



Critique and Analysis of Hadith in Countering Radicalism among Youth

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Abstract: This study investigates the role of hadith criticism in preventing radicalism among youth by emphasizing the analysis of sanad and matan as tools to counter the misuse of Islamic texts. Using a qualitative, library-based method with a critical-hermeneutic approach, the research examines three hadiths frequently instrumentalized by radical groups: the command to fight (HR. Bukhari-Muslim), the best jihad (HR. Abu Dawud, al-Tirmidhi, Ibn Majah), and the migration to Syria (HR. Ahmad, Abu Dawud). The findings reveal that radical interpretations disregard historical context, misinterpret linguistic nuances, and rely on weak transmission chains. Hadith criticism provides corrective interpretations aligned with Islamic principles of peace and moderation. The study highlights the urgency of strengthening hadith literacy among youth through education and digital platforms to foster resilience against extremism. Its contribution lies in offering contextual reinterpretations of contested hadith and proposing practical strategies for inclusive and moderate religious education.

Keywords: hadith criticism; radicalism; youth; jihad; hadith literacy

Abstrak: Penelitian ini mengkaji peran kritik hadis dalam menangkal radikalisme di kalangan pemuda dengan menekankan analisis sanad dan matan sebagai upaya meluruskan penyalahgunaan teks agama. Metode penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif berbasis studi pustaka dengan kerangka kritis-hermeneutik. Tiga hadis utama yang sering dijadikan propaganda radikal dianalisis:

hadis perintah memerangi (HR. Bukhari-Muslim), hadis jihad terbaik (HR. Abu Dawud, al-Tirmidzi, Ibn Majah), dan hadis hijrah ke Syam (HR. Ahmad, Abu Dawud). Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penafsiran radikal mengabaikan konteks sejarah, salah memahami aspek linguistik, serta bersandar pada sanad yang lemah. Kritik hadis dapat memberikan pemahaman alternatif yang sesuai dengan prinsip Islam tentang perdamaian dan moderasi. Penelitian ini menegaskan pentingnya penguatan literasi hadis di kalangan pemuda melalui pendidikan formal maupun digital untuk membangun ketahanan terhadap ideologi ekstrem. Kontribusinya terletak pada reinterpretasi kontekstual hadis-hadis bermasalah dan tawaran strategi praktis bagi pendidikan agama yang inklusif serta moderat.

Kata Kunci: kritik hadis; radikalisme; pemuda; jihad; literasi hadis

المُلخَص

تستقصي هذه الدراسة دور نقد الحديث في محاربة ومنع ظاهرة التطرف بين صفوف الشباب، وذلك من خلال التأكيد على تحليل السند والمتمن كأدوات أساسية لمواجهة سوء استخدام النصوص الإسلامية. باستخدام منهج نوعي مكتبي ذي مقارنة نقدية تأويلية (هرمنيوطيقية)، تبحث الدراسة في ثلاثة أحاديث غالبًا ما تستغلها الجماعات المتطرفة: حديث الأمر بالقتال (رواه البخاري ومسلم)، وحديث أفضل الجهاد (رواه أبو داود، والترمذي، وابن ماجه)، وحديث الهجرة إلى الشام (رواه أحمد، وأبو داود). تكشف النتائج أن التأويلات المتطرفة تتجاهل السياق التاريخي، وتسيء تفسير الفوارق اللغوية الدقيقة، وتعتمد على سلاسل إسناد ضعيفة. يوفر نقد الحديث تأويلات صحيحية تتوافق مع المبادئ الإسلامية للسلام والاعتدال. تسلط الدراسة الضوء على الضرورة المُحتمة لتعزيز ثقافة معرفة الحديث (الوعي بالحديث) بين الشباب عبر التعليم والمنصات الرقمية لترسيخ المرونة والمناعة ضد الأفكار المتطرفة. تكمن مساهمتها في تقديم إعادة تأويل سياقية للأحاديث المتنازع عليها، واقتراح استراتيجيات عملية للتربية الدينية الشاملة والمعتدلة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: نقد الحديث؛ التطرف؛ الشباب؛ الجهاد؛ الوعي بالحديث

Introduction

The spread of Islam in Indonesia historically unfolded peacefully through the cultural and spiritual endeavors of the *wali*. Rather than imposing rigid interpretations, they harmonized Islamic teachings with local traditions, thereby nurturing a form of Islam that was inclusive, tolerant, and deeply embedded in the plural fabric of Indonesian society. This heritage became the foundation for centuries of coexistence between Muslims and adherents of other religions. However, the dynamics of modern globalization, the proliferation of transnational Islamic movements, and the increasing accessibility of religious discourses through digital platforms have significantly transformed the religious landscape. In particular, the phenomenon of radicalism has emerged as one of the most pressing challenges, both globally and in Indonesia.

Radicalism is commonly defined as an orientation that seeks drastic and fundamental change, often through uncompromising or violent means. The *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (KBBI) describes radikalisme as a school of thought or movement that demands change by way of hardline or violent methods. Similarly, Sartono Kartodirdjo (1992) characterizes radicalism as a social movement that wholly rejects the existing order, fueled by strong moral conviction against established authorities. In religious contexts, radicalism refers to doctrinal interpretations that advocate for the complete transformation of social and political systems, frequently through acts of violence or extremism (Hafid, 2020). These definitions highlight that radicalism is not merely a theological stance but also a socio-political force capable of disrupting societal harmony.

While radical movements may arise from multiple factors—economic, political, or cultural—one of the most critical drivers in the Indonesian context is the misuse of religious texts. Qur'anic verses and hadith are often cited selectively, detached from their historical and interpretive contexts, and employed to justify intolerant or violent actions. Among youth in particular, such misuse is facilitated by their limited capacity to engage in critical reading of hadith. Radical preachers, through online sermons or social media platforms, frequently exploit weak (*ḍa'īf*) or even fabricated (*mawḍū'*) hadith to legitimize extremist narratives. For example,

traditions that exaggerate the merits of armed struggle or misrepresent the meaning of *jihad* are circulated without adequate scrutiny of their chains of transmission (*sanad*) or textual integrity (*matan*). The lack of awareness regarding hadith criticism makes young audiences vulnerable to such manipulation.

This condition reveals a significant gap in existing religious education: the weakness of hadith literacy among the younger generation. Whereas Qur'anic literacy has received significant attention through various *tahfiz* and *tafsir* programs, the systematic study of hadith—particularly the sciences of authenticity criticism—remains less emphasized at the grassroots level. The result is a generation that may be familiar with the *text* of hadith yet unable to distinguish between authentic (*ṣahīḥ*), weak (*da'īf*), or fabricated (*mawḍū'*) reports. This vulnerability is exploited by radical groups who cloak their ideological agendas with seemingly religious legitimacy. Strengthening hadith literacy, therefore, becomes not merely an academic exercise but a strategic necessity in safeguarding Indonesian Islam against extremist distortions.

Several studies have attempted to address the issue of radicalism in Indonesia. Farhanah (2021), for instance, focused on theological reinterpretation, highlighting the need to reframe certain doctrinal concepts to counter extremist views. Misbahuddin (2021) emphasized the role of Islamic institutions and community organizations in cultivating moderation and resilience against radical ideologies. While both contributions are significant, they share a common limitation: neither directly addresses the role of hadith criticism as a preventive tool. Their approaches tend to remain within the domain of theological discourse or institutional case studies, without offering concrete methodological guidance on how young Muslims can critically assess the authenticity and meaning of hadith.

Unlike previous studies that concentrated on theological reinterpretation (Farhanah, 2021) or institutional approaches (Misbahuddin, 2021), the present study specifically highlights the function of hadith criticism—through both *sanad* and *matan* analysis—as a bulwark against youth radicalization. By equipping young Muslims with the ability to discern the reliability of hadith sources, radical narratives that depend on misquotation or fabrication can be systematically undermined. This approach also

acknowledges that radicalism today is propagated less through formal institutions and more through digital platforms—social media, video-sharing sites, and messaging applications. Hence, strengthening hadith literacy must adapt to this new context by incorporating digital tools and platforms as part of the strategy.

The contribution of this study is twofold. First, it offers a conceptual framework that integrates classical hadith criticism with contemporary challenges of radicalism, thereby bridging the gap between traditional scholarship and modern realities. Second, it proposes practical strategies for enhancing hadith literacy among youth through digital engagement. For example, online modules, interactive applications, or social media campaigns can be designed to educate young audiences about the principles of sanad and matan criticism, enabling them to independently verify the authenticity of hadith encountered in digital spaces. By empowering youth in this way, radical ideologies that rely on weak or fabricated traditions can lose their persuasive power.

The urgency of this approach is reinforced by the broader socio-political stakes. Indonesia's national project of promoting religious moderation (*wasathiyyah*) depends heavily on the intellectual resilience of its youth, who constitute the largest demographic segment of the population. If left unaddressed, the misuse of hadith by radical groups threatens not only interreligious harmony but also the internal cohesion of the Muslim community itself. Conversely, by cultivating a generation of Muslims who are literate in hadith criticism and digitally savvy, Indonesia can strengthen its resilience against radicalization while simultaneously revitalizing one of the core disciplines of Islamic scholarship.

Methods

This study employs a qualitative, library-based approach with a critical–hermeneutical framework to analyze hadith texts and narratives appropriated by radical groups in Indonesia. Since youth are often the main targets of radical ideologies, the research highlights how hadith criticism can function as a preventive tool against extremist interpretations. Data were drawn from both primary and secondary sources: the main text analyzed is *Matan al-Arbaʿīn al-Nawawīyyah* by al-Nawawī (p. 41), while secondary

materials include scholarly articles, journals, books, online videos, and hadith collections on Islam and radicalism accessed via digital platforms. Following Creswell's (2014) perspective, qualitative inquiry assumes that reality is socially constructed, with multiple realities shaped by context.

The analytical process proceeded through four interconnected stages. First, the researcher identified hadiths most frequently cited by radical groups to legitimize violence or exclusivist ideologies. Second, the *isnād* (chain of transmission) of these hadiths was critically examined through the principles of *jarḥ wa ta'dīl* to assess the reliability and integrity of transmitters. Third, the *matn* (text) was analyzed by situating the traditions within their historical, linguistic, and socio-religious contexts to detect possible distortions of meaning. Finally, the reinterpretation stage provided alternative readings that are consistent with *'ulūm al-ḥadīth* and the spirit of Islamic moderation, ensuring that these traditions are understood in ways that promote justice, balance, and non-violence (Sadiah, 2018; Hafid, 2020). Through this methodological framework, the study not only exposes misinterpretations but also offers constructive strategies for preventing radicalization and strengthening a contextualized, authentic understanding of Islam among youth.

Result and Discussion

Diverse approaches to the Qur'an and *hadith* have long been examined by Muslim scholars and reformist thinkers. In Qur'anic studies, various exegetical methods (*tafsīr*) have emerged, while in the field of *hadith*, this has produced traditions of commentary (*sharḥ al-ḥadīth*). Both disciplines reflect distinct epistemological frameworks. Compared to Qur'anic exegesis, *hadith* interpretation tends to be more complex. Challenges in understanding *hadith* have given rise to the epistemology of *sharḥ*, which aims to clarify textual meanings, difficult vocabulary, themes, *isnād* (chains of transmission), and *matn* (content) in a more accessible manner. Importantly, these commentaries are also shaped by their audiences. While classical *sharḥ* in Arabic was largely limited to those proficient in the language—graduates of *pesantren* Islamic universities—contemporary *sharḥ* has become more inclusive, even appearing in popular forms such as comics, making the tradition

more accessible. Nevertheless, the epistemological construction of *sharḥ al-ḥadīth* has been critiqued by Agusni Yahya, who argues that there is no essential difference between methods of *hadith* understanding during the Prophet's lifetime, after his passing, and up to Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī's *Fathḥ al-Bārī*. He contends that Egypt's sociocultural context, where Ibn Ḥajar lived, did not substantially affect interpretive methods, which remained primarily text-centered (Fatih, 2023, pp. 47–48).

In the context of radicalization, *hadith* often becomes a primary instrument for indoctrination and recruitment by extremist groups. Many individuals fall prey to propaganda due to misinterpretations of the Prophet's sayings. Thus, *hadith* criticism—particularly the scientific examination of *isnād* and *matn*—plays a central role in countering radicalism by offering authentic understandings and exposing misuse. Training youth in these methods strengthens their critical faculties, enabling them to distinguish between genuine teachings and distortions. In Indonesia, such efforts can reinforce religious moderation and resilience against radical ideologies. Literacy programs in *hadith* for young people, whether in formal education or digital platforms, are therefore essential. Digitalization now provides unprecedented access to *hadith* literature, while creative pedagogical formats—such as videos, infographics, and comics—make these teachings more engaging and widely accessible. This is particularly urgent given the psychological vulnerability of youth during identity crises, which psychologists describe as “cognitive opening,” a process that renders them more receptive to new ideas, including radical ones. Consequently, *hadith*-based literacy initiatives serve as a critical bulwark against violent extremism.

Historically, *hadith* understanding has taken two primary forms since the Prophet's time: textualist and contextualist. After his passing, these approaches developed into distinct interpretive schools within the Muslim community, reflecting the Prophet's own tolerance of diverse perspectives. Several factors underlie such differences. According to Nizar Ali, drawing on Ṭāhā Jābir al-ʿAlwānī, four factors are particularly significant: (1) the Prophet's multifaceted roles (as Messenger, statesman, judge, military commander, or ordinary human being) shape how *hadith* are

applied; (2) the intellectual backgrounds of commentators influence interpretation, whether in law, philosophy, or sociology; (3) the transition from an oral to a written culture created new interpretive frameworks; and (4) the relationship between *hadith* and the Qur'an itself has always been central to hermeneutics (Nadhira & Hayati, 2022, p. 57).

Radicalism, as Najmudin explains, can be divided into two forms. The first is intellectual and ideological radicalism, where groups claim exclusive truth, branding others as deviant, innovators (*ahl al-bid'ah*), or even unbelievers. The Salafī or Wahhābī orientations are often cited as examples. The second is radicalism in action, manifested in violent practices such as destruction or killing of those who differ. Both types are dangerous, as they shape cognition, attitudes, and behavior—even among children and adolescents. Indicators of radical influence include extremism, rigid literalism, exclusivism, intolerance, and endorsement of violence. Other scholars note further signs: hostility toward the state and Pancasila ideology, rejection of national symbols, narrow-mindedness in distinguishing right from wrong, and refusal to respect the Indonesian flag (Hamzah, 2018). In essence, radical thought arises from narrow interpretations of Islam that undermine humanistic and democratic values, such as insisting that Islam must be the sole basis of the state or that *sharī'ah* must serve as its constitution (Syahlan, 2015).

Mark Juergensmeyer has argued that religious revivalist movements often rest on doctrinal ambiguities, particularly when sacred texts are employed as a basis for legitimizing violence against states perceived as secular. Similarly, R. Scott Appleby emphasizes the ambivalence within sacred traditions that, while advocating peace, can be misappropriated to justify violence. Qodir (2018, pp. 3–4) highlights that in the Indonesian context, such ambiguities provide fertile ground for extremist groups to rationalize acts of terror. Central to this phenomenon is the misuse of *hadith*, where certain texts are stripped of their historical context and weaponized for radical purposes. A prominent example is the *hadith* narrated by Ibn 'Umar concerning the Prophet's command to fight until the testimony of faith is declared. Radicals interpret this literally, ignoring the fact that the Prophet initially forbade armed struggle in

Mecca and only permitted it after migration to Medina as a defensive measure.

The findings of this study indicate that certain prophetic traditions are frequently exploited by radical groups in Indonesia to legitimize violence, rebellion, and exclusive interpretations of Islam. Among the most frequently cited are: (1) the hadith “*Umirtu an uqātil al-nās*” (I have been commanded to fight the people), narrated in both Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī and Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim; (2) the hadith “*Afḍal al-jihād kalimat haqq ‘inda sulṭān jā’ir*” (The best jihad is a word of truth before a tyrannical ruler); and (3) narrations concerning migration (*hijrah*) to the land of Shām, recorded in Musnad Aḥmad and Sunan Abī Dāwūd.

While radical preachers deploy these texts to support their agendas, classical commentators—such as al-Nawawī in *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī in *Fathḥ al-Bārī*, and al-Mubārakfūrī in *Tuḥfat al-Aḥwadhī*—provide nuanced readings that emphasize contextual, moral, and non-violent interpretations. By juxtaposing these exegetical traditions with contemporary hermeneutical analysis, it becomes clear that radical appropriations represent distortions rather than faithful continuations of the Islamic scholarly legacy.

The following subsections analyze each hadith in detail, distinguishing between (a) the existing scholarly literature and (b) this study’s contribution through sanad and matn criticism, contextual reinterpretation, and implications for strengthening youth hadith literacy.

1. The Hadith on Fighting

عَنْ ابْنِ عُمَرَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا، أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ: أُمِرْتُ أَنْ أَقَاتِلَ النَّاسَ حَتَّى يَشْهَدُوا أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ، وَأَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ، وَيُقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ، وَيُؤْتُوا الزَّكَاةَ، فَإِذَا فَعَلُوا ذَلِكَ عَصَمُوا مِنِّي دِمَاءَهُمْ وَأَمْوَالَهُمْ إِلَّا بِحَقِّ الْإِسْلَامِ، وَحِسَابِهِمْ عَلَى اللَّهِ تَعَالَى. (رواه البخاري ومسلم)

This tradition, narrated by Ibn ‘Umar and transmitted in both Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī (no. 25) and Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim (no. 22), is often used by extremist groups to justify indiscriminate violence against non-Muslims. Scholars such as Esposito (2002) and Juergensmeyer

(2003) have highlighted how such texts are removed from their historical contexts and reframed as universal mandates for aggression. Classical scholars, however, consistently situated the command within specific circumstances. Al-Nawawī (d. 676/1277), in his *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, clarifies that the Prophet's words must be understood as a juridical and defensive measure following the Hijrah, when Muslims were confronted with Quraysh hostilities. Similarly, Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī (d. 852/1449) in *Fath al-Bārī* underscores that the "people" (*al-nās*) referred specifically to the Quraysh adversaries of the Prophet, not humanity at large.

This hadith is frequently cited by radical groups to justify violence against non-Muslims. However, its historical context must be considered. The Prophet Muhammad did not initially permit fighting during the Meccan period, despite persecution (see al-Bukhari, 1997; Muslim, 2000). Fighting was only permitted after the Hijrah to Madinah, in the context of self-defense against Quraysh aggression (Esposito, 2002). Thus, the hadith must be understood as a defensive command, not a justification for offensive war against all non-Muslims.

Sanad criticism affirms the hadith's authenticity, as it appears in both canonical collections with unbroken chains. The issue, therefore, lies not in its transmission but in its interpretation. Matan criticism reveals that the Prophet, during the Meccan period, explicitly prohibited fighting despite persecution, and only after migration to Medina was limited, defensive combat sanctioned (cf. Q. 22:39–40). Thus, reading the hadith as an open license for violence contradicts both Qur'anic principles and the Prophet's praxis. Contextual reinterpretation shows that the text mandates defensive struggle against active hostility, not perpetual war against non-Muslims. For contemporary youth, literacy programs must therefore teach how to situate hadith within its socio-historical background to prevent radical decontextualization.

2. *The Hadith on the Best Jihad*

أَفْضَلُ الْجِهَادِ إِلَى اللَّهِ تَعَالَى كَلِمَةٌ حَقٌّ تَقَالُ عِنْدَ إِمَامٍ جَائِرٍ

This narration, recorded by Abū Dāwūd (no. 4344), al-Tirmidhī (no. 2174), and Ibn Mājah (no. 4011), is authentic according to many

hadith critics. Radical activists frequently deploy it to legitimate hostile opposition to government authorities. Classical commentators, however, stressed moderation. Al-Mubārakfūrī (d. 1353/1934) in *Tuḥfat al-Aḥwadhī* explains that the phrase “‘inda sulṭān” means “in the presence of the ruler,” indicating direct, respectful counsel rather than public agitation or violent rebellion. Likewise, al-Nawawī in his commentary notes that the hadith emphasizes moral courage, not incitement.

Radical groups often misuse this hadith to legitimize insulting or rebelling against leaders. The keyword here is ‘*inda* (عند), which literally means “in the presence of” (Abu Dawud, 1990; al-Tirmidhi, 1975; Ibn Majah, 2009). Classical commentators such as al-Mubarakfuri (1983) emphasize that the hadith refers to speaking truth directly to a ruler, not through social media insults or violent rebellion. Thus, its authentic meaning encourages constructive advice rather than provocation.

Sanad evaluation confirms the hadith’s reliability. Matn analysis highlights a linguistic nuance: the word “‘inda” implies immediacy and proximity, pointing to private admonition rather than mass mobilization. Historical contextualization shows that Companions such as Ibn Mas‘ūd and Abū Hurayrah practiced this principle by offering constructive advice without undermining communal unity. Contemporary reinterpretation reframes the hadith as a foundation for ethical political engagement—encouraging youth to advocate for justice with wisdom (*hikmah*) rather than through social media insults or violent protests. In counter-radicalization, this serves to model critical, but peaceful, civic responsibility.

3. *The Hadith on Migration to Shām (HR. Ahmad, Abu Dawud)*

سَتَكُونُ هِجْرَةً بَعْدَ هِجْرَةٍ ، فَخَيَا رُ أَهْلِ الْأَرْضِ أَلَزَمْتُهُمْ مُهَاجِرَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ ، وَيَبْقَى فِي
الْأَرْضِ شِرَارًا أَهْلِهَا تَلْفِظُوهُمْ أَرْضُوهُمْ ، تَقْدَرُهُمْ نَفْسُ اللَّهِ ، وَتَحْسُرُوهُمْ النَّارُ
مَعَ الْقِرْدَةِ وَالْحَنَازِيرِ

Several weak narrations concerning migration (*hijrah*) to the land of Shām are cited by extremist groups, especially ISIS, to encourage Muslims worldwide to relocate to conflict zones. The narration in Musnad Ahmad and Sunan Abī Dāwūd includes Lays ibn Abī Sulaym, a transmitter known for poor memory. Al-Dhahabī

(d. 748/1348) in *Mīzān al-I'tidāl* criticizes him as weak, leading hadith critics to classify the narration as *ḍa'īf*. Classical interpretations instead emphasize spiritual rather than territorial migration: al-Nawawī in *Riyāḍ al-Ṣāliḥīn* defines true hijrah as leaving behind sin and disobedience, while Ibn Ḥajar in *Fathḥ al-Bārī* stresses the principle of continuous moral transformation (*hijrah min al-ma'ṣiyah ilā al-tā'ah*).

Sanad criticism disqualifies the hadith as a basis for radical calls to migration. Matan analysis further reveals that the Prophet, in authentic narrations, emphasized that “the true migrant is the one who abandons what God has forbidden” (Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, no. 10). Contemporary reinterpretation therefore redirects the notion of hijrah toward ethical renewal rather than geopolitical relocation. For youth, this underscores the importance of spiritual resilience and moral integrity, providing a constructive alternative to radical ideologies that romanticize territorial migration.

Extremist groups like ISIS often misuse this hadith as theological justification for urging Muslims worldwide to migrate to their territory. The narration is found in Musnad Ahmad and Sunan Abu Dawud, but its chain of transmission includes Lays ibn Abi Sulaym, a narrator criticized for weak memory (Ahmad ibn Hanbal, 1995; Abu Dawud, 1990; al-Dhahabi, 1996). Consequently, scholars regard the hadith as weak (*ḍa'īf*). Furthermore, the meaning of “migration” (*hijrah*) in this context is better understood as spiritual transformation—leaving sin and embracing righteousness—rather than physical migration to a war zone.

Radicals also exploit *hadith* such as “the best jihad is speaking truth before a tyrant ruler,” misusing it to legitimize insults and hostility against state leaders through social media campaigns. The narration emphasizes direct and wise counsel, not provocation or slander. Similarly, *hadith* on hijrah to Syria (*Shām*) has been manipulated to support extremist calls for migration to territories controlled by groups like ISIS. Yet, scholars classify the narration as weak (*ḍa'īf*) due to unreliable transmitters, such as Lays ibn Abī Sulaym (Munthe, 2017, p. 19). Classical interpretations stress that hijrah signifies both physical and spiritual migration—leaving sin and oppression for environments conducive to piety—rather than territorial allegiance to extremist projects.

Parallel distortions occur in Qur'anic interpretation. Verses such as “*lā ikrāha fī al-dīn*” (Q. 2:256) and “*avoid ṭāghūt*” (Q. 16:36) are often misread as mandates for takfīr and violent imposition of *sharī‘a*. Figures like Abu Bakar Ba’asyir and Aman Abdurrahman use these readings to claim that true faith requires rejecting “ṭāghūt” by force (Masyhur, 2012, pp. 181, 189; Misbahuddin, 2021, pp. 17–18). Mainstream exegetes explain that these verses affirm freedom of belief and call to peaceful devotion to God, not coercion.

A recurring theme in radical rhetoric is the glorification of martyrdom (*shahāda*) as justification for suicide bombings. However, authentic *hadith* clearly delimit martyrdom to those killed in legitimate self-defense of life, property, or religion (Abū Dāwūd, no. 4772; al-Tirmidhī, no. 1421). Conversely, *hadith* in both Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī and Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim explicitly prohibit suicide, warning of eternal punishment in Hell (al-Kutawy, 2019). Thus, conflating suicide terrorism with *shahāda* is a distortion of Islamic teachings.

Scholars therefore argue that the antidote to radicalization lies in robust *hadith* literacy, contextual interpretation, and critical analysis of isnād and matn. Digital platforms, educational curricula, and ulama engagement are crucial in equipping youth with authentic understandings and resilience against extremist propaganda. Education must highlight Islam’s essence as a religion of mercy (*raḥmatan li-l-‘ālamīn*), where jihad is primarily moral striving and constructive engagement, not violence.

Conclusion

This study emphasizes that the critique and analysis of hadith play a strategic role in preventing the misuse of religious texts by radical groups, particularly among youth. By introducing the methods of sanad and matn criticism, young people can be trained to think critically and to distinguish between authentic Islamic teachings and distorted interpretations. Hadith literacy developed through various formats—both print and digital, such as videos, infographics, and comics—makes religious learning more engaging and accessible. The integration of digital technology is therefore crucial in attracting the younger generation while strengthening access to authentic sources of Islamic teachings.

The findings further suggest the urgent need to strengthen religious education curricula to be more comprehensive and inclusive, with a particular focus on hadith literacy and contextual interpretation of Islamic teachings. Such efforts require collaboration between government, religious scholars, educational institutions, and digital platforms to produce religious content that is relevant, creative, and inspiring. In addition, training programs for educators and scholars should be expanded so they can deliver Islamic teachings in a moderate and interactive manner. Further research is also needed to assess the long-term impact of hadith literacy on youth attitudes and behaviors. Ultimately, countering radicalism is a collective responsibility of society in shaping a younger generation that is critical, tolerant, and resilient in facing ideological challenges in the modern era.

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