

# The Relevance of The Knowledge of Ruwat Al-Hadith in The Digital Era and The Spread of Religious Information in Social Media

Sultan Abdul Raihan<sup>1</sup>, Muhammad Fikri Haikal<sup>2</sup>, Muhammad Saipul Islam<sup>3</sup>, Mohamad Hafiz Bin Darpen<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1,2,3,4</sup>Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin, Malaysia

E-mail: hafizdarpen@kuips.edu.my

## Abstract

The development of digital technology has transformed the way religious information is received and disseminated, particularly through social media platforms. The rapid and open flow of online religious content has contributed to the widespread circulation of fabricated hadiths, decontextualized sermon clips, and religious claims lacking authentic scholarly references. In this context, the science of *Ruwat al-Hadith (Ilm al-Rijal)* regains its relevance as a methodological framework for evaluating the credibility of information transmitters. This study aims to analyze how the principles of *jarh* and *ta`dil* can be adapted to assess the reliability of digital preachers, reference sources, and religious content circulating on social media. This research employs a qualitative approach through library-based analysis of classical and contemporary literature, including hadith studies, digital literacy research, and studies on religious misinformation. The findings indicate that the principles of *Ilm al-Rijal* can be applied to digital verification through identity authentication, content consistency evaluation, source tracing, and modern fact-checking practices. The study concludes that integrating classical methods with modern technology enhances the accuracy of religious information and strengthens public religious literacy in the digital era.

**Keywords:** *ilm al-rijal*, *jarh wa ta`dil*, social media, religious information, digital literacy.

## Introduction

The development of digital technology in the last few years has brought great changes in the way people acquire and understand religious information. Social media not only functions as an entertainment space, but also becomes an important arena for religious expression and delivery of Islamic messages, including the study of Hadith. Digital development has prompted a transformation in the way society understands, interprets, and interacts with Hadith. Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and X (Twitter) are now the main space for spreading da'wah, short talks, and Hadith quotes, thus forming a new pattern of religious consumption that is faster, open, and massive. This phenomenon reflects the change in scientific authority as well as showing the dominant role of social media in the construction of contemporary religious discourse (Nahied & Ubaidillah, 2024).

The presentation of religion that used to be sourced from knowledge assemblies, reference books, and religious authorities is now moving to a virtual space governed by algorithms, the speed of virality, and user preferences. It is known that social media algorithms determine the flow and reach of content by mapping user preferences and behavior. This mechanism accelerates the distribution of information. However, it also has the potential to create bias in the reception of the message. Thus, the pattern of dissemination and consumption

of information in the digital era is highly dependent on the work of algorithms (Khasanah, 2024). This change creates a wide opportunity for da'wah, but at the same time presents a serious challenge in the form of spreading unverified information.

In his research on the spread of fake hadith on social media, Ghifari (2023) explains the seriousness of this issue in the digital era, given the central position of hadith in Islamic teachings, which are vulnerable to manipulation and disinformation on social media. The viral nature of digital media encourages the circulation of inauthentic hadith texts. This situation gives rise to religious misinformation, fuels doubt and division within the community, and disrupts social harmony. Countermeasures require increased verification literacy, strengthening the role of religious authorities, utilizing authentication technology, collaborating with digital platforms, and enforcing regulations against the spread of misleading content.

This phenomenon is characterized by the increasing circulation of excerpts from context-deprived sermons, hadith disseminated without sources, and religious content deliberately created to gain popularity. Furthermore, the emergence of digital ustadz figures, religious influencers, or instant da'wah accounts lacking scientific competence increases the vulnerability to the spread of erroneous understandings. The lack of digital literacy in verifying sources makes it easier for the public to accept viral religious information than to accept valid information. In the Islamic scholarly tradition, hadith scholars have developed a meticulous discipline for verifying the veracity of a narration, namely the Science of *Ruwat al-Hadith* (the Science of *Rijal*). This science focuses on assessing the integrity, morality, honesty, accuracy, and credibility of hadith narrators. Through the methods of *jarh* (criticism) and *ta'dil* (praise), (Imron, 2017), earlier scholars determined whether a narration was credible or should be rejected. Despite being over a thousand years old, the principles of the Science of *Rijal* hold highly relevant methodological value for addressing the challenges of information verification in the digital age.

This relevance arises because the science of hadith chains of transmission and digital information about hadith both require a validation process to determine the reliability of the source, the credibility of the narrator, and the accountability of the content. By adapting the principles of the Science of *Rijal*, the public can have clearer parameters for assessing the credibility of digital preachers, tracing information sources, and distinguishing authentic religious content from misleading ones. This study aims to analyze how the concept of *jarh wa ta'dil* and the principles of *Ilmu Rijal* can be applied in the context of disseminating religious information on social media. Furthermore, this study seeks to define the relevance of hadith verification methodology to modern digital verification mechanisms such as fact-checking, account identity analysis, and source tracing. Through this study, it is hoped that a comprehensive approach can emerge that can improve public religious literacy and strengthen the accuracy of religious information in a fast-paced and dynamic digital ecosystem.

The science of *Ruwat al-Hadith*, or the science of *Rijal*, is a branch of hadith science that focuses on assessing the credibility of narrators through analysis of their character, honesty, morals, accuracy, and consistency. Early scholars such as al-Laith ibn Sa'd, Imam Abdullah ibn Mubarak, and az-Dhahabi developed systematic methods for conducting *jarh* (criticism) and *ta'dil* (praise), thus determining the quality of hadith (Zahrani, 1996). Basic principles such as *al-Adalah*

(moral integrity/justice), *Dhabt* (accuracy of memorization), and attention to flaws in narration have become the foundation of verification recognized throughout the history of Islamic scholarship.

These previous studies demonstrate that verification focuses not only on the content of the information (*al-Matan*) but also on the quality of the narrator. This methodological framework is very important to be used as a reference in analyzing the credibility of religious information disseminators in the modern context.

Contemporary research shows that people frequently use modern digital media to interact with hadith or religious quotations without knowing their validity. Several key issues are important in digital hadith verification.

First, there is the need for a fact-checking system, such as the development of a hadith website and software that can serve as a quick reference for assessing and understanding hadith. Because many hadith texts and translations are still circulating with errors regarding their authenticity, clear criteria are needed in developing such a platform. Through inductive and deductive analysis, this study identified ten key criteria: complete hadith texts with vowels, verified translations, clear sources and *takhrij* (translations), concise explanations, an authoritative panel of experts, a user-friendly interface, a *sanad* mapping, grouping themes, arranging hadith according to book titles, and providing alternatives to fabricated hadith. These criteria are crucial for ensuring that hadith websites and software maintain their authenticity and serve as trusted references for the public (Ahmad, 2019).

Second, the digitization of books on the science of hadith narration (*Ilmu Ruwat al-Hadith*) and the science of hadith interpretation (*jarh wa ta`dil*), which allows quick access to biographies of narrators. This digitization demonstrates that digital technology facilitates access to and learning of hadith through applications, websites, and social media. Digitizing hadith has been proven to expand the dissemination and understanding of the community, although it still faces challenges related to accuracy and the potential for falsification of the texts (Azizah, 2023). Finally, academic efforts to develop robust algorithms for hadith classification utilize artificial intelligence. This is because artificial intelligence (AI) media content algorithms tend to promote viral content, rather than valid content. Consequently, social media and artificial intelligence (AI) technology have the potential to trap students and the public in misleading information by creating information bubbles that tailor content to personal preferences and beliefs. This makes it difficult for students and the public to accept differing viewpoints. To prevent this, strengthening critical thinking skills within the community and in schools is crucial. Educational institutions need to build learning environments that encourage students and the public to assess, verify, and evaluate any information obtained from AI technology (Mbuket, 2025).

## Methods

This study aims to assess the relevance of the principles of *Ruwat al-Hadith (Ilmu Rijal)* in the context of the dissemination of religious information in the digital era, especially on social media. The focus of the study is how the concept of *jarh wa ta`dil* and the assessment of the credibility of the narrator can be applied in assessing the reliability of digital preachers, religious content, and the pattern of information dissemination on modern digital platforms.

This study uses a qualitative approach through literature analysis. The research process is carried out by reviewing documents from primary sources in the form of books of hadith and rijal science that discuss the credibility of the narrator, such as the works of Ibn Hajar al-`Asqalani, al-Dzahabi, Ibn al-Madini and other *jarh wa ta`dil* scholars. In addition, the study also refers to secondary sources that include contemporary journals on digital literacy, verification of religious information, the phenomenon of social media *da`wah*, digital communication studies, and academic reports on the dissemination of misinformation on online platforms.

Data analysis is carried out using qualitative content analysis, by comparing the classical verification principles in *Rijal* Science with modern verification methods such as fact-checking, digital identity tracing, and information trace analysis (digital traceability). This approach is used to identify the suitability and potential adaptation between traditional methodologies and contemporary needs in assessing the credibility of religious information providers in the digital space.

Through this approach, the study concludes that the integration of *Rijal* principles with the understanding of digital technology can create a more comprehensive and relevant verification model, as well as help reduce the spread of inauthentic religious information in modern social media.

## Discussion

### 1. Relevance of the Principles of *Rijal* in the Digital Era

The science of *Ruwat al-Hadith*, or the science of *Rijal*, is an important discipline in Islamic tradition used to assess the credibility of narrators before accepting or rejecting a hadith. This principle is based on in-depth research into the character, moral integrity, accuracy, and consistency of a narrator's narration.

The *muhaddisin* (religious scholars) paid great attention to the science of *Rijal*. They compiled biographies of narrators, examining their names, *kunyah* (religious lineage), lineage, origins, teachers, students, morals, and levels of integrity and accuracy. The scholars also distinguished between reliable and weak narrators, compiled their narrations, and selected authentic hadiths from flawed ones. Through persistent and systematic efforts, the science of *Rijal* emerged as a solid discipline, becoming a source of intellectual pride for Muslims. Even Western scholars, such as Dr. Sprenger also acknowledged the thoroughness and decisiveness of scholars in assessing narrators and maintaining the authenticity of hadith. This assessment ensures that the transmission of religious knowledge is accurate and reliable. (Al-Ghauri, 2007)

In the digital age, this principle is once again relevant because the dissemination of religious information now occurs through social media, which is fast, open, and lacks internal mechanisms to verify the authenticity of content. Social media allows anyone to convey sermons, religious views, or religious claims without a scientific vetting process. This has led to the emergence of digital preachers, religious influencers, or *da'wah* accounts who do not always possess scientific competence. In this situation, the values introduced in the Science of *Rijal* can serve as a methodological reference for assessing the trustworthiness of digital information transmitters.

Concepts or requirements established by previous scholars, such as *al-`Adalah* (integrity/trustworthiness), *Dhabt* (accuracy), (Al-Ghauri, 2017), and the narrator's track record, can

be translated into contemporary indicators for determining the authenticity of an account's identity, content consistency, transparent digital records, and the alignment of the content with scientific references. Thus, the principles of the science of rijal serve as a framework for assessing the delivery of religious information on digital media, much as scholars of the past assessed the credibility of hadith narrators.

## 2. Adapting the Jarh wa Ta'dil Method to Verifying Social Media Content

At this point, it should be clarified that determining the *Jarh wa Ta'dil* method for a *da'i* can no longer be used as it was in the days of the earlier muhaddith. The current method for determining the validity of a hadith relies on reference to previous hadith books written by hadith scholars.

The jarh wa ta'dil method used in the science of hadith is actually very suitable for application in the context of social media. *Jarh* (criticism) is conducted to identify errors, weaknesses, or inaccuracies in the narrator, while *ta'dil* (praise) is conducted to provide a positive assessment. Adapting this method to the digital era can be done through several approaches, such as the following:

### a. *Jarh* (criticism) of digital information providers

In the context of social media, this can be applied by assessing:

- 1) Has the account ever spread false or unsourced information?
- 2) Are there inconsistencies in the content?
- 3) Does the content provider frequently quote hadith without a chain of reference or classification?
- 4) Are there economic, popularity, or sensational motives in the content?

These are indicators that the account or figure lacks digital integrity, so the information conveyed should be questioned.

### b. *Ta'dil* (positive assessment) of content credibility

Conversely, this can be applied by examining:

- 1) Is the content supported by scientific sources such as hadith books or credible scholars?
- 2) Does the information provider have a religious educational background?
- 3) Does the account consistently provide factual and non-manipulative information?
- 4) Is the information provided verified by official institutions or experts?

The integration of *jarh wa ta'dil* with digital indicators makes the social media content verification process more systematic, not based solely on popularity or visual appearance.

## 3. The Relationship between the Science of *Rijal* and Digital Literacy and Modern Verification Mechanisms

The digital era demands that users possess digital literacy, namely the ability to verify the authenticity of digital identities, understand misinformation patterns, and verify information sources. This principle aligns with the study of the Science of *Rijal*, which emphasizes the importance of researching the source of information before believing it. The implementation of the Science of *Rijal* in the digital world can be combined with modern verification technologies such as:

### a. Fact-checking

Various negative issues easily emerge and spread, such as provocation, slander, hate speech, and fraud, thus forming opinions that can damage a person's reputation. This is a disturbing phenomenon on social media in the digital era. Historically, similar problems occurred in the early days of Islam, for example, when Aisyah (r.a.) was accused of adultery, until revelation in Surah *An-Nur* was revealed as clarification. In ancient times, slander was spread by word of mouth, but in today's era, social media has made the spread of news (both true and false) faster, more widespread, and viral (Al-Ayyubi, 2019).

Therefore, it is crucial for us to be aware of various modern fact-checking platforms that can function similarly to the tashih (determining the truth of a narration) process in hadith studies. Users of these platforms can verify religious claims through authoritative hadith databases, such as [usul.ai](http://usul.ai).

Usul.ai is an artificial intelligence (AI)-based platform designed to revolutionize Islamic research in the 21st century. Amidst the rapid development of digital technology, Usul.ai exists to provide credible, reliable, and curated access to online sources of Islamic knowledge, something that was previously difficult to find.

Many of us are only familiar with common AI models like ChatGPT or Gemini, which cannot provide completely accurate answers in the field of Islamic studies due to the limitations and irregularity of Islamic sources online. Many authoritative sources, such as the Quran, hadith, fiqh books, history, and works of previous scholars, are not available digitally, and those that do exist are often mixed with unverified opinions or narratives. Usul.ai solves this problem by providing:

First, Research Credibility: The platform was developed by a director and a team of senior researchers with strong academic backgrounds in Islamic law, history, and theology. They curate thousands of authoritative Islamic sources from various disciplines.

Second, Search Result Reliability: Usul.ai is designed to ensure that every answer is accompanied by clear references. The system reduces the risk of AI hallucinations and helps researchers understand the context and diversity of opinions within the Islamic tradition.

Third, Access to Authoritative Sources: Usul.ai combines artificial intelligence with advanced search technology to provide access to over 15,000 classical and modern Islamic texts. The platform also leverages large digital libraries such as Al-Maktaba Al-Shamela and OpenITI, and then augments them by converting thousands of earlier Arabic books into machine-readable digital text.

Thus, Usul.ai becomes a digital research center that enables researchers, academics, and the general public to study Islamic sources more quickly, accurately, and reliably.

In addition to Usul.ai, there are many other trusted platforms available to fact-check various narratives, Islamic information, and hadiths circulating on social media. These include [islamweb.net](http://islamweb.net), [binbaz.org.sa](http://binbaz.org.sa), and various official websites of fatwa institutions and other Islamic digital libraries. These platforms enjoy high credibility because they are managed by institutions or scholars with authority in the field of Islamic scholarship.

Islamweb.net is a platform that provides a collection of fatwas, articles, explanations of hadith, tafsir, and scholarly studies compiled by scientists and researchers from the Qatari Ministry of Endowments. Each answer or explanation is accompanied by evidence, references to classical scholars, and clear legal definitions, greatly assisting the public in verifying religious issues.

Meanwhile, [binbaz.org.sa](http://binbaz.org.sa) is the official website that compiles fatwas, lectures, and writings by Sheikh Abdul Aziz bin Baz (one of Saudi Arabia's greatest scholars). The content on this platform also includes sources for hadith, explanations of fiqh, scholarly opinions, and legal arguments, making it a reliable reference for verifying the veracity of teachings or information.

The existence of these platforms is very helpful, especially in the era of social media, where

fake news, provocative narratives, and fabricated hadith are easily spread without verification. By utilizing these authoritative sites, students and the public can compare information, verify the validity of evidence, and ensure that the religious knowledge they receive comes from competent scholars.

Using various Islamic fact-checking platforms (including Usul.ai, islamweb.net, binbaz.org.sa, and others) will be an important step in maintaining the authenticity of the public's understanding of Islamic teachings while preventing the spread of misinformation from social media in this digital age.

#### b. Digital Identity Authentication

Khabiir and Ridlo (2025) explain in their study that the transformation of hadith into digital media is a result of technological developments that facilitate the preservation, access, and dissemination of Islamic law. However, issues related to authenticity, authority, and understanding the context of digitalization also pose unique challenges. Through a Systematic Literature Review (SLR), the hadiths now disseminated through apps, websites, and social media have significantly influenced the public's understanding of the changing hadiths. Just as scholars consistently verify the identity of narrators and ensure the authenticity of hadiths, social media users should also conduct due diligence on information or narratives obtained from social media, asking questions such as: is the account of the disseminator authentic (verified)?, is the content derived from scientific sources?, has the dissemination of religious hoaxes been involved?, or other questions related to the validity of the information being disseminated.

All of these factors align with the indicators of narrator credibility in the Science of *Rijal*. Thus, combining classical methodology with modern technology yields a more robust approach to combating religious misinformation on social media.

### 4. Challenges in Applying the Science of *Rijal* in the Digital World

Rosyad and Alif (2023) explain in their study that technological developments have presented new challenges in hadith studies, particularly because false hadith and misinterpretations are easily spread on digital media. However, if used appropriately, technology can strengthen hadith research and help disseminate the hadith heritage more widely and accurately.

While remaining relevant, the application of the Science of *Rijal* in the modern era faces various challenges, such as the numerous anonymous accounts that spread religious content without clear identities, the reliance on social media algorithms that prioritize viral content over valid content, and the widespread circulation of deconstructed, incomplete excerpts of sermons, leading to misunderstandings.

The low digital literacy of students and the public, and the limited ability of religious institutions to monitor the flow of digital information can further exacerbate the situation. However, these challenges highlight the urgency of the Science of *Rijal* as a systematic guideline for assessing the credibility of sources and addressing the flood of non-authoritative religious information in the digital world.

## Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the Science of *Ruwat al-Hadith (Ilmu Rijal)* remains strongly relevant in addressing the challenges of disseminating religious information on social media in today's digital era. The transformation of social media, which now serves as a space for *da`wah* and religious discussion, has changed the way religious information is shared, accessed, and verified. However, this change also carries the risk of the spread of false hadith, distortion of meaning, and the emergence of religious figures lacking scientific credibility.

Through qualitative analysis, this study found that the basic principles of assessing the validity of hadith in the Science of *Rijal*, such as *Al-`Adalah, Dhabt*, and the *jarh wa ta`dil* method, can be adapted as a modern verification framework to assess the credibility of religious information providers on social media. These values can be combined with digital literacy, fact-checking practices, digital footprint analysis, and an understanding of content distribution patterns, resulting in a more comprehensive verification approach that meets the needs of today's society.

This integration not only helps identify authentic religious content but also encourages users to be more selective and critical in accepting religious information. Thus, the application of the principles of *Rijal* Science in the digital ecosystem can be a methodological solution to reduce misinformation, strengthen the accuracy of digital preaching, and increase religious literacy in society in the technological era.

## References

- Ghifari, M. (2023). Strategi efektif dalam mencegah penyebaran Hadith palsu di media sosial. *The International Journal of Pegon: Islam Nusantara civilization*, 9(01), 103- 122.
- Nahied, M. A., & Ubaidillah, R. (2024). Mediatisasi Hadith: Transformasi Interpretasi Dalam Era Digital. *Al-Manar: Jurnal Kajian Alquran Dan Hadith*, 10(1), 87-105.
- Khasanah, O. N. (2024). Manajemen Distribusi dan Audiens–Strategi distribusi Konten media, Segmentasi Audiens dan Personal konten, Algoritma Media Sosial dan Dampaknya pada Persebaran Informasi. *Amerta Jurnal Ilmu Sosial dan Humaniora*, 4(3), 135-145.
- Imron, A. (2017). Dasar-Dasar Ilmu Jarh Wa Ta`didil. Mukaddimah: *Jurnal Studi Islam*, 2(2), 287-302.
- Zahrani, A. Y. (1996). *Kitab `Ilm al-Rijal Nash`atu-hu wa Tatawwuruhu min al-Qarn al-Awwal ila Nihayat al-Qarn al-Tasi`* (1st ed.). Dar al-Hijrah lil-Nashr wa al-Tawzi`.
- Ahmad, K. (2019). Digitalisasi Hadith Di Malaysia Analisis Terhadap Keperluan Kriteria Pembangunan Website Dan Software Hadith. In *Conference Proceeding ICONIMAD 2019: International Conference on Islam in Malay World IX*, Krabi, Thailand
- Azizah, I. N. (2023). Digitalisasi hadith: Membangun Jembatan Antara Tradisi dan Teknologi. *AL ISNAD: Journal of Indonesian Hadith Studies*, 4(01), 52-62.
- Mbukut, A. (2025). Jebakan Algoritma dalam Dunia Pendidikan di Indonesia. *Bagaimana Cara Melampauinya?. Jurnal Masalah Pastoral*, 13(1), 63-72.
- Al-Ghauri, S. A. (2007). *`Ilm al-Rijal: Ta`rifuhu wa Kutubuhu*. (1st ed.). Dar Ibn Kathir. Al-Ghauri, S. A. (2017). *Al-Muyassir fi `Ilm al-Rijal*. (3rd ed). Darul Syakir Enterprise
- Al-Ayyubi, M. Z. (2019). Etika Bermedia Sosial Dalam Menyikapi Pemberitaan Bohong (Hoax) Perspektif Hadith. *Jurnal Studi Ilmu-ilmu Al-Qur'an dan Hadith*, 19(2), 148-166.

- Khabiir, I. N. A., & Ridlo, M. A. (2025). Transformasi Hadith Ke Media Digital. *Jurnal Syaikh Mudo Madlawan: Kajian Ilmu-Ilmu Keislaman*, 2(1), 154-161.
- Rosyad, S., & Alif, M. (2023). Hadith di Era Digital: Tantangan dan Peluang Penggunaan Teknologi dalam Studi Hadith. *Jurnal Ilmu Agama: Mengkaji Doktrin, Pemikiran, Dan Fenomena Agama*, 24(2), 185-197.