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MAWDU' HADITH IN THE DIGITAL LANDSCAPE: EPISTEMIC CHALLENGES AND CONTEMPORARY ISLAMIC LITERACY

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Abstract
This study examines the phenomenon of mawdu' (fabricated) hadith in the digital landscape as an epistemic challenge to contemporary Islamic literacy. While digital transformation has has greatly expanded access to hadith sources, it has simultaneously facilitated the rapid circulation of unverified religious content that often deviates from established scholarly methodologies. Employing a qualitative approach, this research combines a systematic literature review with limited observational analysis of digital religious content. Classical and contemporary literature on mawdu' hadith, Ulum al−Hadith, and digital Islamic literacy are systematically analyzed to construct an epistemic framework for analysis. Illustrative empirical data was obtained through observation of hadith content circulating on social media platforms, particularly TikTok and Instagram, where hadith are often disseminated without scrutiny of their sanad, explanation of their quality, or consideration of their historical context. The research findings show that social media has become a new ecosystem in which the authority of hadith is determined more by algorithmic visibility than by scholarly verification. Low levels of digital Islamic literacy contribute significantly to the uncritical acceptance of fabricated hadith. This study confirms that comprehensive digital Islamic literacy is an important prerequisite for maintaining epistemic integrity and ensuring the responsible transmission of hadith in the digital age.

Abstrak
Penelitian ini mengkaji fenomena hadis mawdu' (hadis palsu) dalam lanskap digital sebagai tantangan epistemik bagi literasi Islam kontemporer. Meskipun transformasi digital telah sangat memperluas akses terhadap sumber−sumber hadis, pada saat yang sama ia juga memfasilitasi peredaran cepat konten keagamaan yang tidak terverifikasi dan sering terlepas dari metodologi keilmuan yang mapan. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif, penelitian ini mengombinasikan tinjauan kepustakaan sistematis dengan analisis observasional terbatas terhadap konten keagamaan digital. Literatur klasik dan kontemporer tentang hadis mawdu', Ulum al−Hadith, dan literasi Islam digital dianalisis secara sistematis untuk membangun kerangka epistemic analisis. Data empiris ilustratif diperoleh melalui pengamatan terhadap konten hadis yang beredar di platform media sosial, khususnya TikTok dan Instagram, di mana hadis sering disebarluaskan tanpa penelaahan terhadap sanad−nya, tanpa penjelasan mengenai kualitasnya, atau tanpa mempertimbangkan konteks historisnya. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa media sosial telah menjadi sebuah ekosistem baru di mana otoritas hadis lebih banyak ditentukan oleh visibilitas algoritmik daripada verifikasi keilmuan. Rendahnya tingkat literasi Islam digital berkontribusi secara signifikan terhadap penerimaan hadis palsu secara tidak kritis. Penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa literasi Islam digital yang komprehensif merupakan prasyarat penting untuk menjaga integritas epistemik dan memastikan transmisi hadis yang bertanggung jawab di era digital.

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Background

Digital transformation in recent decades has profoundly revolutionized the way Muslims access, understand, and disseminate religious knowledge. Online platforms and social media have emerged as new epistemic spaces that increasingly challenge the traditional authority of religious scholars and institutions. Open access to Islamic texts, especially hadith, has indeed expanded public religious literacy. At the same time, however, it has generated a new paradox: the proliferation of misinformation and the distortion of sacred knowledge.[1] In this context, the phenomenon of mawdu' hadith, namely fabricated sayings attributed to the Prophet Muhammad, can no longer be understood solely as a classical problem within hadith studies. Rather, it constitutes an epistemological crisis in the digital age, when the speed of information circulation often surpasses the depth of scholarly verification.

Historically, the phenomenon of mawdu' hadith is not new. It has existed since the time of the tabi῾in (successors), emerging from complex interplay of political, ideological, and social motivations. Muṣṭafa al−Siba'i notes that the fabrication of hadith began during the era of the kibar al−tabi'in (old successors) and intensified during the period of the sighar al−tabi῾in (young successors), when religious moral authority began to weaken and political divisions grew stronger.[2] These conditions created social polarization and distorted Islamic teachings due to political interests. In response, Muslim scholars developed a rigorous scientific framework to counter the falsification of Hadith. Through the discipline of ῾Ulūm al−Hadīth (the Science of Hadith), the muḥaddithūn (hadith scholars) established strict methodologies of sanad and matan criticism to restore the validity of prophetic traditions. This scholarly tradition sought to ground religious authority in systematic verification rather than political authority or mass opinion, thereby preserving the authenticity of the transmission and purity of the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad against manipulation by social and ideological interests.[3]

Entering the digital age, this issue has taken on a new and more complex form. The digitization of knowledge on *mawdu'* hadith through websites and applications such as Dorar.net, Jawami῾ al−Kalim, CariHadis.com, and Lidwa Pustaka has indeed opened up wide access to classical hadith sources.[4] This technological advancement certainly presents a great opportunity for the expansion of hadith studies and the wider dissemination of religious knowledge. At the same time, however, it raises serious challenges regarding the validity of content and scholarly authority, especially when hadiths circulate in social media spaces that are not fully governed by rigorous principles of scientific verification.[5] As a result, assessments of the authenticity of hadith are often

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[1] Nikmatullah Nikmatullah, "Online Hadith in Cyber Media: Benefit, Challenging, and Solution," *Diroyah: Jurnal Studi Ilmu Hadis* 8, no. 2 (June 2024): 251−68, https://doi.org/10.15575/diroyah.v8i2.33796.

[2] Burhanuddin A. Gani, "Historisitas Hadis Maudhu'i," *Jurnal Ilmiah Al-Mu'ashirah: Media Kajian Al-Qur'an Dan Al-Hadits Multi Perspektif* 14, no. 1 (November 2017): 45−55, https://doi.org/10.22373/jim.v14i1.2238.

[3] Istianah Istianah, "Kritik terhadap Penisbatan Riwayat Hadis: Studi atas Hadis−hadis Palsu," *Riwayah* 4, no. 1 (2018): 77−100, https://doi.org/10.21043/riwayah.v4i1.3319.

[4] Nur Laili Nabilah Nazahah Najiyah and Rizki Putriani, "Transformation of Hadith Study in the Digital Era: An Effectiveness of Hadith Applications and Websites," *Mashdar: Jurnal Studi Al-Qur'an Dan Hadis* 6, no. 1 (June 2024): 27−42, https://doi.org/10.15548/mashdar.v6i1.7882.

[5] Muhammad Afda Nahied and Rofiatul Ubaidillah, "Mediatisasi Hadis: Transformasi Interpretasi dalam Era Digital," *Al-Manar: Jurnal Kajian Al-Qur'an aan Hadis* 10, no. 1 (October 2024): 87−105, https://doi.org/10.35719/amn.v10i1.66.

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reduced by algorithmic logic and digital popularity, leading to a crisis of legitimacy for traditional scholarly authority amid the rapid and uncontrolled flow of information.[6]

This epistemic transformation marks a fundamental shift in the way religious knowledge is produced and received. The authority of scholars and the methodological framework of Ulum al－Hadith now compete with populist forms of digital authority, where the validity of a hadith is often measured by its virality. The low level of hadith literacy among users further exacerbates this situation, as many rely on search features without a methodological understanding of transmission structures or textual criticism.[7] As a result, religious texts becomes increasingly vulnerable to distortion, while the classical epistemology of mawdu' hadith is threatened with marginalization by the logic of speed and digital consumption. In this context, the spread of mawdu' hadith in the digital age needs to be understood not merely as an issue of textual authenticity, but as a reflection of a broader epistemic crisis within the digital ecology of mawdu' hadith.

Against this backdrop, the present study attempts to examine the relationship between the phenomenon of mawdu' hadith and the challenges of Islamic literacy in the digital age. It focuses on how fabricated hadiths circulate and gain acceptance within digital networks, the epistemological and ethical challenges that arise from this phenomenon, and the role of Islamic literacy, encompassing critical skills in interpretation, verification, and contextualization, as a strategic instrument to overcome these challenges. Academically, this research contributes to a more integrative conceptual framework for reading contemporary dynamics of mawdu' hadith. Practically, it emphasizes the urgency of establishing comprehensive digital Islamic literacy that extends beyond technical aspects of data verification to include ethical sensitivity, critical reasoning, and epistemic awareness.

Previous studies have shown that the issue of mawdu' hadith is an epistemological problem that has repeatedly occurred throughout the history of hadith scholarship, tarnishing the purity of Islamic teachings.[8] [9] Although scholars have made various efforts to prevent this through education and strengthening knowledge of hadith, the spread of mawdu' hadith continues due to the weak scientific awareness of the community.[10]

In the context of education, Purwidianto[11] reveals that the pesantren learning system can play a dual role in relation to mawdu' hadith. While a curriculum centered on classical texts has the potential to prevent the spread of fabricated hadith, pedagogical practices may also unintentionally reproduce them. This condition underscores the urgency of developing a critical and ethical approach to Islamic literacy in the digital age, so that

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[6] Fajar Rachmadhani, "The Concept of Hadith Maudhu' and Its Contextualization in Information Management in the Digital Era," *Al-Quds: Jurnal Studi Alquran Dan Hadis* 3, no. 2 (2019): 185－98.

[7] Raidatul Umanah, "The Digital Era of Hadith: Challenges of Authenticity and Opportunities for Innovation," *Al-Iftah: Journal of Islamic Studies and Society* 5, no. 2 (December 2024): 136－48, https://doi.org/10.35905/aliftah.v5i2.12647.

[8] M. Ilham Tanzilulloh, "Delegitimasi Hukum Islam: Studi terhadap Hadith Maudhu'," *Al-Syakhsiyyah: J0urnal of Law and Family Studies* 1, no. 2 (2019): 229－40.

[9] Abd. Majid, "Diskursus Tentang Tipologi Hadis Dalam Kehidupan Masyarakat (Studi Analisis Terhadap Keberadaan Hadits Maudhu')," *Al-Mu'ashirah* 14, no. 2 (2017): 114－23.

[10] Abd Wahid, "Strategi Ulama Mengantisipasi Penyebaran Hadist Maudhu' di Kecamatan Peureulak," *Substantia: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Ushuluddin* 20, no. 2 (October 2018): 119－36, https://doi.org/10.22373/substantia.v20i2.5151.

[11] Purwidianto, "Learning Hadith: Preventive Efforts Against Hadith Maudhu in Islamic Educational Institutions (Pesantren) in Indonesia," *Al-Bukhari: Jurnal Ilmu Hadis* 7, no. 1 (2024): 78－90.

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the epistemic authority of hadith scholarship is not undermined by the logic of speed and commodification of information.

Studies on mawdu' hadith have been conducted extensively, especially within historical, classical, and Islamic educational contexts. Previous studies have generally focused on the origins of fabricated hadith, the political and ideological motives behind their production, and the efforts of classical scholars in order to maintain the authenticity of hadith. More recent studies have also highlighted the role of educational institutions, such as Islamic boarding schools, in either preventing or even facilitating the circulation of false hadith through the learning systems they implement.

Despite this growing body of literature, a significant research gap remains in understanding mawdu' hadith as an epistemic crisis in the digital age. Existing studies have relatively rarely examined how fabricated hadith operate within a digital media ecosystem controlled by algorithms, virality, and a culture of instant consumption. In addition, the relationship between the rampant circulation of mawdu' hadith and low levels of digital Islamic literacy, particularly hadith literacy that includes epistemological awareness, respect for scholarly authority, and ethical responsibility, has not been analyzed in depth. Therefore, this study seeks to address this gap by positioning mawdu' hadith not only as a matter of textual authenticity, but also as a broader epistemological and literacy－related challenge in the contemporary digital landscape. Accordingly, this study aims to analyze how mawdu' hadith circulate and gain acceptance in digital spaces, as well as the epistemological factors that cause them to be accepted and reproduced uncritically. It also examines the extent to which digital Islamic literacy contributes to the rampant spread of mawdu' hadith, while formulating the strengthening of such literacy as an epistemic strategy for responding to contemporary challenges to hadith authenticity.

Methodologically, this study uses a qualitative approach based on a library research, reinforced by limited observation of religious content in digital media. The literature review draws on classical and contemporary works related to mawdu' hadith, the epistemology of hadith studies, and Islamic literacy in the digital age. In addition, illustrative empirical data are drawn from observations of hadith content circulating on social media platforms, particularly TikTok and Instagram. These observations include accounts that disseminate hadith without accompanying explanations of the sanad, the quality of the hadith, or the historical context, such as @sandkids_education and @tetehsunda8200. Seasonal examples of mawdu' hadith, such as narratives concerning the virtues of the month of Rajab, were also found to circulate on accounts like @sahabat_ukhti,[12] which shows recurring patterns in the digital dissemination of fabricated hadith.

This methodological approach was chosen to explore and reconstruct the phenomenon of mawdu' hadith within the context of digital transformation. Rather than placing fabricated hadith solely as a matter of textual authenticity, this study positions them as an epistemic issue and a challenge to Islamic literacy. Data were analyzed descriptively and analytically by identifying the characteristics of mawdu' hadith circulating in digital spaces, examining the accompanying challenges of Islamic literacy, and linking this phenomenon to the issue of religious moderation in the digital age. Through this approach, the study seeks to reveal how mawdu' hadith are produced, circulated, and accepted uncritically, as well as their implications for the public religious

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[12] "Sahabat_ukhti on TikTok," TikTok, accessed December 25, 2025, https://www.tiktok.com/@jadidirisendiri2/video/7585098737802841362?is_from_webapp＝1&web_id＝7467125918403315217.

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understanding under conditions shaped by algorithmic logic and rapid information consumption.

Epistemological Interpretation of *Mawdu'* Hadith: From Text Fabrication to Knowledge Crisis

Historically, the existence of mawdu' hadith reflects the complex epistemic dynamics among ideological struggles, political interests, and claims to scientific and moral authority. Early instances of hadith fabrication are often associated with the emergence of groups such as the zindīq, which used mawdu' hadith to cover up its heresy and systematically falsified hadith in an effort to destroy Islamic teachings from within. According to reports attributed to Ḥammad ibn Zayd, around 4,000 false hadith were spread by this group as part of a theological disinformation project.[13] In its early stages, the spread of mawdu' hadith was largely oral and limited to certain communities, but its impact was far－reaching because it was rooted in political and sectarian interests. The falsification of hadith was often used as a tool to legitimize dynastic power and strengthen sectarian ideology, turning hadith from a source of truth into an instrument of symbolic domination. In addition, the falsification of hadith was also carried out by certain individuals as a means of seeking closeness to those in power, by lying in the name of the Prophet Muhammad Saw in order to obtain praise or material gain.[14] Chains of transmission were carefully engineered to give the impression of authenticity, so that to the general public, these false hadiths appeared to be valid and authoritative. Nevertheless, the spread of mawdu' hadith in the classical period was still relatively controlled. This was largely due to the development of strict methodologies of sanad and matan criticism by the muḥaddithūn, who established systematic mechanisms of verification to preserve the epistemological purity of hadith scholarship.

In the contemporary digital context, however, the spread of mawdu' hadith has undergone a radical transformation.[15] Whereas circulation of false hadith in the past depended on the physical presence of narrators, it now operates within a digital ecosystem controlled by algorithmic logics. Social media platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram have become new spaces for religious narration, often dominated by actors who lack recognized scholarly authority. In these spaces, the visibility and perceived legitimacy of hadith are determined less by the validity of sanad and scholarly assessment than by metrics such as likes, engagement, comments, and shares. Therefore, digitization has opened up faster access, facilitating the spread of unverified mawdu' hadith, allowing them to circulate accross geographical and sectarian boundaries. This shift poses a serious challenge to the maintenance of epistemic rigor in religious knowledge amid an uncontrollable flow of information.[16]

Linguistically, the term mawdu' comes from the ism mafʿūl *(passive participle)* form of the verb waḍaʿa－yaḍaʿu－waḍʿan, which carries meanings such as to lower, to abort,

[13] Marhumah, *Ulumul Hadis: Konsep, Urgensi, Objek Kajian, Metode, dan Contoh* (Yogyakarta: Suka－Press, 2014).

[14] Marhumah, *Ulumul Hadis: Konsep, Urgensi, Objek Kajian, Metode, Dan Contoh*.

[15] Khadher Ahmad, Mohd Farhan Md Ariffin, and Mohd Khairulnazrin Mohd Nasir, *Hadith Palsu Moden dan Bentuk-Bentuknya dalam Realiti Semasa*, Brill, December 5, 2022, https://doi.org/10.1163/22321969－12340121.

[16] Mohammed Adnan Abdulrahman, "Cultural and Social Influences on Hadith Classification: An Analytical Study of Historical Transformations," *Journal of Ecohumanism* 3, no. 8 (2024): 2783－91, https://doi.org/10.62754/joe.v3i8.4926.

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or to fabricate.[17] Ibn Diḥyah further explains that mawdu' has several related meanings such as al−mulṣaq (something attached), al−isqaṭ (something discarded), and al−maṣnūʿ (something fabricated). Taken together, these meanings indicate that a mawdu' hadith is a statement or action falsely attributed to the Prophet Muhammad, created through deliberate falsification so that it appears to possess prophetic authority.[18] In this context, *mawdu'* refers not only to textual falsehood, but also to the misuse of religious authority itself.

Terminologically, hadith scholars provide similar but multi−interpretative definitions. Nūr al−Dīn ʿItr defines mawdu' hadith as a fabricated or invented hadith, emphasizing the existence of a deviant creative intention. Ibn al−Ṣalaḥ defines it as a hadith falsely attributed to the Prophet Muhammad, while Muḥammad ʿAjjaj al−Khaṭīb emphasizes that such a narration is ascribed to the Messenger of God despite the fact that he neither uttered nor performed its content.[19] These definitions show that mawdu' is a form of falsehood wrapped in claims of divine truth, an epistemic paradox that has the potential to disrupt the foundations of knowledge transmission in hadith.

Scholars, however, differ regarding the role of intentionality in the creation of mawdu' hadith. ʿUmar ibn Ḥasan and Maḥmūd Abū Rayyah argue that false hadith can arise either intentionally or unintentionally. Conversely, Abū Bakr ʿAbd al−Ṣamad and Ibn Taymiyyah assert that a hadith can only be called false (mawdu') if its fabrication is intentional; unintentional errors, in their view, fall outside this category. This debate illustrates ongoing scholarly disagreement over the conceptual boundaries of mawdu' hadith.[20]

Classical Arabic usage also resonates the semantic field of mawdu' through several derivative meanings such as al−ḥiṭṭah (lowering the degree), al−isqaṭ (annulment), al−Ikhtilaq (fabrication), and al−iṣlaq (placement). These four associations form a semantic spectrum that describes the act of diminishing the value of truth through the creation of misplaced meaning. Therefore, hadith scholars place mawdu' hadith at the lowest category in the hierarchy of hadith validity and emphasize a strict prohibition on narrating it unless its falsehood is explicitly clarified.[21]

The identification of fabricated hadith relies on systematic efforts to trace both the chain of transmission (sanad) and the textual content (matan). Scholars have established a number of indicators that serve as scientific guidelines in detecting mawdu' hadith. These include: explicit admission by the fabricator, as in the case of Maysarah ibn Abī Rabbīḥ al−Farisī; chronological inconsistencies between a narrator and the claimed teacher, such as Maʾmūn ibn Aḥmad al−Harawī's attribution to Hisham ibn ʿAmmar, who had died five years earlier; textual content that lacks the stylistic clarity and eloquence associated with prophetic language; contradictions with the Qur'an or established principles of sharīʿah; the presence of narrators known to be liars or who do not meet the

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[17] Tajul Arifin, `*Ulumul Hadits* (Bandung: Gunung Djati Press, 2014).

[18] Muḥammad ibn Ismaīl ibn Salaḥ ibn Muḥammad al−Ḥusnī, *Tauḍīḥ Al-Afkār Li Ma'ānī Tanqīḥ al-Anẓār*, vol. 2 (Bairut: Dar al−Kutub al−'Ilmiyah, 1997).

[19] Ahmad Farih Dzakiy, Anisa Dwi Ustadiyah, Muhammad Luqman Hakim, "Hadis Palsu, Pemalsuan dan Pencegahannya di Era Digital," *Al-Bayan: Journal of Hadith Studies* 1, no. 2 (2022): 4−13.

[20] Idri, *Studi Hadis* (Jakarta: Kencana; Prenadamedia, 2010).

[21] Idris Siregar, *Ilmu Hadis Dasar* (Yogyakarta: Trussmedia Grafika, 2021).

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scholarly standards of narration; and explicit rejection by reliable narrators who deny having narrated the report.[22]

Taken together, these indicators show that *mawdu'* hadith is not merely a technical category within the science of hadith, but rather an epistemological phenomenon that demonstrates how claims to religious truth can be manipulated through language and authority. This insight underscores the urgency of engaging with *mawdu'* hadith more critically, not only as a product of past deception, but also as a reflection of the potential for religious disinformation that continues to recur in the contemporary digital landscape.

The Circulation of False Hadiths in the Digital Space

The rapid development of information and communication technology (ICT) has fundamentally reshaped the flow of knowledge. Digital platforms have democratized access to information and facilitated the widespread sharing or religious content, offering many advantages. At the same time, however, these transformations have introduced new challenges related to the accuracy, authority, and relevance of the content being disseminated. In social media environments, misinformation spreads through complex and difficult－to－control dynamics, sustained by emotional interactions and dense digital networks.[23] In the contemporary digital landscape, the increasingly widespread circulation of mawdu' hadith has emerged as a new form of transmitting religious knowledge that increasingly operates outside the traditional mechanisms of hadith scholarship.

Digital transformation in hadith studies reveals a significant epistemic paradox. On the one hand, technology expands access to manuscripts and hadith databases; on the other hand, it opens up the possibility of unverified accounts. Digital systems and artificial intelligence have changed traditional methods of hadith engagement, yet serious challenges remain in terms of textual accuracy, interpretive ethics, and the reliability of algorithm－driven dissemination.[24] Existing verification technologies also face methodological limitations, as they are not yet fully capable of accurately distinguishing between sanad and matan amid the massive flow of online data.[25] As shown by Jaiyeoba and Osmani (2024), most research on digital hadith authentication still relies on manual processes, with around 33% focusing solely on sanad, only 14% integrate both sanad and matan, while machine－learning approaches are still limited and have not been scientifically standardized.[26]

This phenomenon shows that the circulation of hadith in the digital spaces is increasingly governed not by classical scholarly principles, but by algorithms and popularity. While social media holds great potential in disseminating Islamic knowledge and strengthening digital daʿwah, it also creates space for misinterpretation when

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[22] Muhammad Ghifari, "Strategi Efektif dalam Mencegah Penyebaran Hadis Palsu di Media Sosial," *The International Journal of Pegon : Islam Nusantara Civilization* 9, no. 01 (June 2023): 103－22, https://doi.org/10.51925/inc.v9i01.83.

[23] Hossein Hassani, Nadejda Komendantova, Elena Rovenskaya, Mohammad Reza Yeganegi, "Unveiling the Waves of Mis－ and Disinformationfrom Social Media," *International Journal of Modeling, Simulation,and Scientific Computing* 15, no. 3 (2024).

[24] Mohammed Adnan Abdulrahman, "The Future of Hadith Studies in the Digital Age: Opportunities and Challenges," *Journal of Ecohumanism* 3, no. 8 (November 2024): 2792－800, https://doi.org/10.62754/joe.v3i8.4927.

[25] Saqib Hakak, Amirrudin Kamsin, Wazir ZadaKhan, Abu bakar Zakari, dkk, "Digital Hadith Authentication: Recent Advances, Open Challenges, and Future Directions," *Wiley*, ahead of print, March 19, 2020, https://doi.org/10.1002/ett.3977.

[26] Haruna Babatunde Jaiyeoba, Noor Mohammad Osmani, "Hadith Preservation: Techniques and Contemporary Efforts," *Journal of Fatwa Management Research* 29, no. 3 (2024): 32－45.

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scientific authority is not critically presented.[27] Thus, the circulation of false hadiths in the digital space reflects a deep epistemic crisis, in which the authenticity of religious texts is confronted with new mechanisms of truth production based on data, algorithms, and public emotions. Addressing this situation demands both the strengthening of digital Islamic literacy and the renewal of technology—based hadith verification systems capable of preserving scholarly authority amid the fluid and uncontrolled flow of information.

Empirical findings on TikTok platform further show this phenomenon. A number of mawdu' hadiths are still circulating widely and being accepted by users without adequate scholarly verification. For instance, the statement "al—naẓafah mina l—īman" (cleanliness is part of faith) was uploaded by the account @sandkids_education,[28] and "ḥubb al—waṭan mina l—īman" (love of the homeland is part of faith) was disseminated by the account @tetehsunda8200.[29] However, classical scholars such as al—Zarkashī, al—Sakhawī, and al—Sayyid Maʿīn al—Dīn have confirmed that these statements lack valid sanad and are not found in authoritative hadith sources.[30] Similarly, the account @karyawan_pt1 circulated the saying "man ʿarafa nafsahu ʿarafa rabbahu" (whoever knows himself knows his Lord),[31] which Ibn Taymiyyah classified as mawdu' in both its chain of transmission and text. Imam al—Nawawī also considered this narration to be mawdu' because it does not have a clear and valid chain of transmission, even though its substance does not contradict Islamic ethical teachings.[32]

In addition to these examples, seasonal mawdu' hadiths, such as those concerning the supposed virtues of the month of Rajab, recur annually in digital circulation. Posts from accounts such as @sahabat_ukhti[33] show that the pattern of circulation of false hadiths in the digital space is not only massive, but also thematic and repetitive. Likewise, the account @asiaimanwisata spread a claim that the day of ʿArafah coinciding with Friday is more important than seventy other Hajj pilgrimages,[34] a narration whose origin Al—Banī deemed unknown.[35] These patterns confirm that the digital space acts as a new ecosystem for the replication and legitimization of false hadiths, where religious authority

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[27] Muhammad Maga Sule and Yahaya Sulaiman, "Enhancing Daʻwah and Spread of Knowledge Via Social Media Platforms," *Jurnal Ilmiah Peuradeun* 9, no. 1 (January 2021): 145—60, https://doi.org/10.26811/peuradeun.v9i1.549.

[28] "Sankids.Education (@sankids.Education)," TikTok, accessed November 7, 2025, https://www.tiktok.com/@sankids.education/video/7451549824383503624?is_from_webapp=1& sender_device=pc&web_id=7467125918403315217.

[29] "Febi Nurazizah (@tetehsunda8200)," TikTok, accessed November 7, 2025, https://www.tiktok.com/@tetehsunda8200/video/7506416470654536967?is_from_webapp=1&se nder_device=pc&web_id=7467125918403315217.

[30] ʻAlī ibn Sultan Muḥammad Abū al—Ḥasan Nūr al—Dīn al—Qarī, *Al-Mauḍūʻah al-Kubrā* (Bairut: Dar al—Amanah, n.d.).

[31] "R4h4$i4_$€j4t! (@karyawan_pt1)," TikTok, accessed November 7, 2025, https://www.tiktok.com/@karyawan_pt1/video/7133980544915836186?is_from_webapp=1&sen der_device=pc&web_id=7467125918403315217.

[32] ʻAlī ibn Sulṭan Muḥammad Abū al—Ḥasan Nūr al—Dīn al—Qarī, *Al-Mauḍūʻah al-Kubrā*

[33] TikTok, "Sahabat_ukhti on TikTok."

[34] "(3) Haji 2025 Bukan Haji Biasa. Ini Adalah Haji Akbar. Sebuah Momen Langka… | TikTok," accessed November 7, 2025,
https://www.tiktok.com/@asiaimanwisata/video/7501904330493005111?is_from_webapp=1&we b_id=7467125918403315217. The common Arabic text is:

<div dir="rtl">افضل الايام يوم عرفة اذا وافق يوم الجمعة وهو افضل من سبعين حجة غير جمعة</div>

[35] Abū ʻAbd al—Raḥman MuḥAmmad Nasir al—Dīn al—Banī, *Silsilah Al-Aḥādith al-Ḍaʻifah Wa al-Mauḍūʻah Wa Atharuha al-Sayyik Fi al-Ummah*, vol. 1 (Riyad: Dar al—Maʻarif, 1992).

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is often replaced by the logic of virality, and public acceptance is driven more by rhetorical and emotional appeal than by epistemological authenticity and validity.

Hadith Literacy in the Digital Space and Contemporary Religious Challenges

The development of digital technology has brought significant changes in the way Muslims access, understand, and refer to the Prophet's hadith. Basically, the digitization of hadith literature opens up great opportunities for the democratization of Islamic knowledge, where hadith books can now be widely accessed through digital applications and online formats. This increased accessibility, on the one hand, has expanded the reach of hadith learning among the general public. On the other hand, it raises serious issues regarding the authenticity and reliability of texts, given that digital hadith content is highly susceptible to manipulation, alteration, and dissemination without adequate scientific verification mechanisms.[36] These conditions show that ease of access is not always directly proportional to the depth of hadith literacy.

Research by Fadele et al. (2021) shows that although efforts to detect false hadiths have developed through computational approaches and data－based classification, attention to the authenticity of hadiths in the digital space is still relatively limited. Many digital initiatives emphasize automation and content distribution rather than comprehensive verification of the sanad, matan, and status of hadith.[37] As a result, narrations of questionable validity, including mawdu' hadith, can easily circulate and be accepted as religious references without undergoing the scholarly criticism process developed within the tradition of Ulum al－Hadith.

In addition to technical verification issues, the problem of hadith literacy is also closely related to the shift of religious authority in the digital space. Websites and social media accounts can have widespread influence without clarity regarding the identity, scholarly background, or ideological affiliations of their administrators. This strategy of anonymity is often used to create an impression of neutrality and universality, so that the content presented is perceived as objective religious truth, unbound by any particular school of thought or authority.[38] In the context of hadith, this condition has the potential to weaken public critical awareness of the importance of scholarly authority, chains of transmission (sanad), and hadith criticism methodology, because the validity of a narrative is determined more by digital visibility than by scientific legitimacy.

Weak digital hadith literacy has direct implications for contemporary religious understanding. While the transformation of *daʿwah* into the digital spaces has indeed opened up wider and more adaptive opportunities to modern society, it has also allowed anyone to convey religious messages without adequate epistemic control.[39] In this context, the use of mawdu' hadith has the potential to justify certain religious views,

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[36] Istianah and Sri Wahyuningsih, "The Hadith Digitization in Millennial Era: A Study at Center for Hadith Studies, Indonesia," *Qudus International Journal of Islamic Studies* 7, no. 1 (2019): 25－44, https://doi.org/10.21043/qijis.v7i1.4900.

[37] Alaba Ayotunde Fadele, dkk, "A Novel Classification to Categorise Original Hadith Detection Techniques," *International Journal of Information Technology*, 2021.

[38] Avi Astor, Ghufran Khir－Allah, and Rosa Martнnez－Cuadros, "Anonymity and Digital Islamic Authority," *Religions* 15, no. 12 (December 2024): 1507, https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15121507.

[39] Mabrur Mabrur and Moh Azwar Hairul, "Transformasi Dakwah Pesantren di Era Digital; Membaca Peluang dan Tantangan," *An-Nida'* 46, no. 2 (December 2022): 231－50, https://doi.org/10.24014/an－nida.v46i2.20864.

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encourage religious practices that are not proportional to the basic principles of Islamic teachings, or, at the most extreme level, reinforce rigid religious attitudes.

These challenges are further exacerbated by the broader digital information ecosystem, which is characterized by hoaxes and post－truth dynamics. In the post－truth era, personal beliefs and emotions often determine the acceptance of information more than facts and scientific verification.[40] Hadiths that are massively disseminated on social media are often accepted not because of their validity, but because of their suitability to the psychological, ideological, or spiritual needs of the audience. In such conditions, Islamic literacy becomes an important "internal filter," enabling individuals and communities to critically assess, filter, and responsibly respond to religious content that is circulating. Online studies and lectures addressing popular but weak or fabricated hadiths, such as discussions on Rajab traditions by Ustadz Adi Hidayat,[41] show an epistemic response and an effort at religious moderation in the face of hadith disinformation on social media. This content is positioned not as a normative authority, but as a representation of digital hadith literacy practices based on scientific verification.

Thus, the main challenge of contemporary religious diversity in the digital age lies not only in the abundance of false hadiths, but also in the weak capacity for hadith literacy among the public. Without adequate literacy reinforcement, the digitization of hadiths and online preaching has the potential to give rise to a shallow, ahistorical understanding of religion that is detached from the established epistemological framework of Islam. Therefore, hadith literacy in the digital space needs to be understood as an important prerequisite for the formation of a more critical, balanced, and responsible understanding of religion amid the complexity of the contemporary digital landscape.

Disruption of Islamic Literacy in the Digital Age and Efforts to Counteract of Mawdu' Hadith

Islamic discourse in the digital age faces various complex challenges that require deep awareness and strategic understanding. This phenomenon reveals the disruption of Islamic literacy in the digital age, where easy access to various sources of religious knowledge does not necessarily correlate with an increase in the quality of religious understanding. While the development of information technology and social media has opened up new opportunities for the wider and faster dissemination of Islamic discourse, it has simultaneously given rise to various forms of disinformation and fragmentation of scientific authority.[42] Therefore, contemporary Islamic discourse faces serious challenges in the form of the spread of misinformation, superficial interpretations of religious texts, and the limited presence of credible scholars in digital spaces. This condition has contributed to a shift in authority, from traditionally trained scholars to digital figures who often lack adequate scholarly legitimacy. In such an environment, Islamic discourse becomes vulnerable to ideological exploitation, oversimplification, and polarization.

At the same time, digitization also holds significant potential to strengthen Islamic literacy if managed with an educational and critical approach. Research by Sabila and

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[40] Sonny Eli Zaluchu, "Dinamika Hoax, Post－Truth Dan Response Reader Criticism Di Dalam Rekonstruksi Kehidupan Beragama," *Religiy: Jurnal Studi Agama-Agama* 10, no. 1 (2020).

[41] "(3) Puasa Sunnah di Bulan Rajab Boleh Banget Ya, Tapi Jangan Didasari dengan... Puasa Rajab │ TikTok," accessed December 25, 2025, https://www.tiktok.com/@rizqianh/video/7584988674153139476?is_from_webapp＝1&web_id＝7467125918403315217.

[42] Susanto Al－Yamin et al., Al－Qur'an dan Literasi Digital (Penerbit Adab, 2024).

🐾 Dakhirotul Ilmiyah, *et al.*
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Mutrofin (2023) demonstrates that social media can serve as an effective means of enhancing people's knowledge of Islam through communicative, accessible, and interactive content. However, this study also emphasizes that meaningful digital Islamic literacy requires adherence to four basic principles of media literacy: understanding, awareness of interdependence, contextual sensitivity, and the ability to manage information critically.[43] Without these principles, digitization has the potential to reinforce a culture of shallow and instant information consumption, which ultimately weakens the community's capacity for critical thinking.

In a broader context, strengthening digital literacy is a key strategy for countering hoaxes and religious disinformation in this era of disruption. There are essential elements of digital literacy that must be developed through educational institutions and religious communities, including: cultural awareness, cognitive competence, constructive engagement, communicative ability, confidence, creativity, and critical thinking.[44] Digital literacy should therefore be understood not merely as technical ability in using media, but as epistemic awareness to understand context, build positive narratives, and avoid informational bias. In this sense, the disruption of Islamic literacy in the digital era not only shows the weakness of the community's ability to verify religious sources, but also reflects the urgent need for a paradigm shift in religion, where technology must be placed as a means of intellectual and spiritual empowerment, not merely as a medium for information consumption.

Addressing the disruption of Islamic literacy in the digital age requires a systematic, collaborative, and sustainable approach. One of the main strategies in dealing with the flow of misinformation is to improve public literacy through the active involvement of government institutions, community leaders, and digital communities. Key measures include providing access to credible sources of information, continuous media literacy education, and strict law enforcement against those spreading hoaxes and digital disinformation. One concrete example of this effort can be seen in the initiative of Ustad Adi Hidayat, who uses YouTube as a platform to critically review and correct *mawdu'* hadiths that widely circulate in society.[45] Studies of this kind play a significant role in minimizing the uncritical acceptance of fabricated hadith in digital spaces by reintroducing methodological verification and scholarly accountability into the public sphere. Similarly, the Anti－Slander, Incitement, and Hoax Forum (FAFHH) makes an important contribution as a forum for clarification and verification of information.[46] Through this approach, Islamic content circulating on social media will not be easily distorted.

In addition to strengthening digital literacy, developing credible, authentic, and relevant Islamic digital platforms represents a strategic step in strengthening Islamic discourse in the digital age. Given the wide openness of information and the diversity of

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[43] Arini Tika Sabila, Mutrofin, "Urgensi Peningkatan Kualitas Literasi Keislaman Melalui Digitalisasi (Studi Pada Followers Tiktok Da'i Muda Husain Basyaiban)," *Jurnal Dakwah dan Komunikasi* 8, no. 1 (2023): 45－66.

[44] Naimatus Tsaniyah and Kannisa Ayu Juliana, "Literasi Digital sebagai Upaya Menangkal Hoaks di Era Disrupsi," *Al-Balagh: Jurnal Dakwah dan Komunikasi* 4, no. 1 (June 2019): 121－40, https://doi.org/10.22515/balagh.v4i1.1555.

[45] Atika Yulanda, "Kajian Hadis－Hadis Palsu Yang Populer Oleh Ustadz Adi Hidayat," *Islam Transformatif: Journal of Islamic Studies* 4, no. 1 (July 2020): 36－45, https://doi.org/10.30983/it.v4i1.2626.

[46] Christiany Juditha, "Interaksi Simbolik dalam Komunitas Virtual Anti Hoaks untuk Mengurangi Penyebaran Hoaks," jurnal pikom (penelitian komunikasi dan pembangunan) 19, no. 1 (2018): 17－32.

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sources of Islamic knowledge in cyberspace, such platforms can serve as a space for curating and disseminating authoritative and contextual Islamic discourse.[47] In this effort, collaboration between religious institutions, academic communities, and technology practitioners is an urgent necessity, especially in addressing challenges such as the rapid spread of misunderstandings, media attacks on the image of Islam, and weak coordination in the digital daʿwah movement. In addition, a sustained commitment to credibility and transparency must be maintained as a moral foundation to ensure that Islamic messages conveyed online remain honest, meaningful, and socially responsible.[48] Strengthening public trust in digital Islamic content, combating disinformation, and actively participating in the digital space are therefore integral to building a form of Islamic authority that is both adaptive and credible amid ongoing information disruption.

Conclusion

This study shows that the phenomenon of mawdu' hadith in the digital age can no longer be understood solely as a classical issue of religious textual falsification. Instead, it has developed into a broader epistemic crisis within the contemporary ecology of Islamic knowledge. Digital transformation has shifted the paradigm of scientific authority from a strict system of sanad and matan verification to the logic of algorithms, visibility, and social media virality. Within this context, digital platforms function as new ecosystems for the reproduction, commodification, and normalization of fabricated hadith, gradually eroding the epistemological authority of scholars and the discipline of Ulum al－Hadith.

Research findings indicate that low levels of digital Islamic literacy, particularly hadith literacy encompassing methodological competence in assessing the authenticity and historical context of hadith, contribute significantly to the uncritical acceptance and reproduction of mawdu' hadith. Social media platforms such as TikTok and Instagram have emerged as main arenas for the circulation, where the legitimacy of hadith is often determined more by the level of engagement and rhetorical appeal than by established scholarly standards. Thematic and repetitive circulation patterns, including popular hadiths lacking valid sanad, show that digitization not only accelerates the flow of information but also obscures epistemic boundaries between ṣaḥīḥ, ḍaʿīf, and mawdu' hadiths in the public sphere.

Therefore, this study confirms that strengthening comprehensive digital Islamic literacy is a crucial strategy for responding to this epistemic disruption. Such literacy must be directed towards developing epistemological awareness, knowledge ethics, and critical skills in reading religious authorities in digital spaces. Achieving this effort requires sustained collaboration among Islamic educational institutions, religious authorities, academics, and the digital communities, enabling the responsible integration of hadith verification systems with modern technologies. Ultimately, the main challenge in dealing with *mawdu'* hadith in the digital age lies not only in the issue of textual authenticity, but also in efforts to maintain the epistemological integrity of Islam amid increasingly fluid, populist, and interest－laden flow of information.

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[47] Fahd and Al－Ani, "Challenges Facing Islamic Discourse in the Digital Age and Strategies for Addressing Them."

[48] *Ibid.*

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