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Methods of Strengthening *Da'if* Hadith: A Comparative Analysis of the Epistemologies of the *Muhaddithin* and the *Fuqaha*

Muhammad Luthfi[1], Muh. Khusni Tamrin[2], Shidqi Ahyani[3], Nasrulloh[4]
[1,2,3,4]*Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, Indonesia*
Email: 260201310015@student.uin-malang.ac.id

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Abstract. The strengthening of *da'if* hadith (*taqwiyat al-hadith al-da'if*) is a methodological issue in hadith studies and *usul al-fiqh* concerning the determination of a report's authenticity and its probative force in the construction of Islamic law. The issue is significant because the *muhaddithin* and the *fuqaha* approach the basis, mechanisms, and limits of strengthening *da'if* hadith differently. This study aims to analyse the methods of strengthening *da'if* hadith from the perspectives of hadith science and *usul al-fiqh*, and to explain the epistemological differences between the *muhaddithin* and the *fuqaha* in determining the criteria, limits, and probative force of *da'if* hadith. This is a qualitative study based on *library research*, employing descriptive-analytical and comparative methods. The primary sources comprise the thought of Muhammad ibn 'Umar ibn Salim Bazmul and Qasim ibn 'Umar Haj Muhammad. The secondary sources include articles on isnad and *matn* criticism, the use of unreliable hadith in the Sunni tradition, the strengthening of hadith through correspondence of meaning with the Qur'an, and the application of *da'if* hadith in the construction of Islamic law. The findings show that the methods of strengthening *da'if* hadith include *mutaba'at*, *shawahid*, *talaqqi al-'ulama bi al-qabul*, statements of the Companions, correspondence with the Qur'an, consensus (*ijma'*), principles of the Shari'a, analogy (*qiyas*), and testing against scientific and historical reality. Each method, however, has a distinct epistemological function and limits. The fundamental difference between the *muhaddithin* and the *fuqaha* in strengthening hadith lies in the orientation of their testing: the *muhaddithin* emphasise the validity of a hadith's attribution to the Prophet (*sihhat al-nisbah*), whereas the *fuqaha* focus more on the validity of its substance and the report's position in legal argumentation (*sihhat al-ma'na*).

Keywords: *Methods of Strengthening, Da'if Hadith, Muhaddithin, Fuqaha.*

A. INTRODUCTION

Hadith is the second source of Islamic teaching after the Qur'an and holds a fundamental position in explaining, elaborating, and implementing the provisions of the Shari'a. Its status as a source of law makes the authenticity of hadith a central issue in the development of Islamic thought, particularly in matters of creed, worship, transactions, and legal rulings. Unlike the Qur'an, all of whose verses were transmitted by *mutawatir* transmission, the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad reached subsequent generations through multiple chains of transmission of varying quality. This situation prompted scholars to develop a methodology of hadith criticism to identify which reports may be accepted and which must be rejected on the basis of an examination of the isnad and the *matn*.

In the discipline of hadith science, the quality of a report is determined by whether or not it satisfies a set of conditions for acceptance. A *sahih* hadith must have an unbroken chain of transmission, be narrated by transmitters who are upright and precise in memory, and be free from irregularity (*shudhudh*) and hidden defects (*'illah*). If any of these conditions is not met, a report may be classified as *da'if*. Nevertheless, weakness is not a single category with a uniform degree of deficiency. Some reports are only mildly weak and may still be strengthened through other chains of transmission, while others are so severely weak that they cannot serve as a basis for strengthening. Assessing a *da'if* hadith therefore requires identifying the cause of its weakness before determining whether it can be strengthened.

The question of strengthening *da'if* hadith is important because the weakness of a report does not necessarily mean that its entire content is false. In some cases, a hadith may have other chains of transmission that support the veracity of the report. This mechanism is known as *taqwiyat al-hadith al-da'if*, the process of strengthening a hadith through other chains of transmission or other supporting indicators. In the tradition of hadith science, strengthening through *mutaba'at* and *shawahid* allows a report previously classified as *da'if* to gain support from other chains, so that under certain conditions it may be elevated to *hasan li ghayrihi*. Such elevation, however, still requires that the weakness of the main report not be severe and that the supporting chains possess verifiable quality and independence.

The strengthening of hadith has not developed solely in the form of support through chains of transmission. The juristic tradition also makes use of other indicators, such as the correspondence of a hadith's content with the Qur'an, consensus, statements of the Companions, general principles of the Shari'a, analogy, and acceptance by scholars. These indicators are used to evaluate the standing of a report's substance within the construction of legal argument. Ibn Salim Bazmul explains that scholars used a range of avenues and indicators to strengthen weak hadith, not all of which operate through the mechanism of transmission (ibn Salim Bazmul, 2007). This shows that the discussion of strengthening hadith has a broader scope than merely multiplying chains of transmission.

A problem arises when these various forms of strengthening are understood as methods with the same epistemological function. The correspondence of a hadith's meaning with a Qur'anic verse, for instance, can support the truth of its substance, but it does not necessarily prove that the hadith genuinely originates from the Prophet Muhammad. Likewise, a legal ruling that accords with analogy or with the general principles of the Shari'a does not automatically prove the authenticity of the report that conveys it. A distinction must therefore be drawn between the truth of a hadith's meaning and the validity of its attribution to the Prophet. This distinction is fundamental to understanding the different approaches of the *muhaddithin* and the *fuqaha* (Haj Muhammad, 2013).

This difference in orientation is also related to the development of isnad and *matn* criticism in the Islamic scholarly tradition. Brown's research shows that early hadith critics did not examine only the isnad but also paid attention to the content of the *matn*, even though this practice was not always explicitly presented as *matn* criticism (J. Brown, 2008). In a subsequent study, Brown explains that *matn* criticism poses methodological problems of its own, because evaluating the content of a report may involve rational, interpretive, and contextual considerations (J. A. C. Brown, 2012). Both studies show that hadith authentication cannot be reduced to a mechanical examination of the isnad; it also requires an evaluation of the content and of the relationship between the report and other evidence. Recent scholarship reinforces this view by affirming that substantive criticism and contextual understanding of the *matn* are needed to determine the validity of a hadith (Wasman et al., 2023), while contemporary *matn* criticism has broadened its scope by taking into account *maqasid al-shari'ah*, linguistic tools, and the context of the report, while maintaining the link between the *matn* and the isnad (Mohd Razak et al., 2025).

Harald Motzki's studies on the dating of Muslim traditions also contribute to our understanding of hadith research methodology. Through his discussion of historical approaches to dating traditions, Motzki shows the importance of examining the relationship between the isnad, the *matn*, and the sources of transmission in reconstructing the history of hadith transmission (Motzki, 2005). His study of the *Musannaf* of 'Abd al-Razzaq al-San'ani likewise demonstrates the importance of early hadith collections as sources for investigating the existence and development of reports in the first Islamic century (Motzki, 1991). Although neither study directly addresses *taqwiyat al-hadith al-da'if*, both are relevant in strengthening

the methodological premise that the assessment of hadith requires sound historical and textual research. The isnad-cum-*matn* approach developed by Motzki continues to be applied in recent research, for example to trace the origin and formation of the hadith on the ten Companions promised Paradise(Su, 2024) and of the reports on the sanctity of Madina (Kara, 2026).

The debate over the use of *da'if* hadith has also received attention in Brown's article *Even If It's Not True It's True: Using Unreliable Hadiths in Sunni Islam*, in which he explains that the use of unreliable hadith in the Sunni tradition was never entirely rejected throughout its history (J. Brown, 2011). The majority of premodern Sunni scholars allowed the selective use of weak hadith, particularly in matters outside the core of law and creed, provided the report was not shown to be fabricated. There were, however, also groups of scholars who rejected this practice on the grounds that it could compromise the commitment to the authenticity of the Prophet's teachings (J. Brown, 2011). This study shows that the debate over *da'if* hadith is not merely a technical matter of the isnad but is also bound up with epistemological priorities and with the responsibility to safeguard the authority of the Prophet's teachings.

More specifically, the study by Izzuddin and Abdul Halim examines the strengthening of *da'if* hadith through the correspondence of the *matn*'s meaning with Qur'anic verses. It finds that the majority of *muhaddithin* do not regard similarity of meaning with a Qur'anic verse as sufficient evidence to elevate a hadith to *hasan li ghayrihi* (Bakar & Halim, 2025). The authenticity of a hadith still requires an examination of its isnad and *matn*. Correspondence between a hadith's content and the Qur'an may indicate that its meaning is true, but it does not automatically prove that the wording was actually uttered by the Prophet Muhammad. This finding underlines the importance of distinguishing between support for the substance of a hadith and the strengthening of the authenticity of its transmission.

The study by Tsalis et al. on the perspectives of hadith scholars and jurists regarding *da'if* hadith in the fatwas of the National Sharia Council of the Indonesian Ulema Council (DSN-MUI) also makes an important contribution. It examines the use of the *sulh* hadith in DSN-MUI Fatwa No. 55/DSN-MUI/V/2007 on Sharia *Musharakah* Current Account Financing (Tsalis et al., 2025). Through *takhrij* and isnad analysis combined with normative analysis, the study reveals problems with the quality of the isnad of the hadith used, although its substance remains connected to the Shari'a principle of dispute resolution (Tsalis et al., 2025). These findings show that the relevance of a report to legal argument does not remove the obligation to explain the quality of its isnad and the standing of the evidence used.

A more recent study by Yusra et al. examines *da'if* hadith in the construction of Shafi'i jurisprudence through the case of *musyammas* (sun-heated) water. It traces the development of the use of the hadith narrated by 'A'ishah on water heated by the sun through the thought of al-Shafi'i, al-Juwayni, Zakariyya al-Ansari, Ibn Hajar al-Haytami, and al-Ramli. The findings reveal an evolving pattern of *istidlal*, moving from not using the hadith as a legal basis, to using it to support a Companion's *athar*, to placing it on a par with the *athar*, and finally to treating it as the principal proof supported by the *athar* (Yusra et al., 2026). The study shows that the standing of a *da'if* hadith in juristic construction can develop through the integration of the report, *athar*, the principle of precaution, and scholarly acceptance.

On the basis of these previous studies, it can be seen that research on the strengthening of *da'if* hadith has developed around several different foci. Ibn Salim Bazmul and Haj Muhammad focus on methods of strengthening from the perspectives of the *muhaddithin* and the fuqaha (Haj Muhammad, 2013; ibn Salim Bazmul, 2007). Brown offers perspectives on *matn* criticism and on the history of the use of unreliable hadith in the Sunni tradition (J. Brown, 2008, 2011; J. A. C. Brown, 2012). Motzki strengthens the historical dimension of research on the transmission and dating of hadith (Motzki, 1991, 2005). Meanwhile, Izzuddin et al., Tsalis et al., and Yusra et al. address the strengthening of hadith in the contexts of correspondence

with the Qur'an, the use of hadith in fatwas, and the construction of juristic argument (Bakar & Halim, 2025; Tsalis et al., 2025; Yusra et al., 2026).

Although these studies have made important contributions, a synthesis is still needed that systematically distinguishes the various methods of strengthening according to the epistemological object they aim to strengthen. The discussion of *mutaba'at*, *shawahid*, correspondence with the Qur'an, consensus, analogy, scholarly acceptance, and scientific facts needs to be placed within a framework that explains whether each method strengthens the isnad, the substance of the meaning, or the legal argument. Moreover, the different approaches of the *muhaddithin* and the *fuqaha* need to be analysed not only in terms of their differing methods but also in terms of their scholarly orientations and the consequences of their use in determining the probative force of hadith.

The novelty of this study lies in formulating an integrative analytical framework that distinguishes three layers of strengthening *da'if* hadith: the authenticity of transmission (*sihhat al-nisbah*), the validity of the substance of meaning (*sihhat al-ma'na*), and probative force in legal construction. This framework is used to explain that not every form of support for a hadith has the same consequences for elevating the quality of a report. Accordingly, this study does not merely compare the methods of the *muhaddithin* and the *fuqaha*; it also offers a conceptual distinction that avoids equating the truth of a meaning with the authenticity of a hadith's attribution to the Prophet Muhammad.

Against this background, the study focuses on two research questions: how are *da'if* hadith strengthened from the perspectives of hadith science and *usul al-fiqh*, and how do the *muhaddithin* and the *fuqaha* differ epistemologically in determining the criteria, limits, and probative force of *da'if* hadith. The study aims to analyse the methods of strengthening *da'if* hadith on the basis of the various chains of transmission and supporting indicators used in the traditions of hadith science and *usul al-fiqh*. It further aims to explain the epistemological differences between the *muhaddithin* and the *fuqaha* and to formulate an integrative framework that distinguishes between strengthening the authenticity of a hadith, strengthening its meaning, and strengthening legal argument.

B. METHOD

This is a qualitative study whose data were obtained through *library research*. This method was chosen because the object of the study concerns the thought of hadith scholars and *fuqaha* on the methods of strengthening *da'if* hadith, which is accessible through scholarly literature, academic works, journal articles, and supporting documents. The study does not seek to test hypotheses empirically but to analyse the concepts, arguments, and methodological principles that developed within the traditions of hadith science and *usul al-fiqh*.

The data sources are divided into primary and secondary sources. The primary sources comprise Muhammad ibn 'Umar ibn Salim Bazmul's work *Taqwiyat al-Hadith al-Da'if Bayna al-Fuqaha' wa al-Muhaddithin* (ibn Salim Bazmul, 2007) and Qasim ibn 'Umar Haj Muhammad's study *Manhaj Taqwiyat al-Hadith al-Da'if Bayna al-Muhaddithin wa al-Fuqaha'* (Haj Muhammad, 2013). These two sources are used to identify the methods of strengthening, the conditions for their application, and the differences in the epistemological orientations of the *muhaddithin* and the *fuqaha*.

The secondary sources include an article on al-Albani's methodology in strengthening hadith through *shawahid* and *mutaba'at* (Baharudin et al., 2025), an article on strengthening *da'if* hadith through correspondence of meaning with Qur'anic verses (Bakar & Halim, 2025), a study of the perspectives of hadith scholars and jurists on the use of *da'if* hadith in DSN-MUI fatwas (Tsalis et al., 2025), and an article on the development of the use of *da'if* hadith in Shafi'i juristic construction (Yusra et al., 2026). The works of Jonathan A. C. Brown (J. Brown,

2008, 2011; J. A. C. Brown, 2012) and Harald Motzki (Motzki, 1991, 2005) serve as supporting literature to broaden the analysis of *matn* criticism, the history of the use of weak hadith, and historical approaches to research on hadith transmission. This supporting literature is complemented by recent articles on *matn* criticism (Mohd Razak et al., 2025; Wasman et al., 2023), isnad-cum-*matn* analysis (Kara, 2026; Su, 2024), consensus in the understanding of hadith (Majid et al., 2023) and the relationship between hadith and science (Alhattab & Jamil, 2024).

Data were collected through documentation, namely by identifying, reading, classifying, and recording concepts related to the methods of strengthening *da'if* hadith. The data from this literature were analysed with attention to the argumentative context of each author.

The data were then analysed using descriptive-analytical and comparative methods. The descriptive-analytical method was used to explain the various forms of strengthening hadith, including the conditions and limits of each method. The comparative method was used to compare the epistemological orientations of the *muhaddithin* and the *fuqaha* in determining the quality of a report and its standing in legal argument. The analysis was carried out by classifying the objects of strengthening into three categories: authenticity of transmission, validity of substance, and legal probative force. This classification constitutes the analytical framework of the study for explaining the relationship between hadith criticism and the construction of Islamic law.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Methods of Strengthening *Da'if* Hadith from the Perspectives of Hadith Science and *Usul al-Fiqh*

Taqwiyat al-hadith al-da'if is a process of evaluating a report through the existence of chains of transmission or supporting indicators that can provide information about the veracity of a hadith. From the perspective of hadith science, strengthening is not achieved simply by gathering a number of chains; it also involves evaluating the quality of the transmitters, the continuity of the chains, the relationships between routes of transmission, and the coherence of the *matn*. Strengthening a hadith is thus part of the process of report criticism, which demands rigour in determining whether a given weakness can still be remedied through additional evidence. Ibn Salim Bazmul explains that scholars had a number of methods and avenues for strengthening *da'if* hadith, whose application must be differentiated according to the nature of the report's weakness and the type of indicator used (ibn Salim Bazmul, 2007).

Epistemologically, the strengthening of hadith proceeds from the understanding that the truth of a report cannot always be assessed solely through an individual evaluation of a single transmitter. Supporting indicators (*qara'in*) can provide additional information about the likelihood that a report is true or mistaken. These indicators, however, must be assessed according to what is to be proven. If what is to be proven is the authenticity of a hadith's attribution to the Prophet Muhammad, evidence directly connected to the transmission of the report is required. Conversely, if what is to be proven is the truth of the substance of a legal provision, support from the Qur'an, consensus, statements of the Companions, and the principles of the Shari'a may be taken into consideration. This distinction shows that the strengthening of hadith cannot be separated from the question of what kind of knowledge the process of strengthening is meant to produce (Haj Muhammad, 2013; ibn Salim Bazmul, 2007).

The main criterion in determining whether a hadith can be strengthened is the cause and degree of its weakness. A *da'if* hadith may result from a break in the chain, the unknown identity of a transmitter, weak memory, inaccurate transmission, contradiction with a stronger report, or a hidden defect. Each of these causes has different methodological consequences. A report

weakened by a transmitter's poor memory, where the transmitter is known to be truthful and of sound integrity, may still be strengthened through other chains. Conversely, a report whose weakness stems from accusations of lying, fabrication, or very serious errors in transmission cannot be strengthened merely by adding chains that do not meet the standards of acceptance. The process of strengthening must therefore begin with identifying the type of weakness, rather than simply counting the number of chains found (Bakar & Halim, 2025; ibn Salim Bazmul, 2007).

Ibn al-Salah, as cited in the study by Bakar and Abdul Halim, explains (Bakar & Halim, 2025) that not every weakness in a hadith is removed by the existence of other chains. If the weakness is due to the imperfect memory of a transmitter known for honesty and trustworthiness, the existence of other chains of transmission can show that the report has a reliable basis. A weakness caused by a transmitter's mendacity or by a serious irregularity, however, is not automatically removed even when additional chains are found. This explanation shows that the strengthening of hadith has methodological limits determined by the nature of the report's weakness. The concept of *ta'addud al-turuq*, or the multiplicity of chains of transmission, should therefore not be understood as an automatic mechanism for elevating the quality of every *da'if* hadith.

In mapping the categories of weakness discussed in the literature of hadith science, a number of categories can be identified that may still become objects of inquiry for strengthening, including *mursal* hadith; *mudallas* reports transmitted with the expression *'an*; reports from transmitters with poor memory; *mukhtalit* transmitters whose narrations before and after their deterioration (*ikhtilat*) cannot be distinguished; *mastur* and *majhul al-hal* transmitters; *mu'allaq*, *munqati'*, and *mursal khafi* reports; and reports with problems in their written records or in the identity of their transmitters. This classification shows that there are zones of weakness that require further investigation before a report can be judged capable or incapable of being strengthened. These categories do not mean, however, that every hadith with such characteristics automatically rises to *hasan li ghayrihi*. The assessment still depends on the quality of the supporting chains, the relationships between the chains, and the absence of any serious weakness that would preclude strengthening (ibn Salim Bazmul, 2007).

One of the principal methods of strengthening *da'if* hadith is through *mutaba'at* (ibn Salim Bazmul, 2007) This method involves tracing other chains of transmission from the same Companion in order to determine whether a report is supported by different transmitters or routes. In the methods of strengthening formulated by Ibn Salim Bazmul, *mutaba'ah* is divided into *mutaba'ah tammah*, namely support from a chain that converges on the same teacher, and *mutaba'ah qasirah*, namely support from a chain that converges at a higher level of transmitters (ibn Salim Bazmul, 2007). This distinction matters because the relationship between the main chain and the supporting chain determines the extent to which a transmission truly receives independent support.

Strengthening through *mutaba'at* may have several possible consequences. For a very weak report, the multiplicity of chains does not always raise the quality of the whole hadith, but it may support the core of the event (*asl al-qissah*). In other cases, supporting chains may change the assessment of a report previously classified as *munkar* into an ordinary *da'if* report that can still be taken into consideration. For a hadith whose weakness is slight, the existence of supporting chains of equal or greater strength may provide grounds for elevating it to *hasan li ghayrihi*. Strengthening through *mutaba'at* must therefore take into account the degree of weakness of the main isnad and the capacity of the additional chains to overcome that weakness (Baharudin et al., 2025; ibn Salim Bazmul, 2007).

The study by Baharudin et al. on al-Albani's methodology in strengthening hadith through *shawahid* and *mutaba'at* shows that the process of strengthening does not end with the

discovery of additional chains, but also requires an evaluation of the quality of each transmitter and of the relationships between reports (Baharudin et al., 2025). Multiple chains of transmission can support the main report only if they are genuinely independent and do not repeat the same source of weakness. The study shows that *i'tibar* is an essential part of strengthening hadith because it enables the researcher to compare all the chains of transmission. Thus, *mutaba'at* are not merely an instrument for increasing the number of chains, but an evaluative mechanism for determining the strengths and weaknesses of a report through comparative evidence. The influence of al-Albani's methodology of hadith assessment has also extended into contemporary religious discourse, including in Indonesia, so that the way a report is assessed and strengthened has direct implications for religious understanding and practice in society (Musyafiq, 2023).

The next method of strengthening is *shawahid*, namely support for a report through another hadith originating from a different Companion but sharing the same or a similar meaning. Unlike *mutaba'at*, which trace other chains from the same Companion, *shawahid* extend the inquiry to different Companions as sources. Such reports can support the content of the hadith under examination. Similarity of meaning, however, must be analysed carefully, because not every thematic similarity indicates that the entire wording of the hadith has been strengthened. If the supporting hadith corresponds only in certain parts, the strengthening is limited to the parts that genuinely correspond. It is therefore incorrect to conclude that the entire wording of a hadith has been verified merely on the basis of its similarity in meaning to other reports (ibn Salim Bazmul, 2007).

This issue is related to the nature of hadith transmission in its oral phase, which was relatively flexible in wording and content (Rashwan, 2024). Kara shows that variations in wording across chains can strengthen the core elements of a report while also reflecting changes that occurred in later generations of transmitters (Kara, 2026). Support between reports is therefore better understood as strengthening the core content rather than every detail of the wording.

The study by Baharudin et al. shows that al-Albani's methodology treats *shawahid* as an instrument of strengthening that still requires evaluation of the quality of the isnad and the coherence of the *matn* (Baharudin et al., 2025). A report from a different Companion can support the meaning of a hadith, but it must still be examined whether that report can genuinely serve as a corroborant or whether it shares the same weakness. *Shawahid* and *mutaba'at* thus share the function of strengthening but differ in the source of support. *Mutaba'at* are more closely related to testing transmission through the same Companion, whereas *shawahid* provide support through transmission from different Companions. Both can contribute to elevating the quality of a hadith if they meet the methodological requirements, particularly with respect to the quality of the isnad, the independence of the chains, and the coherence of the report's content.

Apart from chains of transmission, the methods of strengthening *da'if* hadith also concern scholars' acceptance and practice of a report, known as *talaqqi al-'ulama bi al-qabul*. This method proceeds from the fact that a hadith may gain wide acceptance in scholarly tradition and practice even though its isnad does not reach a high degree of strength. In the methods of strengthening formulated by Ibn Salim Bazmul, scholars' acceptance of the wording of a hadith across generations is regarded as capable of supporting the standing of the report (ibn Salim Bazmul, 2007). The examples discussed are the hadith *la wasiyyata li warith* "*no bequest to an heir*" and the hadith on the purity of seawater, *huwa al-tahuru ma'uhu*. Acceptance of the wording of a hadith must, however, be distinguished from acceptance of its legal substance. If scholarly consensus concerns only the meaning or the legal ruling, the

definitive force of the argument lies in that acceptance or consensus, not automatically in the problematic isnad of the hadith.

The discussion of *talaqqi bi al-qabul* is also addressed in the study by Yusra et al. on Shafi'i juristic construction, which shows that scholarly acceptance of a report can confer functional legitimacy in the practice of *istidlal*, especially when the report has been widely used by the school's scholarly authorities (Yusra et al., 2026). Such acceptance nonetheless needs to be analysed according to what is being accepted: the wording of the hadith, its general meaning, or the legal ruling it contains. This distinction is necessary so that acceptance within the juristic tradition is not automatically understood as proof of the authenticity of the isnad by the standards of hadith criticism.

Strengthening through statements of the Companions (*qawl al-sahabi*) is another method discussed in the literature on strengthening hadith (ibn Salim Bazmul, 2007). A Companion's statement can support the substance of a report, especially when its content concerns the understanding and practice of the earliest generation of Muslims. The standing of a Companion's statement, however, must be analysed according to the nature of the statement. If it concerns a matter that cannot be based on personal reasoning (*la majala li al-ra'y fihi*), then under certain conditions it may be regarded as *marfu' hukman* (attributable to the Prophet by implication). In that case, the Companion's statement can provide stronger support for attributing the meaning to the Prophet Muhammad. Conversely, if the statement is the product of *ijtihad*, its standing relates more to strengthening the substance or the legal argument (ibn Salim Bazmul, 2007).

Differences also arise when the Companions disagreed about a ruling. In the methods of strengthening formulated by Ibn Salim Bazmul, the *fuqaha* may use the fatwas of Companions to strengthen a meaning, whereas the *muhaddithin* may regard such disagreement as an indicator requiring further examination, particularly where a report attributed to the Prophet may in fact be a Companion's statement or a *mawquf* report (ibn Salim Bazmul, 2007). This shows that statements of the Companions do not always serve the same function in the process of strengthening. Their standing depends on whether the statement is *marfu'* by implication, an accepted product of *ijtihad*, or, on the contrary, an indicator of an error in the attribution of the report.

Strengthening through the correspondence of a hadith's content with the Qur'an is one of the important points of debate between the *muhaddithin* and the *fuqaha*. The Qur'an is the primary source of Islamic teaching and holds the strongest epistemological standing. Hadith content that accords with Qur'anic verses can therefore gain support in terms of substance and normative principle. Such correspondence, however, does not automatically prove that the wording of the hadith genuinely originates from the Prophet Muhammad. A distinction must be drawn here between the truth of a message and the validity of attributing that message to the Prophet.

The study by Izzuddin and Abdul Halim shows specifically that the majority of *muhaddithin* do not accept similarity of meaning between a *da'if* hadith and a Qur'anic verse as a sufficient basis for elevating the hadith to *hasan li ghayrihi* (Bakar & Halim, 2025). Hadith critics continue to require an examination of the isnad and *matn* to establish the authenticity of a report. The study also explains that there is a difference between direct and indirect correspondence of meaning, but neither form of correspondence can replace an examination of the chains of transmission. Thus, the harmony of a hadith with the Qur'an may show that the substance it conveys is grounded in revelation, but it does not prove that the wording was actually spoken by the Prophet.

Izzuddin and Abdul Halim also show that the view accepting correspondence of meaning with the Qur'an as a means of strengthening hadith is found among some jurists and

in certain discussions by Ibn al-Qattan al-Fasi (Bakar & Halim, 2025). Nevertheless, their study affirms that this practice cannot be generalised as a standard method of the *muhaddithin*. In a number of cases, hadith critics maintained their *da'if* assessment of a report even though the content of its *matn* corresponded with a Qur'anic verse. This shows that the truth of a meaning does not always constitute evidence of the authenticity of its attribution. As the study emphasises, a hadith may have a *da'if* isnad while its meaning is true. Support from the Qur'an is therefore more appropriately treated as strengthening the substance when it is not accompanied by adequate evidence of transmission.

Consensus and the general principles of the Shari'a can also support the content of a report. If a legal ruling has been accepted on the basis of strong evidence and has obtained the consensus of scholars, the substance of that ruling has its own foundation within the Islamic legal system. A *da'if* hadith containing a similar provision may serve to explain or support it, but it does not automatically become the principal source determining the ruling's validity. A distinction must therefore be drawn between acceptance of the wording of a hadith, acceptance of its general meaning, and acceptance of a legal ruling established through other evidence. This distinction is important for preserving the hierarchy of the sources of Islamic law and for avoiding the conflation of strengthening substance with elevating the quality of the isnad (Masruroh & Farid, 2019; Tsalis et al., 2025). In the context of Islamic law in Indonesia, Majid et al. show that consensus can serve both as a source and as a method for understanding legal hadith, as in the determination of the beginning of the lunar (*qamariyah*) months (Majid et al., 2023). This finding shows that consensus operates at the level of understanding and establishing law, not at the level of proving the authenticity of a report's transmission.

Another method of strengthening is through correspondence with a sound analogy (*qiyas sahih*). In *usul al-fiqh*, *qiyas* is a method of establishing a ruling by linking a new case to a case whose ruling is already established on the basis of a shared effective cause (*'illah*). In the context of *da'if* hadith, the correspondence of a report with analogy can support the legal substance it contains. Analogy, however, does not serve the same function as a chain of transmission, because it provides no direct evidence of the source from which a hadith was transmitted. A legal ruling may be grounded in a *sahih* analogy even though the hadith conveying the same substance retains a weak isnad. Analogy is thus better understood as strengthening legal argument than as elevating the authenticity of a hadith (Haj Muhammad, 2013; ibn Salim Bazmul, 2007).

The development of modern science also raises the question of whether scientific and historical facts may be used as indicators for strengthening hadith. This question is discussed specifically by al-Qallaf in his study of strengthening weak hadith through correspondence with modern scientific discoveries (al-Qallaf, 2021). The study describes a view that accepts the correspondence of a hadith with scientific discoveries as an indicator supporting the truth of a report's content (al-Qallaf, 2021). This view proceeds from the assumption that information contained in a hadith and later confirmed by scientific research can support the truth of its meaning. There is, however, also a view that rejects the use of scientific facts as a basis for elevating the grade of a hadith, because empirical truth does not automatically prove the authenticity of the source of transmission.

Al-Qallaf tends to favour the view that rejects elevating the quality of a *da'if* hadith solely on the basis of its correspondence with modern scientific discoveries. In his view, scientific facts may be used to examine the content of the *matn* but cannot replace the function of isnad criticism (al-Qallaf, 2021). A piece of information may be empirically true, yet that truth does not necessarily show that the Prophet was the one who conveyed it. Moreover, the development of science allows for the revision and refinement of research findings. Scientific discoveries therefore cannot serve as the sole basis for elevating the status of a hadith to *hasan*

li ghayrihi. This view is in line with Alhattab and Jamil (Alhattab & Jamil, 2024). who stress that hadith and science have different epistemological origins, while the dynamic nature of science calls for caution when scientific data are incorporated into hadith commentary.

Al-Qallaf's discussion of the report *sumu tasihhu* "*fast and you will be healthy*", which is generally understood as an encouragement to fast because fasting is beneficial to health, illustrates this problem (al-Qallaf, 2021). Although the general meaning of the hadith is supported by a number of health studies on the benefits of fasting, this correspondence does not automatically remove the weakness of its isnad. Likewise, the correspondence of some reports on the transmission of disease with modern medical knowledge cannot replace an examination of the quality of their transmitters. Both examples show that the empirical truth of a piece of information and the authenticity of a hadith are two issues that must be assessed separately. Scientific facts can thus be used as an instrument for analysing the *matn*, but not as a substitute for the method of transmission criticism.

The historical dimension is also relevant to the testing of hadith, especially with regard to dating and reconstructing the transmission of reports. Motzki explains the importance of a historical approach in studying Muslim traditions by attending to the relationship between the isnad and the *matn* (Motzki, 2005). His study provides grounds for placing a report within the historical context of its transmission and the development of early sources. Motzki's research on the *Musannaf* of 'Abd al-Razzaq al-San'ani likewise shows the importance of early collections in investigating the existence of hadith that can be traced back to the early Islamic period (Motzki, 1991).

Neither study directly establishes a method for strengthening *da'if* hadith, but both provide historical tools for assessing the origin, development, and existence of reports in early sources. Historical facts can thus assist the process of verification and hadith criticism, but they cannot stand alone as a substitute for isnad and *matn* criticism. The application of isnad-cum-*matn* analysis in recent research shows that tracing networks of transmission and comparing variant wordings can help determine the time and region in which a report first circulated (Kara, 2026; Su, 2024).

Strengthening through *kashf* (mystical unveiling) and *ilham* (inspiration), meanwhile, requires firmer methodological limits. Spiritual experience may be meaningful in an individual's religious life, but it cannot serve as evidence that a statement genuinely originates from the Prophet. This is because spiritual experience is individual and lacks a mechanism of isnad verification that can be publicly examined. The authenticity of hadith must therefore remain grounded in evidence of transmission and in sound principles of hadith criticism. In this context, Ibn Salim Bazmul's discussion of the various indicators of strengthening must be understood by distinguishing indicators that may be used in assessing substance from those that satisfy the requirements for authenticating a report (ibn Salim Bazmul, 2007). Spiritual experience cannot replace the scholarly process of determining the quality of a hadith.

On the basis of the foregoing discussion, the methods of strengthening *da'if* hadith have different characteristics and epistemological consequences. Strengthening through *mutaba'at* and *shawahid* is directly related to the examination of chains of transmission and may lead to an elevation in the quality of a hadith if the requirements are met. Strengthening through *talaqqi al-'ulama bi al-qabul* and statements of the Companions may support the standing of a report or its legal substance, but must be examined according to the object of acceptance. Correspondence with the Qur'an, consensus, the principles of the Shari'a, and analogy mostly support the truth of the meaning and the legal argument. Scientific and historical facts may be used to examine the content of the *matn* and the context of transmission, but do not independently raise the quality of the isnad. Experiences of *kashf* and *ilham* cannot be used as instruments for authenticating hadith. The strengthening of hadith, therefore, cannot be

understood as a single mechanism, but rather as a set of methods with different functions according to what is to be proven.

2. Epistemological Differences between the *Muhaddithin* and the *Fuqaha* in Determining the Criteria, Limits, and Probative Force of *Da'if* Hadith

The difference between the *muhaddithin* and the *fuqaha* on the strengthening of *da'if* hadith cannot be explained merely in terms of accepting or rejecting weak hadith. It relates to the object of study, the scholarly aims, and the epistemological orientation of each discipline. The *muhaddithin* are oriented towards verifying the truth of a report's attribution to the Prophet Muhammad, whereas the *fuqaha* are oriented towards determining rulings through the process of *istinbat* by considering various sources and principles of the Shari'a. This difference in aims affects how each group assesses reports that do not meet the conditions for the acceptance of hadith. Ibn Salim Bazmul and Haj Muhammad show that this methodological difference does not always signify opposition but reflects different emphases in assessing the truth of a report and its standing as evidence (Haj Muhammad, 2013; ibn Salim Bazmul, 2007).

From the perspective of the *muhaddithin*, the quality of a hadith is determined by examining the continuity of the isnad, the uprightness of the transmitters, the precision of their memory, the absence of irregularity, and the freedom of the report from hidden defects. A hadith that does not meet these requirements is therefore classified as *da'if*. Its weakness can nonetheless be investigated further through *i'tibar* and the tracing of *mutaba'at* and *shawahid*. This process is undertaken to determine whether the weakness in the isnad can still be strengthened or whether it instead indicates an error in transmission that cannot be remedied. The main orientation of the muhaddithin is thus to ensure that a report attributed to the Prophet Muhammad has a sound basis in transmission.

The emphasis on the authenticity of transmission is also linked to the tradition of *matn* criticism in hadith science. Brown shows that early hadith critics did criticise the content of reports, even though this practice was not always explicitly presented as *matn* criticism (J. Brown, 2008). His research corrects the view that early hadith scholars attended only to the isnad and neglected the content of the text. Brown demonstrates that a number of criticisms of reports in the third and fourth Islamic centuries in fact involved an examination of the content of hadith but were often expressed in the language of isnad criticism (J. Brown, 2008). This finding is important because it shows that the orientation of the *muhaddithin* towards authenticity does not mean neglecting the *matn*; rather, it treats the examination of the isnad and the *matn* as interrelated.

A subsequent study by Brown explains that *matn* criticism has its own problems, because evaluating the content of a report may involve rational and interpretive considerations that do not always produce agreement (J. A. C. Brown, 2012). Differences in understanding a text can lead scholars to assess the same hadith differently. This study shows that *matn* criticism requires caution so that the evaluation of a report's content is not based solely on individual rational preferences. Isnad and *matn* criticism should therefore be conducted in an integrated manner, taking into account the principles of hadith criticism and the context of the report's content.

This reinforces the argument that the authenticity of a hadith cannot be determined solely through the correspondence of its meaning with a general principle without examining its chains of transmission. The contemporary debate on the hadith concerning 'A'ishah's age at marriage illustrates this tension concretely: Jasser Auda rejects the report through Qur'an-based *matn* criticism and criticism of particular transmitters, whereas Jonathan Brown defends it by demonstrating the existence of many independent chains of transmission (Muzakkir et al.,

2023). This case shows that differing assessments of a hadith are often rooted in different epistemological assumptions about the relationship between isnad criticism and *matn* criticism.

From another perspective, the *fuqaha* place hadith within a wider network of legal argument. In the process of *istinbat*, they consider not only the status of a report but also the relationship between its content and the Qur'an, consensus, statements of the Companions, analogy, and the general principles of the Shari'a. A legal substance may therefore be supported by other sound evidence even if the hadith that conveys it has a weak isnad. In such cases, what is strengthened is the legal argument or the substance of the ruling, not necessarily the authenticity of the hadith. This approach shows that the *fuqaha* regard hadith not only as an object of transmission but also as part of a system of evidence used to resolve legal questions.

This difference in orientation can be understood through the concepts of *sihhat al-nisbah* and *sihhat al-ma'na*. *Sihhat al-nisbah* concerns proving that a statement genuinely originates from the Prophet Muhammad; it is the primary concern of the *muhaddithin*, pursued through the examination of the isnad, the transmitters, and the *matn*. *Sihhat al-ma'na*, by contrast, concerns the truth of the substance or content of a report, especially when its meaning accords with the Qur'an, the principles of the Shari'a, and sound legal argument. From the perspective of the *fuqaha*, such correspondence of substance can be of value in the process of *istinbat*, even if it does not always prove the authenticity of the isnad. The two concepts should therefore not be conflated, as they have different objects of proof.

This difference is clearly visible in the discussion of strengthening through the Qur'an. The *fuqaha* may use the correspondence of a hadith's meaning with a Qur'anic verse as support for its legal substance. The majority of the muhaddithin, on the other hand, do not consider such correspondence sufficient to elevate a *da'if* hadith to *hasan li ghayrihi*. Izzuddin and Abdul Halim show that hadith critics continue to require a *sahih* isnad, or at least one that meets the requirements of *hasan li ghayrihi*, in order to attribute a report to the Prophet Muhammad (Bakar & Halim, 2025). Similarity of meaning with the Qur'an shows only that the content of the report accords with the principles of revelation; it does not prove that the Prophet actually uttered the wording in question. This difference shows that the *fuqaha* and the *muhaddithin* may accept the same substance for different epistemological reasons.

The difference is also evident in the use of analogy. For the fuqaha, *qiyas* is one of the methods of *istinbat* that can support a legal ruling. If the content of a *da'if* hadith accords with a *sahih* analogy, the legal substance it conveys may have a rational basis in the principles of the Shari'a. The *muhaddithin*, however, do not treat analogy as an instrument for proving the authenticity of an isnad, because analogy is a process of legal reasoning, not historical evidence of the transmission of a statement. Analogy can thus strengthen legal argument but cannot replace the function of examining transmission. This difference shows that the term "strengthening" carries different technical meanings depending on the discipline that uses it.

Scholarly acceptance of a report (*talaqqi al-'ulama bi al-qabul*) also reveals differences in determining probative force. In the juristic tradition, scholars' acceptance and practice of a hadith can lend legitimacy to its use in legal argument. Such acceptance, however, needs to be analysed carefully to determine whether what is accepted is the wording of the hadith or only its legal substance. If acceptance concerns the wording of the hadith, the discussion relates to the possibility of strengthening the report. Conversely, if acceptance concerns only the meaning and the legal ruling, the force of the argument is more appropriately attributed to consensus or to the legal practice of scholars. This distinction is important so that acceptance within the juristic tradition is not automatically understood as authentication of the isnad by the standards of the *muhaddithin* (Yusra et al., 2026).

This difference in criteria does not mean that all *fuqaha* accept *da'if* hadith without limit. The use of *da'if* hadith still takes into account the degree of weakness, the correspondence

of its content with stronger evidence, and its standing in legal argument. Sunni scholars hold differing views on the use of *da'if* hadith. Brown's research shows that the majority of premodern Sunni scholars allowed the selective use of weak hadith, particularly in matters outside the core of law and creed, provided the report was not shown to be fabricated (J. A. C. Brown, 2012). There were, however, also groups of scholars who rejected the use of weak hadith on the grounds that it could obscure the authenticity of the Prophet's teachings and open the door to religious practices lacking an adequate basis. The debate over *da'if* hadith is thus concerned not only with methods of strengthening but also with the limits on the use of reports in various domains of Islamic teaching.

With regard to *fada'il al-a'mal* (the merits of good deeds), most scholars who permit the use of *da'if* hadith stipulate a number of conditions. The weakness of the hadith must not be severe; its content must fall under a general principle of the Shari'a that is already established; and the person acting upon it must not firmly believe that the act is an authentic sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad. In addition, its content must not contradict *sahih* or *hasan* evidence. These restrictions show that tolerance of the use of *da'if* hadith is not the same as accepting all weak reports. Brown's research shows that the use of weak hadith in the Sunni tradition developed through a long debate between those who prioritised its pedagogical and devotional benefits and those who made textual authenticity their foremost priority (J. A. C. Brown, 2012).

The debate on the use of weak hadith also reveals a distinction between accepting hadith as a source of law and using it as support in religious matters. A *da'if* hadith cannot automatically serve as an independent basis for establishing matters of creed or law that require strong evidence. Some scholars, however, allow the use of weak reports in exhortation, the merits of deeds, and the encouragement of worship under certain conditions. Brown's research shows that this practice is part of Sunni intellectual history and was not uniformly accepted by all scholars (J. Brown, 2011). The use of *da'if* hadith must therefore be accompanied by an explanation of the report's status, the scope of its use, and the standing of other evidence that supports it.

The implications of the epistemological differences between the *muhaddithin* and the *fuqaha* can be seen in the study by Tsalis et al. on the *sulh* hadith in DSN-MUI Fatwa No. 55/DSN-MUI/V/2007 (Tsalis et al., 2025). The study reveals problems with the quality of the isnad of the hadith used in the fatwa, although its substance is relevant to the Shari'a principle of amicable dispute resolution. This finding shows that a report can have substantive value in legal construction even though the authenticity of its isnad remains problematic. In this context, the use of *da'if* hadith needs to be analysed according to its standing as principal or supporting evidence and the relationship of its content to other, stronger sources of law. Legal relevance, therefore, must not be used as a reason to disregard the quality of transmission.

The case of *musyammas* water in the Shafi'i tradition provides another illustration of the development of the use of *da'if* hadith in legal construction. Yusra et al. show that the hadith narrated by 'A'ishah concerning water heated by the sun was judged very weak by a number of hadith critics, yet it retained a place in the development of Shafi'i juristic argument (Yusra et al., 2026). The study traces changes in the pattern of *istidlal* through the thought of al-Shafi'i, al-Juwayni, Zakariyya al-Ansari, Ibn Hajar al-Haytami, and al-Ramli (Yusra et al., 2026). This development moved from rejecting the hadith as a legal basis, to using it to support a Companion's *athar*, to placing it on a par with the *athar*, and finally to using it as the principal proof reinforced by the *athar*.

The findings of Yusra et al. show that the use of *da'if* hadith in the juristic tradition does not always rest on a single method of strengthening (Yusra et al., 2026). In the case of *musyammas* water, there is an integration of support from a Companion's *athar*, scholarly

acceptance (*talaqqi bi al-qabul*), the principle of precaution (*ihtiyat*), and the correspondence of its substance with the general principles of the Shari'a. The standing of a hadith in juristic argument can thus develop through a network of mutually supporting evidence. This development, however, does not of itself change the assessment of the isnad according to hadith criticism. On the contrary, the case highlights the importance of distinguishing between the history of a report's reception within a school of law and the assessment of its authenticity according to the principles of hadith science.

Research on the use of *da'if* hadith in the juristic tradition also needs to be situated within the development of hadith sources and transmission. Through his study of the *Musannaf* of 'Abd al-Razzaq al-San'ani, Motzki shows the importance of early hadith sources in research on the history of transmission (Motzki, 1991). His study contributes to the understanding that reports used in the juristic tradition need to be traced through early sources and the context of their transmission. Motzki also shows that dating Muslim traditions requires an analysis of the relationship between the isnad and the *matn* (Motzki, 2005). Both studies are relevant in affirming that differences in the use of hadith within the juristic tradition cannot be separated from historical research on sources and chains of transmission.

In light of the whole discussion, the epistemological differences between the *muhaddithin* and the *fuqaha* can be understood through three interrelated layers of analysis, each with a different object of proof. The first layer is the authenticity of transmission (*sihhat al-nisbah*), namely proving whether a report can genuinely be attributed to the Prophet through the examination of the isnad, the *matn*, *mutaba'at*, and *shawahid*. The second layer is the validity of substance (*sihhat al-ma'na*), namely assessing the truth of a hadith's content through its correspondence with the Qur'an, the principles of the Shari'a, *athar*, and other sound evidence. The third layer is legal probative force, namely determining the standing of a report in the process of *istinbat* by considering the hierarchy of evidence, consensus, analogy, and the principles of *usul al-fiqh*. These three layers constitute an analytical framework formulated from a synthesis of the thought of Bazmul, Haj Muhammad, al-Qallaf, and the supporting studies.

This framework shows that elevating the quality of a hadith, establishing the truth of its meaning, and accepting a legal argument are processes that do not always produce identical consequences. Strengthening through *mutaba'at* and *shawahid* may lead to an elevation in the quality of a report if it meets the requirements of hadith criticism. Conversely, correspondence with the Qur'an, consensus, or analogy may support the truth of the substance and the legal argument without automatically proving the validity of the hadith's attribution to the Prophet Muhammad. A legal ruling may have a strong foundation even though one of the reports explaining its substance remains *da'if*. This distinction also explains why the acceptance of a ruling by the *fuqaha* is not always identical to the elevation of a hadith's grade according to the *muhaddithin*.

On the basis of the above, the relationship between hadith science and *usul al-fiqh* needs to be built on a clear division of methodological functions. Hadith science serves to safeguard the accuracy of attributing reports to the Prophet Muhammad through isnad and *matn* criticism, while *usul al-fiqh* serves to determine the standing of reports in legal construction by considering all the relevant evidence. The two approaches need not be set against each other, since they make complementary contributions to safeguarding the authenticity of the sources and the accuracy of legal *istinbat* in Islam. The distinction between strengthening authenticity, strengthening substance, and strengthening legal argument is an important principle for ensuring that *da'if* hadith are used critically, proportionately, and with academic responsibility.

D. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that the methods of strengthening *da'if* hadith from the perspectives of hadith science and *usul al-fiqh* encompass various approaches, namely strengthening through *mutaba'at*, *shawahid*, scholarly acceptance (*talaqqi al-'ulama bi al-qabul*), statements of the Companions, correspondence with the Qur'an, consensus and the principles of the Shari'a, analogy, and testing against scientific and historical reality. Each method has a distinct epistemological function and limits. Strengthening through *mutaba'at* and *shawahid* may lead to an elevation in the quality of a report if its weakness is slight, the supporting chains are independent, and no serious defect precludes the strengthening. Support from the Qur'an, consensus, statements of the Companions, and analogy, meanwhile, relates mostly to strengthening the substance and the legal argument. Scientific and historical facts can be used to examine the content of the *matn* and the context of transmission, but they do not independently replace isnad criticism. *Kashf* and *ilham*, for their part, cannot be used as instruments for authenticating hadith.

The epistemological difference between the *muhaddithin* and the *fuqaha* lies primarily in the object and purpose of their testing. The *muhaddithin* focus on examining the authenticity of transmission through isnad and *matn* criticism, whereas the *fuqaha* place hadith within a network of legal argument involving the Qur'an, consensus, the *athar* of the Companions, analogy, and the principles of the Shari'a. This difference does not always signify methodological opposition but reflects different scholarly orientations that can complement each other. The use of *da'if* hadith in legal argument still requires an explanation of the report's quality, its standing as principal or supporting evidence, and the other legal bases that strengthen its substance. Research on the use of *da'if* hadith in DSN-MUI fatwas and on the development of *istidlal* in the Shafi'i school shows that a report can have a function in legal construction without automatically being judged authentic by the standards of isnad criticism.

The conceptual contribution of this study lies in formulating three layers of analysis in the strengthening of weak hadith: the authenticity of transmission (*sihhat al-nisbah*), the validity of the substance of meaning (*sihhat al-ma'na*), and legal probative force. These three must be distinguished so that strengthening the truth of a meaning is not automatically understood as elevating the quality of a hadith. Accordingly, the integration of hadith science and *usul al-fiqh* should be carried out proportionately. Hadith science serves to safeguard the accuracy of attributing reports to the Prophet, while *usul al-fiqh* provides a framework for assessing the standing of reports in the construction of Islamic law. Future research could test this framework through comparative analysis of specific hadith used in works of jurisprudence and in contemporary fatwas.

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