
Hermeneutics of hadith in the digital era: Challenges and applications of the double movement method in understanding the intent of *isbal* hadith amid the era of disinformation

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Abstract: The development of digital media has significantly changed the way hadiths are produced, circulated, and understood by Muslim communities. Hadiths circulating on social media are often presented in a concise manner, taken out of their historical context, and understood literally, making them susceptible to misinformation and manipulation of meaning. This condition points to an epistemological crisis in hadith literacy, where the authority of understanding has shifted from scientific methodology to the logic of virality and algorithms. This article aims to analyze the problem of understanding hadith in the era of digital disinformation and to offer Fazlur Rahman's hermeneutics of hadith with the Double Movement method as an alternative approach. This study uses a qualitative method through literature study with descriptive-analytical analysis techniques. The results show that the Double Movement method, through the analysis of the historical context of hadith and the contextualization of its universal moral values, is able to prevent ahistorical literal readings and restore hadith to its ethical and transformative functions. The case study of the hadith on *isbal* shows that the main problem does not lie in the text of the hadith, but rather in the failure to understand its normative intent. Thus, the Double Movement method is relevant and applicable for building a contextual, critical, and responsive understanding of hadith in the face of the challenges of digital society.

Keywords: Hadith Hermeneutics, Double Movement, Digital Hadith, Disinformation, Fazlur Rahman, *Isbal*

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Introduction

The *isbal* hadith the prophetic tradition concerning garments that extend below the ankles has become a contested text within Indonesian digital public spheres. On platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, *isbal* is frequently circulated in fragmentary quotations, memes, short captions, and bite-sized videos that tend to privilege literal and decontextualized readings over methodological scrutiny of chain (*isnād*) and text (*matn*). Such circulation not only reduces the normative depth of the hadith, but may also serve as a quick legitimizing tool for ideological claims amid a broader wave of religious disinformation (Ridha, 2025), (Aras Herman, 2025).

This pattern signals a shift in interpretive authority: algorithmic visibility and viral appeal often outweigh traditional scholarly validation. Recent Indonesian studies on meme-based hadith communication and digital dakwah demonstrate that visual and captioned formats substantially affect public perceptions of authenticity and meaning (Ramadani et al., 2024). Moreover, research into the credibility of captions accompanying hadith content on social media demonstrates that captions frequently act as user-level *sharh* (exegesis), sometimes substituting for deeper sanad-matan analysis (Ningrum et al., 2024).

Recent Indonesian studies have examined the circulation of hadith in digital environments. Chamimudin (2023), in *Jurnal Universum*, analyzes the *isbal* hadith in meme format and finds that quotations

are often presented fragmentarily and directed toward specific normative conclusions without historical contextualization (Chamimudin, 2023). Ramadanani (2024), in Jurnal Mahad Aly Genggong, demonstrates that digital da'wah prioritizes visual appeal and virality over methodological rigor in sanad and matn analysis (Ramadani et al., 2024). Ningrum (2024), in Takwiluna, argues that social media captions function as new forms of interpretive authority, shaping public understanding of hadith despite lacking systematic hadith criticism (Ramadani et al., 2024).

While these studies empirically map communicative patterns and credence dynamics, they leave an important gap no Indonesian research to date applies a systematic hermeneutical method that reconstructs the historical context of a contested hadith (isnad/matn), extracts its moral objective (maqāṣid), and rearticulates it for contemporary digital discourses. Consequently, the present study proposes to fill this gap by adapting Fazlur Rahman's *Double Movement* hermeneutic to the *isbal* hadith and by developing a contextual interpretive model for countering digital hadith disinformation.

Theoretically, Rahman's framework historical contextualization → moral extraction → reapplication to modern issues provides a viable structure for reinterpreting hadith materials because hadith texts, like Qur'anic verses, are normatively situated and teleologically oriented (Rahman, 1981). Applying this approach allows for a reconstruction of the socio-historical rationale of the *isbal* narrations, an articulation of their ethical aims, and a formulation of hermeneutic guidelines that can be used by scholars and digital da'iyah/da'i to correct misreadings in online media.

Accordingly, this study aims to: (1) analyze how the *isbal* hadith is constructed and contested in Indonesian digital discourse; (2) reconstruct its socio-historical context and legal rationale using the first movement of Rahman's method; (3) extract its universal moral objectives; and (4) develop a contextual interpretive model to address hadith disinformation in digital environments. The novelty of the research resides in integrating hadith methodology, maqāṣid reasoning, and digital discourse analysis into a holistic framework centered on a locally relevant contested narration.

Method

This study employs a qualitative research design (Cresswell & Poth, 2016) combining normative hermeneutics and digital discourse analysis. The qualitative approach is chosen to explore meaning construction and epistemological patterns in the dissemination of the *isbal* hadith within digital spaces. The research integrates library research and digital document analysis (Bowen, 2009). The hermeneutical framework is grounded in Fazlur Rahman's Double Movement theory (Rahman, 1981), while digital discourse is examined through critical discourse analysis within the broader perspective of digital religion studies (Fairclough, 2010).

Primary data consist of hadith texts and selected digital content. Secondary data include scholarly literature on hadith hermeneutics and digital religion. Data were collected through document analysis, non-participatory digital observation, and systematic archiving. The research subjects are textual: the *isbal* hadith and its digital representations. Digital data were selected using purposive sampling (Cresswell & Poth, 2016). Data analysis followed four stages: content analysis (Krippendorff, 2018), critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2010), historical reconstruction, and moral contextualization based on Double Movement (Rahman, 1981). Data validity was ensured through triangulation and systematic documentation.

Results and Discussion

Digital Construction and Epistemological Challenges of the *Isbal* Hadith

Analysis of digital content containing hadith *isbal* shows that the construction of meaning in social media tends to follow three main patterns: text fragmentation, ahistorical literalism, and algorithm-based legitimization.

1. Fragmentation and Reduction of Hadith Narratives

Most of the analyzed content presents *isbal* hadith in the form of normative sentence fragments such as “What exceeds the ankles in hell is its place” without including the complete history, social context, or explanation of the reason for the prohibition. In some cases, hadiths are presented in meme format with bold typography and religious visual backgrounds that reinforce the impression of absoluteness and finality.

These findings are in line with Chamimudin's (2023) research, which shows that hadith memes on social media tend to reduce the complexity of the text into a single moral message (Chamimudin, 2023). Ramadani (2024) also found that digital da'wah prioritizes visual simplicity for high dissemination (Ramadani et al., 2024). However, unlike the two studies that focused on the visual communication dimension, the results of this study show that fragmentation has an impact on changes in the epistemological structure of hadith understanding. Texts separated from their context not only lose their historical nuances but also their methodological relationship with the disciplines of sanad and matan criticism. Thus, fragmentation is not merely a technical issue of presentation but the beginning of epistemic reduction.

2. Literalism Without Asbab al-Wurud and 'Illat Hukum

Analysis of short video narratives and comment columns shows a tendency toward literal interpretation that positions clothing length as the sole indicator of piety. In some content, there are no references to the social context of 7th-century Arabia or scholarly discourse on the relationship between *isbal* and arrogance. In fact, historical studies conducted by Alhafizh et al. (2024) and Sadali et al. (2023) show that the prohibition of *isbal* in the hadith is closely related to the symbolic practices of the Arab aristocracy, which used the length of clothing as a symbol of status and arrogance (Alhafizh, 2024), (Sadali et al., 2023). This finding is also in line with the trend in contemporary Indonesian fiqh studies that distinguishes between *isbal* due to arrogance and *isbal* without such elements.

However, in the digital space, this dimension of 'illat is almost completely lost. Hadiths are treated as standalone textual norms without any interpretive process. Ningrum (2024) shows that social media captions often replace the function of classical commentary, but this study finds that these captions reinforce literal readings rather than explaining the context. Regardless of the asbāb al-wurūd, this shows a disconnect between the text and its history, transforming the hadith from an ethical guideline into a normative symbol (Ningrum et al., 2024).

3. Shift in Authority From Scholars to Algorithms

Observations of digital interactions show that the legitimacy of hadith truth is more often measured by popularity indicators number of followers, number of views, and level of interaction than by references to hadith books or religious scholars. Content delivered by figures with millions of followers tends to be accepted without verification, even if it does not include methodological references. This phenomenon reinforces the findings of Fasas (2025), who notes a tendency to use hadith as normative legitimacy in exclusive digital religious discourse (Fasas, 2025). In addition, Hayati (2025) shows that religious authority in the digital space is performative and visibility-based (Hayati et al., 2025). However, this study adds a structural dimension: social media algorithms systematically reinforce content that is concise, provocative, and emotional. This means that the shift in authority is not only social but also technological. Algorithms become invisible mediators that determine which interpretations are dominant.

Interestingly, the form of disinformation found was not in the form of false hadiths, but rather authentic hadiths that were misunderstood. Prayitno (2025) refer to this phenomenon as context manipulation in digital religious discourse (Prayitno, 2025). This study confirms these findings, but shows that the root of the problem is not the authenticity of the sanad, but the absence of hermeneutic mechanisms. Hadiths are believed not because of a scientific verification process, but because of their virality. In this context, there is what can be called an epistemological crisis: the source of legitimacy has shifted from methodology to popularity. If in the classical tradition the authority of hadiths rested

on isnād and scientific discipline, then in the digital space authority rests on algorithms and visual impressions.

Based on all findings, it can be concluded that the main challenge of hadith *isbal* in the digital age does not lie in the text itself, but rather in the mechanism of constructing its meaning. Fragmentation, ahistorical literalism, and shifts in authority form a pattern of hermeneutic disinformation that shifts hadith from a source of contextual ethics to an absolute normative symbol. These findings expand on previous Indonesian studies that focused on the communication and representation of digital hadith. While Chamimudin (2023) and Ramadani (2024) highlighted visual aspects and da'wah, and Ningrum (2024) highlighted the function of captions, this study shows that all of these dynamics contribute to the epistemological transformation of the understanding of hadith (Chamimudin, 2023), (Ramadani et al., 2024), (Ningrum et al., 2024). Thus, the crisis that occurs is not merely an information crisis, but a hermeneutic crisis that is, a failure to bridge the text, context, and moral purpose of hadith. This then requires the application of systematic hermeneutic methods, such as Double Movement, to restore hadith to its ethical orientation.

Reconstructing the Historical Intent of the *Isbal* Hadith: The First Movement

Analysis of classical hadith sources shows that the prohibition of *isbal* appears in several sahih and marfu' narrations, especially the hadith which states that "Allah will not look at those who extend their clothes out of arrogance" (narrated by Ibn 'Umar; found in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim). Other narrations (e.g., Sunan Abi Dawud) draw a clear line between behavior associated with arrogance (*khuyala'*) and clothing styles that happen to be long without any element of arrogance. These statements place the illat (legal cause) of the prohibition not solely on the length of clothing, but on the social motivation (*ria'/kubriya'*/arrogance) practiced by certain elite groups in the early days of Islam (Al-Bukhari, 2026). From a sanad-matan perspective, the main hadiths show the Prophet's concern for social attitudes (arrogance/pretension) mediated through clothing symbols, in other words, *isbal* refers to a symbolic phenomenon clothing as a status marker rather than a technical rule on the length of clothing for all contexts.

Based on social historical studies, the practice of wearing long garments among the pre-Islamic/early Islamic Arab aristocracy was interpreted as a statement of status and pride. In such situations when long garments became a means of displaying wealth/honor the prohibition that later emerged served as an ethical correction to this behavior. This is confirmed by several historical studies and local socio-historical analyses that highlight the close relationship between *isbal* and social arrogance. By placing the hadith in this context, its normative purpose (*maqasid*) can be interpreted as an effort to uphold moral egalitarianism reducing the symbolization of status that erodes community solidarity (Karnedi, 2021). Reconstruction of the social context shifts the focus of interpretation from textual rules to teleological understanding: the prohibition is a response to specific social practices, not a universal instruction on clothing without exception.

When questioning the illat (*raison d'être*) of the hadith, textual evidence and traditional studies (*sharḥ* ulama) indicate that the main illat is *khuyalā'/takabbur* (arrogance). Classical scholars also provide an exception: if the length of clothing occurs without the intention of arrogance (e.g., due to negligence), then the individual is not included in the group that is condemned. Empirical findings from field research in Indonesia confirm this difference in practice: some communities interpret *isbal* as a matter of intention; others treat physical indicators (clothing length) as practical moral markers. Qualitative studies on campuses and in Islamic boarding schools confirm this variation in understanding at the local practice level (Dawud, 2026). Hermeneutically, illat makes moral evaluation dependent on intention and social context an important implication for modern interpretation: texts must be read together with their social context (*asbāb al-wurūd*) and psychological indicators (intention), not just the surface of the matn.

This historical reconstruction has several direct implications for interpretive practices in the digital space: First, priority must be given to contextualizing the text: every post or quotation containing *isbal* must include historical information about the original context of the prohibition; without this, digital readers are prone to drawing incorrect literal inferences. (practical implications for digital da'wah content). Second, there needs to be an emphasis on intention (*niyyah*) and 'illat: public education must emphasize that laws are often related to motivation and social context, so that social/educational policies are more relevant than mere moral labeling. Third, combination of historical texts and *maqāṣid* ethics: historical reconstruction opens up the possibility of placing moral objectives (anti-arrogance) at the center of interpretations that can be applied to modern phenomena (e.g., “symbolic display” on social media).

Moral Extraction and Contextual Reapplication in the Era of Digital Disinformation

Historical reconstruction shows that the prohibition of *isbal* does not stand on the length of clothing, but on the expression of social arrogance mediated through clothing symbols. Thus, the universal moral value (*maqṣad akhlāqī*) that can be extracted is the prohibition of arrogance, symbolic superiority, and the performativity of social status. This value is transhistorical, because arrogance is not a phenomenon exclusive to 7th-century Arab society, but rather an attitude that can arise in various forms and social mediums. Within Rahman's hermeneutic framework, this stage is a transformation from historical particularity to universal ethical principles (Rahman, 1981).

The results of digital discourse analysis show that in social media spaces, symbols of piety are no longer limited to clothing, but extend to religious performativity, such as displays of religious identity, claims of singular truth, and practices of mutual judgment based on formal symbols. In many cases, the hadith *isbal* is used as a tool to publicly measure and assess the quality of other individuals' faith. This phenomenon confirms Atmam (2023) findings regarding the tendency of hadith literalism in digital discourse, which leads to social exclusivism (Atmam, 2023). In addition, research on digital da'wah practices (Chamimudin, 2023), (Ramadani et al., 2024) shows that religious symbols are often produced in visual formats that reinforce group identity. In this context, arrogance is no longer manifested through the length of clothing, but through moral superiority and the symbolization of piety. Thus, if the prohibition of *isbal* in the early days of Islam aimed to dismantle symbols of social arrogance, then in the digital age, the same moral values can be directed towards criticism of religious symbolization that is oriented towards image-building and moral superiority.

Based on all findings, it can be concluded that the main challenge of hadith *isbal* in the digital age does not lie in the text itself, but rather in the mechanism of constructing its meaning. Fragmentation, ahistorical literalism, and shifts in authority form a pattern of hermeneutic disinformation that shifts hadith from a source of contextual ethics to an absolute normative symbol. These findings expand on previous Indonesian studies that focused on the communication and representation of digital hadith. While Chamimudin (2023) and Ramadani (2024) highlighted visual aspects and da'wah, and Ningrum (2024) highlighted the function of captions, this study shows that all of these dynamics contribute to the epistemological transformation of the understanding of hadith (Chamimudin, 2023), (Ramadani et al., 2024), (Ningrum et al., 2024). Thus, the crisis that occurs is not merely an information crisis, but a hermeneutic crisis that is, a failure to bridge the text, context, and moral purpose of hadith. This then requires the application of systematic hermeneutic methods, such as Double Movement, to restore hadith to its ethical orientation.

Conclusion

This study examined the hermeneutical challenges of the *isbal* hadith in the digital era and applied Fazlur Rahman's Double Movement method to reconstruct its original intent and contemporary relevance. The findings show that the main problem lies not in the authenticity of the hadith, but in its fragmented and literal circulation in digital media, which reduces its moral depth and shifts its function from an ethical warning against arrogance to a rigid normative symbol of piety. Through historical reconstruction, the study confirms that the prohibition of *isbal* is fundamentally linked to arrogance and symbolic status display, not merely the physical length of garments. By recontextualizing its moral objective in the digital sphere, the research demonstrates that the core ethical message rejecting pride and moral superiority remains relevant in contemporary forms of performative religiosity. The novelty of this study lies in systematically integrating digital discourse analysis with the application of the Double Movement method specifically to the *isbal* hadith. Theoretically, it contributes to the development of hadith hermeneutics by extending Rahman's method beyond Qur'anic studies. Practically, it offers a contextual interpretive framework to mitigate hermeneutical disinformation and promote ethically grounded engagement with hadith in digital environments.

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