tempo 2025). In a bustling and clamorous society, *tahajjud* is a private and sacred zone for self-care. In his

work *al-Ḥadīth al-Ma'lūl: Qawā'id wa Ḍawabīṭ*, al-Malibārī studied 'illah on one of narrations,

“Whoever prays much at night, his face will be radiant during the day” (al-Malibārī 1996, 86).

When studying the narration transmitted by Imam Ibn Mājah in *Sunan Ibn Mājah* (al-Qazwainī n.d., 1: 422), al-Malibārī discovered an 'illah. That was one of hadiths possessing *idrāj* (insertion). It began with a transmitter, namely Syuraik, who was known to be trustworthy and devoted in his worship. His student, Thābit, who was impressed by how amazing his figure was, came to him and asked for one narration. Syuraik then gave his student the aforesaid narration. After verifying, hadith scholars found that the *matn* was invented by Syuraik himself, not a hadith originated from the Prophet Muhammad (al-Malibārī 1996, 86–87). Thus, the narration was considered *ma'lūl* or weak.

A Critique of the Culture of Promiscuity and dan Pornography

Fasting is not a mere worship ritual, but also a form of spiritual resistance against the culture of promiscuity, pornography, and exploitation of human desire (Harahap et al. 2025). Al-Malibārī implicitly promotes this discourse into his study. He urges people to realize that fasting is not only about spiritual act, but also a means of psychological and social management. He wrote this topic in his work, stating a narration,

“O young men, whoever among you is able to marry, should marry. And whoever cannot, then he is recommended to fast, for it will be a restraint for him” (al-Malibārī 1996, 97).

The hadith is recorded in *Fawā'id Ibn Abī al-'Aqab*, a work of 'Alī ibn Ya'qūb. Through this hadith, al-Malibārī needs to assert that *tafarrud* is one of 'illah types in hadith study, unlike al-Ḥuwaynī and Mamdūḥ who do not consider it as an 'illah. Even though *tafarrud* occasionally does not directly weaken a hadith, and at times may resemble a *gharīb* hadith, its ambiguity lies in assessing whether the narrator's solitary transmission results from factors such as the reception place, the teacher heard, and the time of narration.

In narrating the aforesaid hadith, a narrator named al-Walīd practiced *tafarrud*. He usually narrated a hadith in Damascus, but for this hadith, he did it in Makkah. Thus, the *matn* he delivered was different

with other hadiths of the similar meaning. This *tafarrud* happened to him caused the hadith to be weak and rejected (al-Malibârî 1996, 98).

A Critique of Genealogical Elitism

Al-Malibârî implicitly echoes a critical discourse against the tendency of certain groups claiming political or religious authority solely on the grounds of lineage, rather than competence and integrity. The hadith is an attempt to clarify that Quraish lineage symbolizes the leadership quality, not an eternally essential requirement for legitimate authority. The hadith is included by Imam al-Baihaqî in his work *al-Sunan al-Kubrâ* (al-Baihaqî 2003, 8:248), which means,

"The leaders are from the Quraish. When they judge, they act justly; when they pledge, they fulfill it; and when they are asked for mercy, they grant it."

Ḥamzah al-Malibârî affirmed that the hadith contains an *'illah* originated from its transmitter, Ibrâhîm bin Sa'd. Although he was known for being trustworthy, he did not record this narration in his work. Hence, it was narrated based on what Ibrâhîm had recalled. This situation explained why he did *tafarrud* in narrating a hadith he did not record in his work thus, the transmission was different compared to others he recorded. Grounding in that background story, the aforesaid hadith is deemed weak and rejected (al-Malibârî 1996, 97).

The Efficiency Principles and Priority in Giving

Based on one of hadiths, al-Malibârî implied the principle of optimal charity. The hadith encourages people to give the most useful thing, rather than merely unused or the low-quality one. This also shows that Islam promote the optimization of economic value of an asset, not only its consumptive value. The hadith from this discussion is,

"The best object of charity is a productive female camel (which has newly given birth and gives plenty of milk), or a productive female goat (which gives plenty of milk); and is given to somebody to utilize its milk, by milking one bowl in the morning and one in the evening" (al-Malibârî 2005, 46).

It was transmitted by Imam al-Bukhârî in *Ṣaḥîḥ al-Bukhârî* (al-Bukhârî 2014, 3:165). Ḥamzah al-Malibârî discussed it as an example of a hadith with *'an'annah* *'illah* (defect of transmission by *'an'annah*). The identified defect was found within the chain of narration transmitted by Mâlik, from Abû al-Zinâd, from al-A'raj, and from Abû Hurairah. Although they used the *'an'annah* type in their transmission, they were not

proven as *mudallis* in this hadith nor other hadiths they had transmitted. Besides, that hadith transmission did not contradict with others. Therefore, this hadith remains acceptable, even though it contains 'an'illah (al-Malibârî 2005, 46-48).

From the study of *Ta'lîl al-Ḥadîth* by the three figures, it can be concluded that al-Ḥuwaynî, Mamdûḥ, and al-Malibârî implicitly offer some discourses as social criticism in the contemporary era. Accordingly, their study on 'illah is not merely a hadith discourse, but presents relevant contextual view for the current time.

Discourses of Contemporary Ta'lîl al-Ḥadîth and Its Implications

Ta'lîl al-Ḥadîth discourses promoted by Abû Ishâq al-Ḥuwaynî, Sa'id Mamdûḥ, and Ḥamzah al-Malibârî present distinctive approaches grounded in each ideological and epistemological orientations. Al-Ḥuwaynî represents a Salafî trend characterized by purification which emphasizes on corroborating *ṣaḥîḥ* (authentic) hadiths and eradicating *ḍa'îf* (weak) ones from religious practice. His ideological orientation is obviously based on the enthusiasm of religious purification, meanwhile, his epistemology is deeply rooted in the authority of the classical hadith.

On the contrary, Sa'id Mamdûḥ appears with a traditionalist and defensive orientation. This stance enhances the preservation of the major scholars' authority and the continuation of established religious practices, such as *Ahl al-Sunnah al-Jamâ'ah* tradition. In the epistemological perspective, he does not promote substantial methodological innovations, but rather tends to strengthen the *turâth* (classical tradition) legitimacy in facing Salafî's criticism. As opposed to the stance of both previous scholars, Ḥamzah al-Malibârî offers reformist-critical approach, attempting to formulate a fresh methodology in *ta'lîl al-ḥadîth* by rejecting blind *taqlid* (conformity) to classical assessments while encouraging openness to rational-critical approach.

The implications of the discourse distinction appear on the three primary domains. In academic perspective, al-Ḥuwaynî strengthens hadith research in *Salafî* framework, but lacks in innovation area. Mamdûḥ reinforces *turâth* position and preserves the tradition continuation, while al-Malibârî broadens the horizon of hadith criticism by offering an innovative and more interdisciplinary methodology. In the religious practice, al-Ḥuwaynî encourages the emergence of puritan (purification) forms of worship, rejecting the practices based on *ḍa'îf* hadith; Mamdûḥ

maintains the popular religious traditions, such as *mawlid* and *tahlil*; whereas al-Malibârî reconsiders religious practices within a framework of methodological rationality.

Furthermore, in social discourse, al-Ḥuwaynî's approach reinforces the identity of Salafî group and is potential to trigger polarization; Mamdûḥ shows calmer attitude by continuing the tradition, even though he is considered stagnant; while al-Malibârî offers a new critical dynamic challenging the status quo, though not without resistance from conservative groups. Consequently, the distinct approaches of *Ta'lil al-Ḥadīth* from the three mentioned figures reflect a dialectic between purification, conservation, and reform in the modern hadith discourse. To clarify the distinct orientations and contributions of the three scholars, Table 2 summarizes the five key domains characterizing the thoughts of al-Ḥuwaynî, Mamdûḥ, and al-Malibârî.

Table 2
A Comparative Overview of al-Ḥuwaynî, Mamdûḥ, and al-Malibârî
in Contemporary Ḥadīth Discourse

No.	Domain	Al-Ḥuwaynî	Mamdûḥ	Al-Malibârî
1	Ideological Orientation	Puritan Salafism; religious teachings purification from <i>bid'ah</i> (innovation) and superstition	Traditionalist-Azhari orientation; preserves scholars' authority & continuity of <i>mazhab</i>	Reformist-critical orientation; challenges Salafî & traditionalist hegemonies
2	Epistemological Orientation	Reliance on classical <i>turâth</i> ; textual and conservative	Defensive; holding to classical method, prioritizes authority over innovation	Rational-critical; open to new methodologies and interdisciplinary approaches
3	Academic Implications	Reinforces hadith research within a Salafî framework;	Strengthens <i>turâth</i> position; legitimizing traditional practices	Renews <i>ta'lil al-ḥadīth</i> methodology; accelerates contemporary

		focusing on classifying <i>ṣaḥīḥ-ḍaʿīf</i> hadiths		academic discourse
4	Religious Practices Implications	Rejects practices based on <i>ḍaʿīf</i> hadiths, encourages puritan worship	Preserves popular practices supported by acceptable <i>ḍaʿīf</i> hadiths	Reconsiders religious practices based on <i>sanad</i> & <i>matn</i> criticism; more logical
5	Social Implications	Reinforces Salafi identity; may trigger polarization with traditionalist	Lowers the tension with Salafi, but tends toward intellectual stagnation	Stimulates intellectual dynamism & critical awareness, but faces resistance from conservative groups

Conclusion

This article unveils—through the perspectives of Abû Ishâq al-Ḥuwaynî, Saʿîd Mamdûḥ, and Ḥamzah al-Malîbârî—that contemporary *Taʿlîl al-Ḥadîth* study is not monolithic; it unfolds a broad spectrum of methodological spectrum. Al-Ḥuwaynî with his puritan Salafi framework emphasizes the purification of narration; Mamdûḥ due to his traditionalist-defensive stance, upholds scholarly authority and popular practices; while al-Malîbârî promotes reformist-critical approach by offering novel methodology as opposed to the previous two. They are similar in their effort of reviving the *taʿlîl* study as a pivotal instrument in hadith criticism, meanwhile the distinction reflects each of their ideological and epistemological orientations.

Academically, the discourse shows that *taʿlîl* study remains relevant in the modern context, primarily in challenging *sanad* and *matn* criticisms amid the establishment of modern hadith discourse. Practically, their distinct approaches provide many options for Muslim to select one that is appropriate for their socio-religious contexts. Socially, these discourses contestation describes the dynamism of religious authority in Muslim world, in which traditional, Salafi, and reformist paradigms fight over

knowledge legitimacy and religious practices. Thus, this study highlights the urgency of studying modern hadith scholars and provides opportunities for further research bridging *ta'lil* discourse with other contemporary issues, such as religious authority, hadith study digitalization, and Muslim's socio-religious practices.

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