

RECONFIGURATION OF LIVING HADITH IN THE DIGITAL SPACE: BETWEEN AUTHENTICITY OF TRANSMISSION AND POPULARIZATION OF ISLAMIC EDUCATION CONTENT ON SOCIAL MEDIA

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Received: 01-01-2026 | Revised: 01-03-2026 | Accepted: 30-06-2026

ABSTRACT

The rapid expansion of social media has transformed how ḥadīth-based Islamic educational content is produced, transmitted, and consumed. This study examines the reconfiguration of living ḥadīth in digital spaces, focusing on the tension between classical ḥadīth transmission authenticity and social media popularization demands. Employing a qualitative design integrating Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of content on Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube with phenomenological interviews of 12 content creators and 15 audience participants, the study identifies three dominant discursive patterns: textual-visual repackaging, narrative embodiment, and scholarly mediation. Findings reveal a structural 'authenticity-popularity paradox' wherein platform algorithmic logic systematically disadvantages the scholarly apparatus of classical ḥadīth transmission. A Reconstructive Living Ḥadīth Model for Digital Spaces (RLHM-DS) is proposed as a normative-qualitative framework operating across three levels, i.e., Production, Platform, and Reception, for improving ḥadīth transmission quality in Islamic digital education. The study contributes an integrated application of Fairclough's CDA with classical isnād-based authenticity standards and living ḥadīth theory within the Indonesian Islamic education context, addressing a gap in the existing literature that has yet to systematically combine these analytical traditions.

Keywords: living ḥadīth; digital media; social media; Islamic education; ḥadīth authenticity; Critical Discourse Analysis.

INTRODUCTION

Walk into any Indonesian masjid today and you will likely encounter the same phenomenon: a worshipper sharing a ḥadīth post on their phone just before or after prayer. The content might be beautifully designed, emotionally resonant, and attributed, correctly or otherwise, to *Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī* or *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*. Whether the ḥadīth is authentic, whether the translation is accurate, whether the context in which the Prophet originally spoke those words has been preserved, are questions that rarely surface in the scroll. This everyday scene captures a tension that sits at the heart of the present study.

The emergence of social media as a dominant medium of communication has disrupted established patterns of religious knowledge transmission across Muslim communities worldwide. Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube have become primary spaces in which Islamic teachings, including ḥadīth, are interpreted, repackaged, and disseminated to audiences that dwarf the reach of any traditional religious institution. The implications for Islamic education are significant:

who counts as an authoritative transmitter of prophetic knowledge, and what counts as faithful transmission, are no longer questions with self-evident answers.

The scale and diversity of ḥadīth-related content in digital spaces has drawn growing scholarly attention. Majid, Majid, Shahr, and Sulong have identified significant opportunities and structural challenges facing ḥadīth studies in the digital era, particularly regarding the tension between accessibility and scholarly integrity.¹ Rosyad and Alif document the dual promise and peril of digital technology for ḥadīth studies in Indonesia, noting that while technology broadens access to prophetic traditions, it simultaneously introduces new risks of transmission error and decontextualization.²

Within Islamic scholarly tradition, the concept of ‘living ḥadīth’ (*al-ḥadīth al-ḥayy*) refers to the dynamic process by which prophetic traditions are not merely preserved as historical texts, but actively practiced, embodied, and re-enacted in the lived experiences of Muslim communities. This framework, theorized by Mansyur et al. through their landmark *Metodologi Penelitian Living Qur'an dan Hadis*, has traditionally been applied to studying how ḥadīth manifest in communal rituals and educational institutions.³ Suryadilaga elaborated the model through empirical fieldwork in pesantren settings,⁴ while he later extended it to the broader tradition of living ḥadīth in Indonesian Islamic education.⁵ The rapid penetration of digital media into Muslim life necessitates a critical re-examination of how living ḥadīth operates in digitally mediated spaces, which is the one that this study seeks to provide.

The existing literature on digital ḥadīth has established a consistent empirical pattern: social media systematically reshapes the form, framing, and authority claims of ḥadīth content in ways that compromise classical transmission standards. Saefudin, Raharusun, and Rodliana were among the first to document this at scale, finding that ḥadīth content on major Indonesian platforms frequently lacks completeness in ḥadīth structure.⁶ Subsequent studies have probed the mechanisms behind this pattern. Shari traced how TikTok affordances reshape prophetic traditions during Ramadan,⁷ while Manik et al. showed that creators deliberately prioritize moral and emotional resonance over scholarly rigor to maximize reach in viral culture.⁸ Bakar and Manik and Amin extended this diagnosis to show that the reshaping is not incidental but structural, that is driven by platform presentation logic and

¹L. A. Majid, M. N. A. Majid, H. K. Shahr, and W. S. N. W. Sulong, “Exploring Innovations and Challenges in the Study of Hadith in the Digital Era,” *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences* 14, 3 (2024): 1057–1071

²S. Rosyad and M. Alif, “Hadis di Era Digital: Tantangan dan Peluang Penggunaan Teknologi dalam Studi Hadis,” *Jurnal Ilmu Agama: Mengkaji Doktrin, Pemikiran, dan Fenomena Agama* 24, 2 (2023): 185–197.

³M. Mansyur, Suwendi, M. A. Suryadilaga, and M. Yahya, *Metodologi Penelitian Living Qur'an dan Hadis* (Yogyakarta: TH-Press, 2007).

⁴M. A. Suryadilaga, “Model-Model Living Hadis Pondok Pesantren Krapyak Yogyakarta,” *Al-Qalam* 26, 3 (2009): 367–383.

⁵M. A. Suryadilaga, “Living Hadis dalam Tradisi Pendidikan Pesantren di Indonesia,” *Jurnal Living Hadis* 2, 1 (2015): 45–63.

⁶M. W. Saefudin, A. S. Raharusun, and M. D. Rodliana, “Konten Hadis di Media Sosial: Studi Content Analysis dalam Jejaring Sosial pada Akun Lughoty.com, @RisalahMuslimID, dan @thesunnah_path,” *Jurnal Penelitian Ilmu Ushuluddin* 2, 1 (2022): 19–49.

⁷M. F. Shari, “Bentuk Mediatisasi Hadis Berupa Video: Respon Netizen terhadap Video Pendek mengenai Hadis di Aplikasi TikTok,” *Moderasi: Jurnal Kajian Agama Islam* 1, 2 (2021): 170–184.

⁸Z. Manik, N. A. Siregar, D. H. Bintang, A. Syukron, and A. S. Lubis, “Recontextualization of Hadith in TikTok Youth Culture,” *Sufiya Journal of Islamic Studies* 3, 2 (2025): 38–51.

algorithmic incentives that systematically favor simplification.⁹ Aulia and Zakka further demonstrate how these dynamics extend to normative questions of Muslim digital ethics.¹⁰ What this body of work has not done, however, is move from description to diagnosis: none of it has integrated the evaluative standards of classical ḥadīth criticism (*naqd al-ḥadīth*) with a systematic discourse-analytical framework to explain precisely how and why the reshaping occurs, or to prescribe what better practice would look like.

The gap identified above is compounded by a broader absence in the literature: existing studies of digital ḥadīth in Indonesia have engaged only selectively with the international ḥadīth scholarship that bears directly on questions of transmission authenticity and authority. Brown offers an indispensable account of how ḥadīth were authenticated, transmitted, and contested across the medieval and modern periods.¹¹ Motzki and Schoeler provide rigorous historical analyses of the oral and written dimensions of early ḥadīth transmission, establishing that the isnād system itself emerged as a solution to problems of authenticity verification that predate algorithmic media by more than a millennium.¹² Lucas traces how ḥadīth criticism became institutionalized as a discipline within Sunni scholarly culture, showing that *naqd al-ḥadīth* has always been a contested practice shaped by competing claims to authority.¹³ Nadwi's documentation of ḥadīth transmission networks further demonstrates that the scholar-student chain was never merely a formal requirement but a living social institution.¹⁴

Despite this body of work, a gap persists: the existing literature has yet to systematically integrate classical ḥadīth criticism standards (*naqd al-ḥadīth*) with Critical Discourse Analysis to produce a normative framework applicable to Islamic educational contexts. Table 1 maps this gap against prior studies.

Table 1. Research Gap Matrix: Prior Studies on Digital Ḥadīth Transmission

Study	Platform	Approach	Naqd al-Ḥadīth	CDA	Normative Model
Saefudin et al. (2022)	IG, Twitter, FB	Content analysis	Partial	×	×
Shari (2021)	TikTok	Mediatization	×	×	×
Bakar & Manik (2023)	Instagram	Meaning analysis	×	Partial	×
Manik et al. (2025)	TikTok	Recontextualization	×	×	Partial

⁹A. Bakar and Z. Manik, “Pemaknaan Hadis-Hadis tentang Zuhud di Media Sosial: Studi Kasus Akun Instagram Aa Gym,” *Substantia: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Ushuluddin* 26, (2023): 59–74, <https://doi.org/10.22373/substantia.v26i1.23009>; A. Bakar and Z. Manik, “Hadith Content about Women on Instagram: Analysis of Religious Account Strategies to Attract Followers,” *Al-Fikru: Jurnal Ilmiah* 18, 2 (2024): 173–191, <https://doi.org/10.51672/alfikru.v18i2.441>; M. S. Amin, “Pengaruh Algoritma Media Sosial terhadap Narasi Keislaman di Ruang Digital,” *El-Wasathy: Journal of Islamic Studies* 3, 1 (2025): 148–158.

¹⁰S. N. I. Aulia and F. Zakka, “The Role of Hadith in Shaping Social Media Use Ethics among Generation Z,” *Al-Bukhari: Jurnal Ilmu Hadis* 7, 2 (2024): 159–173, <https://doi.org/10.32505/al-bukhari.v7i2.9554>.

¹¹J. A. C. Brown, *Hadith: Muhammad's Legacy in the Medieval and Modern World* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2009).

¹²H. Motzki, ed., *Hadith: Origins and Developments* (London: Routledge, 2002); G. Schoeler, *The Oral and the Written in Early Islam*, trans. U. Vagelpohl (London: Routledge, 2009).

¹³S. C. Lucas, *Constructive Critics, Hadith Literature, and the Articulation of Sunni Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 2004).

¹⁴M. A. Nadwi, *Al-Muhaddithat: The Women Scholars in Islam* (London: Interface Publications, 2007).

Amin (2025)	Multi-platform	Algorithm analysis	X	X	X
Present study	IG, TikTok, YT	CDA + Phenomenology	✓ Full	✓ Full	✓ RLHM-DS

The novelty of this study lies in its integrated analytical architecture: it brings together, for the first time within the Indonesian Islamic education context, Fairclough's three-dimensional CDA, classical isnād-based authenticity standards from the *naqd al-ḥadīth* tradition, and living ḥadīth theory. Prior studies employing CDA in Islamic digital contexts have analyzed content framing and ideological construction, but without grounding their evaluative criteria in the specific epistemic standards of classical ḥadīth transmission. The RLHM-DS emerges from this integration as a framework that is simultaneously empirical, critical, and normative, a combination that neither tradition, applied in isolation, could generate.

This study is driven by three research questions: (RQ1) What are the dominant discursive forms and patterns of living ḥadīth about Islamic education circulating on social media? (RQ2) How do the discursive structures of ḥadīth-based content on social media construct, negotiate, or undermine classical standards of ḥadīth authenticity? (RQ3) How do content creators and audiences experience and navigate the tension between ḥadīth authenticity and social media popularization demands?

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research design integrating Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and phenomenological inquiry. The qualitative design is epistemologically aligned with the living ḥadīth research tradition, which is fundamentally concerned with meaning-making, interpretive practice, and the social dimensions of religious knowledge transmission.¹⁵ Research ethics procedures were followed in accordance with the institutional guidelines of UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta. All participants provided written informed consent prior to any interview activity. Participant identities are protected through coding throughout this article. Data collection was conducted between January and June 2024.

Phase 1: Critical Discourse Analysis of Digital Ḥadīth Content

The first phase employed Fairclough's three-dimensional CDA model, analyzing discourse at three interconnected levels: (1) the textual level (linguistic features, lexical choices, grammatical structures, and multimodal elements); (2) the discursive practice level (processes of content production, distribution, and consumption, including intertextual relationships with classical ḥadīth sources); and (3) the sociocultural practice level (the broader social, institutional, and ideological contexts shaping digital ḥadīth discourse, including platform algorithmic logic and Islamic authority structures in Indonesia). This phase addresses RQ1 and RQ2.

The research corpus was constructed through purposive sampling of ḥadīth-related Islamic educational content across Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. Accounts were selected based on three criteria: (a) minimum follower count of 10,000; (b) consistent focus on ḥadīth-related educational content; and (c) representational diversity, encompassing formally trained ulama and lay content

¹⁵Mansyur et al., *Metodologi Penelitian Living Qur'an dan Hadis*, 7; Suryadilaga, "Model-Model Living Hadis." 84.

creators. A total of 30 accounts were selected across the three platforms (10 per platform), and from each account five to seven posts were selected for in-depth analysis, yielding a corpus of 180 content units. Trustworthiness was ensured through: (a) theoretical triangulation, applying both the CDA framework and classical *naqd al-ḥadīth* criteria simultaneously; (b) researcher reflexivity, maintained through an analytical journal; and (c) member checking, wherein interpretive findings were shared with two Islamic scholars in ḥadīth studies for critical feedback.

Phase 2: Phenomenological Inquiry

The second phase employed Moustakas' transcendental phenomenological approach to explore the lived experiences of content creators and audiences, addressing RQ3.¹⁶ Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with two purposively selected groups: 12 Islamic educational content creators and 15 Muslim social media users who regularly engage with ḥadīth-based content. Sampling continued until thematic saturation was achieved.¹⁷ Table 2 presents the participant profile.

Table 2. Participant Demographics and Characteristics

Code	Group	Gender	Age	Education	Platform	Followers / Role	Training
C-01	Creator	Male	34	S1 Islamic Studies	YouTube	280K subscribers	Formal (Ustadz)
C-02	Creator	Male	29	S2 Ḥadīth Sciences	YouTube/IG	95K subscribers	Formal (Ustadz)
C-03	Creator	Female	27	S1 Communication	Instagram	45K followers	Lay creator
C-04	Creator	Male	32	S1 Islamic Education	TikTok/IG	120K followers	Formal (Ustadz)
C-05	Creator	Female	24	S1 Business	TikTok	67K followers	Lay creator
C-06	Creator	Male	41	S3 Islamic Sciences	YouTube	310K subscribers	Formal (Ulama)
C-07– C-12	Creator	Mixed	23–45	Varied	Multi-platform	12K–200K	3 formal / 3 lay
A-01– A-08	Audience	Mixed	18–35	S1 / S2	Multi-platform	Active daily users	Varied Islamic edu.
A-09– A-15	Audience	Mixed	36–55	SMA / S1	Multi-platform	Active daily users	Varied Islamic edu.

Data analysis in Phase 1 was conducted through researcher-led close reading of each content unit, with findings recorded in a structured analytical journal organized around the three CDA dimensions. In Phase 2, phenomenological analysis followed the four-stage Moustakas procedure: epoche, phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation, and synthesis of textural and structural descriptions.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

¹⁶C. Moustakas, *Phenomenological Research Methods* (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 1994), 84.

¹⁷J. W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 2013), 57.

Living Ḥadīth Framework

The living ḥadīth concept, as Mansyur et al. developed it, insists that ḥadīth are not museum pieces, but they are living things, meant to be practiced, re-enacted, and interpreted anew in each generation's circumstances.¹⁸ Suryadilaga showed what this looks like on the ground: in Indonesian pesantren, prophetic traditions are woven into daily rituals, teaching methods, and community norms in ways that go well beyond textual transmission.¹⁹ The present study extends the framework into digital spaces, on the grounds that social media has become, for many Indonesian Muslims, the primary site where they first encounter prophetic teaching.

The living ḥadīth framework carries normative commitments that distinguish it from merely descriptive approaches to religious practice. As Brown documents in his comprehensive analysis of ḥadīth's medieval and modern legacy, the concept of a tradition as "living" has always presupposed fidelity to the epistemic conditions that make the tradition recognizable as prophetic; most fundamentally, the chain of transmission (*isnād*) that connects the contemporary practitioner to the original prophetic source.²⁰ Motzki's meticulous reconstruction of early ḥadīth transmission demonstrates that this chain was not a bureaucratic formality but a living social relationship: to transmit ḥadīth was to stand in a line of persons who bore personal responsibility for what they passed on.²¹

Digital Religion Theory

Campbell's Digital Religion framework is useful here because it refuses a simple story of decline. Rather than asking whether the internet is good or bad for religious life, it asks how digital media restructures the social arrangements through which religious knowledge gets made and legitimated, or what she calls networked religion.²² As Bunt documents in his study of digital Muslim publics, online religious engagement produces genuine new forms of Islamic practice rather than just degraded versions of older ones.²³ The challenge Eickelman and Anderson identified, where the emerging Muslim public sphere tends toward fragmentation of traditional authority and the commodification of religious content, has only intensified since they wrote.²⁴

Digital religion scholarship has increasingly attended to the platformization of religious content, where the process by which platform architectures, algorithmic curation, and monetization logics reshape what religious content can be produced, who can produce it, and which forms of religious expression receive visibility.²⁵ Recent work on religious influencers and online Islamic authority has demonstrated that digital media does not simply democratize religious authority but creates new

¹⁸Mansyur et al., *Metodologi Penelitian Living Qur'an dan Hadis*, 7.

¹⁹Suryadilaga, "Model-Model Living Hadis," 370.

²⁰Brown, *Hadith: Muhammad's Legacy*. 82.

²¹Motzki, *Hadith: Origins and Developments*. xviii.

²²H. A. Campbell, "Understanding the Relationship between Religion Online and Offline in a Networked Society," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 80, 1 (2012): 64–93, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jaarel/lfr074>.

²³G. R. Bunt, *iMuslims: Rewiring the House of Islam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009).

²⁴D. F. Eickelman and J. W. Anderson, eds., *New Media in the Muslim World: The Emerging Public Sphere* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003).

²⁵P. H. Cheong, "Authority," in *Digital Religion: Understanding Religious Practice in New Media Worlds*, ed. H. A. Campbell (London: Routledge, 2014), 72–87; C. Helland, "Ritual," in *Digital Religion: Understanding Religious Practice in New Media Worlds*, 2nd ed., ed. H. A. Campbell (London: Routledge, 2016), 25–40.

hierarchies organized around follower counts, production values, and algorithmic optimization.²⁶ Rashid's analysis of online Islamic epistemology further shows that digital environments produce distinctive forms of religious reasoning in which appeals to authenticity function rhetorically rather than operationally as scholarly verification procedures.²⁷

Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis

For the content analysis phase, this study uses Fairclough's three-dimensional CDA model.²⁸ Fairclough's model attends to three levels: the textual (how words and images are chosen and arranged), the discursive practice (how content is produced, circulated, and consumed), and the sociocultural (how it all connects to broader relations of power in Indonesian Muslim public life). It is this last level that makes CDA particularly appropriate here: the authenticity-popularity tension this study investigates is not simply a matter of individual creator choices, but of structural conditions that shape what is even possible to say in a given digital context.

Theoretical Integration

The living ḥadīth framework arrives with normative baggage: it cares whether digital ḥadīth practice actually meets the conditions for authentic prophetic transmission, those are the reliable narrator chain, the contextual grounding, the communal embodiment. Digital religion theory, by contrast, is deliberately agnostic about whether digital change represents gain or loss. Fairclough's CDA enters as the analytical resolution: it provides the methodological apparatus to examine, at the level of specific texts and discursive practices, precisely how the normative demands of classical ḥadīth transmission are preserved, negotiated, or eroded under the structural pressures that digital religion theory describes. The phenomenological component, informed by Moustakas,²⁹ grounds the analysis in experience: it asks how actual creators and actual audiences inhabit this tension, rather than treating it as a purely structural or textual matter.

RESULTS

The findings presented below do not resolve neatly into a single narrative about digital ḥadīth practice. What emerged from both the CDA corpus and the phenomenological interviews was a picture considerably more fractured, and more interesting, than the binary of 'authentic versus inauthentic' transmission might suggest. Three discursive patterns address RQ1 and RQ2; creator and audience experiences address RQ3; the contradictions within each are addressed as they arise.

Dominant Discursive Patterns of Living Ḥadīth in Digital Educational Content (RQ1 & RQ2)

CDA of the 180-unit research corpus revealed three dominant discursive patterns through which living ḥadīth is constructed and transmitted in digital Islamic educational spaces.

²⁶M. Slama, "Practising Islam through Social Media in Indonesia," *Indonesia and the Malay World* 46, 134 (2018): 1–4, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13639811.2018.1416798>.

²⁷H. Rashid, "Islam and the Digital Public Sphere," in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Islamic Spirituality*, ed. S. Ridgeon (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), 365–380.

²⁸N. Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language* (London: Longman, 1995); N. Fairclough, *Analysing Discourse: Textual Analysis for Social Research* (London: Routledge, 2003).

²⁹C. Moustakas, *Phenomenological Research Methods*, 84.

Pattern 1: Textual-Visual Repackaging

Textual-visual repackaging is characterized by a discursive logic of motivational universalization and constitutes the most prevalent pattern in the corpus. At the textual level, ḥadīth texts, frequently extracted without *isnād* and presented as typographic overlays on aesthetically curated imagery, are lexically framed through motivational language positioning the ḥadīth as a timeless personal directive rather than a historically situated prophetic teaching.

A representative example from the corpus is an Instagram post by account C-03 (45K followers) featuring the ḥadīth: ‘Sesungguhnya Allah tidak melihat rupa dan hartamu, tetapi Allah melihat hati dan amalmu’ overlaid on a sunrise photograph, captioned ‘HR. Muslim: jadikan ini motivasimu hari ini.’ At the textual level, the citation ‘HR. Muslim’ appears without book, chapter, or ḥadīth number, functioning as a credentialing marker rather than a verifiable scholarly reference. The original Arabic text and narrator chain are absent, and the Indonesian translation decontextualizes the ḥadīth from its *asbab al-wurud*, the specific occasion on which the Prophet addressed a group regarding judgments of social status.

At the discursive practice level, the post was produced within a content calendar optimized for morning engagement. Intertextually, the post blends Islamic scholarly discourse with lifestyle content discourse, producing what Fairclough terms ‘interdiscursivity’: the ḥadīth is not transmitted as a prophetic teaching requiring scholarly context, but reframed as a personal motivational resource.³⁰ At the sociocultural practice level, this pattern reflects the broader commodification of prophetic teachings in Indonesia’s digital Muslim public sphere, a dynamic consistent with Eickelman and Anderson’s characterization of religious commodification in the emerging Muslim public sphere.³¹

This finding resonates with Saefudin et al., who documented that ḥadīth content on major Indonesian Islamic accounts frequently lacks completeness in ḥadīth structure.³² Where the present study advances beyond these prior accounts is in explaining the discursive mechanism: it is not simply that source attribution is absent, but that the citation functions within a distinct discursive logic, as a credentialing signal rather than a scholarly apparatus.

Pattern 2: Narrative Embodiment

Narrative embodiment is organized around a logic of experiential authentication. A representative corpus example is a YouTube video (C-01, 280K subscribers) in which the creator narrates a personal experience of loss, then cites the ḥadīth about *ṣabr*: ‘Rasulullah shallallahu alaihi wasallam bersabda: Sesungguhnya besarnya pahala sesuai dengan besarnya ujian.’ The creator provides the source (HR. Tirmidzi no. 2396) and names the companion narrator (Anas bin Malik), demonstrating a higher authenticity standard than the textual-visual pattern. This pattern is most prevalent on YouTube, where longer-form formats permit sustained narrative construction, consistent with Shari’s documentation of ḥadīth mediatization patterns on video platforms.³³

Pattern 3: Scholarly Mediation

³⁰Fairclough, *Analysing Discourse*, 218.

³¹Eickelman and Anderson, *New Media in the Muslim World*, 14.

³²Saefudin, Raharusun, and Rodliyana, “Konten Hadis di Media Sosial,” 35.

³³Shari, “Bentuk Mediatisasi Hadis,” 175.

Scholarly mediation is distinguished by a discursive logic of classical authority maintenance. A representative example is a YouTube lecture series by C-06 (310K subscribers, S3 Islamic Sciences), in which each episode opens with the full ḥadīth in Arabic, followed by identification of the companion narrator, *sanad* chain, and grading (*ṣaḥīḥ/ḥasan/ḍaʿīf*), before proceeding to *sharḥ al-ḥadīth* drawing on classical commentaries including Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī's *Fatḥ al-Bārī*. At the sociocultural practice level, scholarly mediation constitutes an attempt to preserve classical Islamic epistemic norms within a medium that structurally incentivizes their erosion, directly reflecting the fragmentation of religious authority described by Eickelman and Anderson³⁴ and the disruption of traditional authority hierarchies identified by Campbell in the context of networked religion.³⁵

DISCUSSION

The Authenticity-Popularity Paradox: A CDA Perspective (RQ2)

Across all three discursive patterns, CDA reveals the ‘authenticity-popularity paradox’: the discursive resources most valued within classical ḥadīth transmission norms are precisely those that social media platform logic renders most costly in terms of audience reach and engagement. Amin’s analysis provides the sociocultural context: platform algorithms that optimize for emotional engagement and content brevity structurally disadvantage the scholarly apparatus classical ḥadīth transmission requires.³⁶ The CDA analysis demonstrates that this algorithmic pressure is internalized at the level of discursive strategy, producing ‘strategic inauthenticity,’ the deliberate simplification of ḥadīth transmission for the purpose of maximizing reach.

Interpreted through Campbell’s framework of networked religion, the authenticity-popularity paradox represents a structural feature of how digital networks reconfigure religious authority: authority is no longer conferred through institutional credentials and transmission chains, but through follower counts, engagement metrics, and algorithmic visibility. Bunt’s concept of ‘iMuslims’ further illuminates this dynamic, that is the digital Muslim public is characterized by a pluralization of religious voices in which the formally trained scholar and the lay content creator compete on the same algorithmic terrain.³⁷

Phenomenological Analysis: Content Creator Experiences (RQ3)

The creator interviews yielded a more complicated picture than a straightforward account of scholars versus algorithm would suggest. Six invariant themes emerged from the data. The most structurally central theme is algorithmic consciousness, the pervasive awareness that platform algorithms function as a kind of silent editorial partner in the production of ḥadīth content. C-06, a formally trained ulama with over 300K subscribers, described the experience in terms that made the ethical stakes unmistakable:

“Saya tahu betul bahwa sebuah hadis tidak bisa dijelaskan dalam satu menit. Tapi algoritma YouTube menghukum video panjang dengan retention rate yang buruk. Setiap kali saya mempersingkat penjelasan sanad, saya merasa seperti mengkhianati tanggung

³⁴Eickelman and Anderson, *New Media in the Muslim World*, 22.

³⁵Campbell, “Understanding the Relationship,” 80.

³⁶Amin, “Pengaruh Algoritma Media Sosial,” 154.

³⁷Bunt, *iMuslims*, 87.

jawab ilmu. Ini bukan pilihan kreatif — ini adalah tekanan struktural yang sulit dilawan sendirian.”

[English translation: “I know full well that a ḥadīth cannot be explained in one minute. But YouTube algorithm punishes long videos with poor retention rates. Every time I shorten the explanation of the sanad, I feel as if I am betraying my scholarly obligation. This is not a creative choice — it is a structural pressure that is very difficult to resist alone.”]

(C-06, Formally trained ulama, YouTube, 310K subscribers)

Not all creators experienced the algorithm as a source of ethical tension. C-08, a lay TikTok creator who had grown from under 5K to over 80K followers within eight months, was direct about this:

“Kalau video saya dapat jutaan views dan orang-orang nulis di komentar bahwa mereka jadi lebih ingat Allah, itu artinya konten saya berhasil. Saya tidak terlalu pusing soal nomor hadis atau rantai sanadnya — yang penting pesannya sampai dan orang tergerak. Bukankah itu tujuan dakwah?”

[English translation: “If my video gets millions of views and people write in the comments that they are reminded of Allah, that means my content succeeded. I do not worry too much about the ḥadīth number or the sanad chain — what matters is that the message arrives and people are moved. Isn’t that the goal of dakwah?”]

(C-08, Lay creator, TikTok, 80K followers)

Source verification anxiety, the second theme, cut differently depending on where participants sat in the formal/informal divide. C-03 put it plainly:

“Saya selalu cari dulu di beberapa website hadis. Tapi bagaimana saya tahu website itu bisa dipercaya? Saya bukan lulusan pesantren. Akhirnya saya tulis HR. Bukhari atau HR. Muslim karena konten lain juga begitu — tapi jujurnya saya tidak benar-benar bisa verifikasi sampai ke kitab aslinya.”

(C-03, Lay creator, Instagram, 45K followers)

A third theme, informal scholar partnerships, emerged as a grassroots quality control mechanism. C-05 described how it worked:

“Saya punya grup WhatsApp dengan dua ustadz. Setiap sebelum posting, saya kirim draf konten ke sana. Mereka cek hadisnya — apakah shahih, apakah terjemahannya tepat. Ini bukan formal, tapi sudah jadi kebiasaan. Tanpa mereka, saya tidak berani posting.”

(C-05, Lay creator, TikTok, 67K followers)

The remaining themes, audience trust management, platform-specific adaptation, and identity negotiation, were consistent across most participants, though their valence and intensity varied considerably depending on formal training background.

Phenomenological Analysis: Audience Experiences (RQ3)

The audience interviews revealed that participants did not treat social media as a place to learn ḥadīth. They treated it as a place to be reminded of ḥadīth they might then verify elsewhere. A-04, a 28-year-old university lecturer, articulated this:

“Kalau saya lihat hadis di TikTok, saya anggap itu pengingat — bukan pelajaran. Kalau bunyinya menarik atau relevan dengan yang saya alami, saya screenshot dulu, lalu nanti

tanya ke ustadz di kajian Jumat: ini hadisnya bener ga, shahih ga? Social media adalah pintu masuk, bukan tempat belajar hadis yang sesungguhnya.”

(A-04, Audience, age 28, university lecturer)

A second pattern emerged, what the data suggests might be termed ‘credentialed acceptance’: the assumption that visible markers of Islamic identity (beard, gamis, large follower count) constitute sufficient grounds for acceptance of ḥadīth content without further verification. A-12, a 24-year-old private sector employee, described his practice:

“Kalau yang posting ustadz, apalagi yang sudah terkenal dan followers-nya banyak, ya saya percaya langsung. Ngapain dicek lagi? Masa seorang ustadz salah soal hadis. Saya langsung share ke grup — ini bermanfaat untuk orang banyak.”

(A-12, Audience, age 24, private sector employee)

A-12’s logic that follower count functions as a proxy for scholarly authority is precisely the conflation of algorithmic visibility with religious credibility that the CDA analysis identifies as a structural feature of the authenticity-popularity paradox. Among audiences who did apply evaluation criteria, credibility heuristics emerged as informal habits of attention, resonating with Fadilha’s analysis of how audience knowledge frames shape ḥadīth reception.³⁸

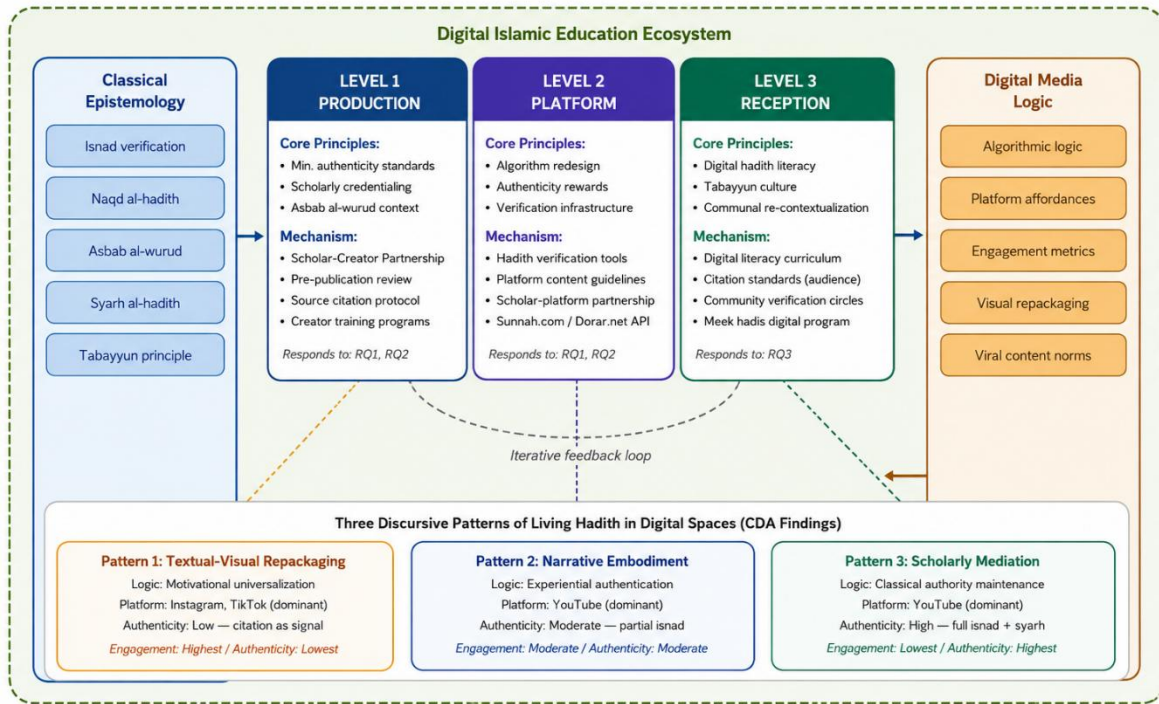
The Reconstructive Living Ḥadīth Model for Digital Spaces (RLHM-DS)

Integrating CDA findings with phenomenological insights, this study proposes the RLHM-DS as a normative-qualitative framework for the production, evaluation, and consumption of ḥadīth-based Islamic educational content in digital environments. The model operates across three interconnected levels elaborated in Table 3.

³⁸R. Fadilha, “Resepsi Hadis di Media Sosial: Studi Kasus Film Animasi Nussa Episode Adab Menguap,” *Al-Manar: Jurnal Kajian Al-Quran dan Hadis* 8, 1 (2022): 38, <https://doi.org/10.35719/amn.v8i1.21>.

Figure 1. The Reconstructive Living Hadith Model for Digital Spaces (RLHM-DS)

A Three-Level Normative-Qualitative Framework for Islamic Digital Education

**Table 3. RLHM-DS: Levels, Principles, and Mechanisms**

Level	Core Principles	Practical Mechanisms
Production	Minimum authenticity standards; scholarly credentialing; asbab al-wurud contextualization	Scholar-Creator Partnership (SCP); pre-publication review; mandatory source citation protocol
Platform	Algorithm re-design to reward authenticity; hadith verification infrastructure	Platform-integrated hadith verification tools (Sunnah.com / Dorar.net); community guidelines for Islamic educational content
Reception	Digital hadith literacy (melek hadis digital); tabayyun culture; communal re-contextualization	Islamic digital literacy curriculum; audience-facing citation standards; community verification circles

The three levels of the RLHM-DS are not arbitrary prescriptions but derive directly from the empirical findings of this study. The Production Level addresses the patterns identified in CDA Patterns 1 and 2: the systematic absence of full *isnad* attribution, the decontextualization from *asbab al-wurud*, and the opacity regarding creator credentials. The Platform Level responds to the finding that algorithmic logic functions as a structural driver of strategic inauthenticity. The Reception Level addresses the phenomenological bifurcation in audience responses: the *tabayyun* practices of audience members like A-11 and A-07 are identified as adaptive epistemic habits that the RLHM-DS seeks to cultivate systematically, while the credentialed-acceptance pattern of A-12 is identified as the specific vulnerability that digital hadith literacy education must target.

Implications

For Islamic education institutions, the most urgent implication is epistemic habit. The RLHM-DS Reception Level proposes to treat *melek hadis digital* (digital ḥadīth literacy) as a core competency within PAI at all school levels, and to train PAI teachers to model *tabayyun* not as a classical principle but as a concrete daily practice. For content creators, the Scholar-Creator Partnership must be framed as a form of audience care rather than scholarly gate-keeping, to attract the creators who most need it. For policymakers, this study makes an uncomfortable argument: the authenticity-popularity paradox is built into the incentive architecture of the platforms themselves. Koinfo, in dialogue with MUI and the major platforms, needs to explore what it would look like to reward source citation completeness and scholarly credentialing as signals of content quality.

A final theoretical implication requires acknowledgment. Scholars working within digital religion theory, including Campbell and Bunt, have argued that online religious practices should be evaluated on their own terms as emerging and potentially legitimate forms of religious engagement, rather than measured against institutional templates they were never designed to replicate.³⁹ Lucas's historical analysis is relevant here: *naqd al-ḥadīth* standards were themselves historically constructed and contested, not simply received from an undifferentiated classical past.⁴⁰ The RLHM-DS is offered as a framework for improving ḥadīth transmission quality within the terms that the living ḥadīth tradition sets for itself; whether those terms should themselves be renegotiated in light of digital realities is a question that the tradition's scholars will need to work out.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine the reconfiguration of living ḥadīth in digital spaces, and found something more complicated than a simple story of degradation. The authenticity-popularity paradox is real and structurally embedded: the demands of classical ḥadīth transmission and the incentive structures of social media platforms pull in opposite directions, and this study has traced that tension through both the discursive patterns of digital ḥadīth content and the lived experiences of those who produce and consume it.

What the phenomenological data adds to this structural diagnosis is a set of complicating human realities. Some creators experience the algorithm as ethical pressure; others have reframed it as confirmation of their dakwah impact. Some audiences approach digital ḥadīth with calibrated skepticism; others outsource epistemic responsibility to follower counts and recognized faces. These are not deviations from the story: they are the story, and any normative framework that ignores them risks prescribing interventions that address an idealized audience rather than the actual one.

The RLHM-DS proposed here attempts to build in that complexity. Its three-level architecture, which comprises of Production, Platform, Reception, prescribes structural mechanisms (citation protocols, Scholar-Creator Partnerships, algorithm adjustments) that work with the grain of existing practice where possible, and proposes targeted digital literacy interventions where epistemic habits need to be cultivated rather than merely reinforced. The novelty of this study resides in this integration itself: by combining Fairclough's CDA with classical *naqd al-ḥadīth* standards and living ḥadīth theory within a single qualitative inquiry, the study produces an analytical framework that is simultaneously empirical, critical, and prescriptive. Whether that integration is sufficient, or whether it opens more

³⁹Campbell, "Understanding the Relationship," 90; Bunt, *iMuslims*, 210.

⁴⁰Lucas, *Constructive Critics*, 45.

problems than it resolves, is a question that subsequent empirical research, be it longitudinal, multi-platform, and ideally multi-national, will need to address.

Three limitations deserve acknowledgment. The study was initially conducted as a single-researcher inquiry, partially addressed through the integration of additional authors in the present publication. The corpus was restricted to three platforms, leaving WhatsApp and Telegram, where much Indonesian Islamic content actually circulates, outside the analysis. And the Indonesian context is not the whole of the Muslim world: whether the authenticity-popularity paradox takes similar forms in Egyptian, Malaysian, or Turkish digital Muslim publics would need to be examined on its own terms.

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