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ISL3562

Textual Study of Hadith

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VIRTUAL UNIVERSITY OF PAKISTAN

ISL3562

Textual Study of Hadith

STUDY HANDOUT

Hadith - the sayings, actions and approvals of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) - is the second source of Islamic law and guidance after the Quran. This handout covers the meaning, compilation and classification of Hadith, the major collections, and selected ahadith with translation and explanation on faith, worship, ethics and social life, with key terms and exam pointers. 

Compiled as a structured study resource for VU students.

Covers the key topics, definitions, concepts and exam pointers of the course.

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Unit 1: Introduction: Meaning and Importance of Hadith

Learning Objectives

- Define Hadith, Sunnah, Khabar and Athar
- Explain the relationship between Quran and Sunnah
- State the importance of Hadith as a source of guidance
- Distinguish Hadith from Sunnah

Hadith (plural: ahadith) literally means 'speech' or 'report'. Technically it is a report of the sayings (qawl), actions (fi'l) or tacit approvals (taqrir) of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Sunnah is the Prophet's practical way - his lived example; every Sunnah rests on Hadith reports, but 'Hadith' is the report while 'Sunnah' is the established practice.

Khabar is a general term for a report (sometimes used synonymously with Hadith); Athar usually refers to reports from the Companions and early generations. Students should know all four terms and their technical differences.

The Quran commands obedience to the Messenger alongside Allah: 'Obey Allah and obey the Messenger' appears repeatedly. The Quran gives principles (establish prayer, give zakat); the Sunnah explains the details - how to pray, how much zakat, how to perform Hajj. Without Hadith, the Quran's commands cannot be fully practiced.

Hadith is the second source of Islamic Shariah after the Quran: it explains, specifies and sometimes adds rulings (e.g. details of inheritance shares beyond the Quranic verses, prohibition of certain transactions). It is also the record of the Prophet's character - the living Quran, as Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) described him.

Key Terms

Hadith	Report of the Prophet's sayings, actions or tacit approvals.
Sunnah	The Prophet's established way/practice; the lived example.
Qawl / Fi'l / Taqrir	Saying / action / tacit approval - the three contents of Hadith.
Khabar / Athar	Report (general) / reports of Companions and Successors.

Example - Quran needs Sunnah: The Quran commands prayer but never describes its rak'ahs, recitations or postures - the Hadith 'Pray as you see me praying' supplies the entire method.

Example - qawl vs fi'l: 'Actions are but by intentions' (qawl - a saying); the Prophet shortening prayer while traveling (fi'l - an action); his silence when a Companion did something permissible (taqrir - approval).

Summary

- ✓ Hadith = reports of the Prophet's sayings, actions, approvals; Sunnah = his lived way.
- ✓ The Quran commands obeying the Messenger; Sunnah details Quranic commands.
- ✓ Hadith is the second source of Shariah and the record of prophetic character.

Exam Pointers

- ★ Define Hadith, Sunnah, Khabar and Athar with distinctions.
- ★ Why is Hadith indispensable for practicing the Quran's commands? Give two examples.
- ★ Explain 'the Prophet's character was the Quran'.

Unit 2: Compilation and Preservation of Hadith

Learning Objectives

- Describe how Ahadith were preserved in the Prophet's lifetime
- Explain the writing of Hadith: permission and early manuscripts
- Trace the stages of compilation: Sahaba, Tabi'un, the great collections
- Answer the objection that Hadith were compiled 'too late'

Preservation began during the Prophet's lifetime: Companions memorized ahadith (Arab memory culture was extraordinary), practiced them daily, and some wrote them - Abdullah ibn Amr's Al-Sahifah al-Sadiqah is the famous example; the Prophet permitted him to write everything he said. Letters and treaties dictated by the Prophet were also written records.

After the Prophet's passing, the Companions (Sahaba) taught in Madinah, Makkah, Kufa, Basra, Syria and Egypt; the Successors (Tabi'un) collected from them. Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz (d. 101 AH) ordered the first official compilation - Ibn Shihab al-Zuhri's work. This answers the 'late compilation' objection: systematic writing began within the first century, building on memorization and earlier notes.

The second and third centuries produced the great collections: Malik's Muwatta, then the Sihah Sittah (six canonical books). Scholars traveled thousands of miles verifying chains - the isnad system (naming every transmitter) was Islam's unique authenticity mechanism: 'The isnad is part of religion; without it, anyone could say anything' (Ibn al-Mubarak).

Preservation methods: memorization, writing, practice/transmission, and critical scrutiny (ilm al-rijal - biographical evaluation of narrators). The combination makes Hadith the best-documented body of ancient reports in history.

Key Terms

Sahaba / Tabi'un

Companions of the Prophet / their Successors; the first transmitters.

Al-Sahifah al-Sadiqah	Abdullah ibn Amr's written collection from the Prophet's lifetime.
Isnad	Chain of transmitters; Islam's authenticity mechanism.
Ilm al-rijal	Science of narrator biographies; critical evaluation of transmitters.

Example - travel for one hadith: Scholars like Bukhari traveled from city to city to hear a single hadith directly from its narrator, checking memory and character - authentication was fieldwork, not armchair work.

Example - objection answered: 'Compiled 200 years later' ignores: (1) writing during the Prophet's life, (2) official compilation under Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz (~100 AH), (3) continuous memorization chains throughout.

Summary

- ✓ Preserved by memorization, writing (even in the Prophet's lifetime), practice and scrutiny.
- ✓ Official compilation ordered by Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz; great collections in 2nd-3rd centuries.
- ✓ The isnad system is Islam's unique authenticity guarantee.

Exam Pointers

- ★ How were Ahadith preserved during the Prophet's lifetime? Give evidence of writing.
- ★ Trace the stages of Hadith compilation.
- ★ Answer the objection that Hadith were compiled too late to be reliable.

Unit 3: The Major Hadith Collections

Learning Objectives

- Name the Sihah Sittah with authors and dates
- Explain the special status of Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim
- Distinguish Sahih, Sunan and Musnad type collections
- Name other important collections

The Sihah Sittah (six authentic books): (1) Sahih al-Bukhari - Muhammad ibn Ismail al-Bukhari (d. 256 AH); the most authentic book after the Quran; ~7,000 ahadith with repetitions (~2,600 unique); 16 years of work. (2) Sahih Muslim - Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj (d. 261 AH); second in authenticity; arranged by topic with full isnads. Together: the Sahihayn.

(3) Sunan Abi Dawud - legal ahadith (fiqh-oriented); (4) Jami' al-Tirmidhi - notes on narrator grades and juristic differences; (5) Sunan al-Nasa'i - strong on authenticity criteria; (6) Sunan Ibn Majah - contains some weak ahadith, hence ranked sixth. All four

Sunan organize by legal chapters.

Collection types: Sahih - only authentic ahadith (Bukhari, Muslim); Sunan - arranged by legal topics; Jami' - comprehensive (all topics: belief, worship, ethics, history); Musnad - arranged by Companion-narrator (e.g. Musnad Ahmad - the largest, ~30,000 ahadith); Muwatta - Malik's blend of hadith and Madinan practice.

Others: Muwatta Malik (earliest organized book), Musnad Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Sunan al-Darimi, Riyad al-Salihin (Nawawi's thematic selection - very popular for study), Mishkat al-Masabih. For this course, mastering the Sihah Sittah's names, authors and arrangement is essential. 

Key Terms

Sihah Sittah	The six canonical collections.
Sahihayn	Bukhari + Muslim; the two most authentic collections.
Sunan	Collections arranged by legal chapters (Abu Dawud, Tirmidhi, Nasa'i, Ibn Majah).
Musnad	Collection arranged by Companion-narrator (e.g. Musnad Ahmad).

Example - arrangement: Looking up zakat rulings: open Sunan Abi Dawud's 'Kitab al-Zakat' - topical Sunan arrangement serves jurists; looking up everything narrated by Abu Hurairah: open Musnad Ahmad under his name.

Example - Bukhari's rigor: He prayed istikhara before including each hadith and accepted narrators only after verifying their meeting and memory - ~600,000 reports sifted to ~7,000.

Summary

- ✓ Sihah Sittah: Bukhari, Muslim (the Sahihayn), Abu Dawud, Tirmidhi, Nasa'i, Ibn Majah.
- ✓ Sahih = authentic-only; Sunan = legal arrangement; Musnad = by narrator.
- ✓ Know authors, dates and arrangement logic.

Exam Pointers

- ★ Name the Sihah Sittah with authors and explain the status of the Sahihayn.
- ★ Distinguish Sahih, Sunan, Jami' and Musnad collections.
- ★ Why is Sahih al-Bukhari considered the most authentic book after the Quran?

Unit 4: Classification of Hadith

Learning Objectives

- Classify by number of narrators: mutawatir, mashhur, ahad
- Classify by authenticity: sahih, hasan, da'if

- Explain the five conditions of a sahih hadith
- Define mawdu' (fabricated) and how fabrications are detected

By number of narrators: mutawatir - reported by so many at each level that fabrication is inconceivable (e.g. the Hadith of intentions in its meaning-mass; the Quran's preservation is the prime mutawatir fact) - gives certain knowledge; mashhur - well-known, multiple chains but below tawatur; ahad (solitary) - below that; subdivided into gharib (single chain), aziz (two), mashhur in the technical sense (three+). Most ahadith are ahad and still authoritative in law when authentic.

By authenticity: sahih (authentic), hasan (good - slightly below sahih), da'if (weak - fails one or more conditions). The five conditions of sahih: (1) continuous isnad (ittisal) - every link met the next; (2) upright narrators (adl) - morally reliable; (3) precise memory (dabt) - accurate; (4) no hidden defect (illah); (5) no irregularity (shudhudh - contradicting stronger reports). Hasan relaxes precision slightly.

Da'if results from a broken chain, an unreliable or unknown narrator, or a defect. Weak ahadith are not used for core beliefs or law, though scholars permit them for virtuous deeds (fada'il) with conditions. Mawdu' (fabricated) - invented and attributed to the Prophet; a major sin. Fabrications are detected via isnad breaks, known liars in the chain, or texts contradicting established principles.

Key Terms

Mutawatir	Mass-transmitted; certain knowledge.
Sahih / Hasan / Da'if	Authentic / good / weak - by the five conditions.
Five conditions	Continuity, uprightness, precision, no defect, no irregularity.
Mawdu'	Fabricated hadith; attributing lies to the Prophet.
Isnad / Matn	Chain of narrators / the text of the report.

Example - grading: A hadith with a continuous chain of known upright, precise narrators and a sound text = sahih. Same but one narrator merely 'acceptable' in memory = hasan. A gap in the chain = da'if.

Example - mawdu' detection: A 'hadith' praising a specific city appears only through a known forger, contradicting authentic reports - classified mawdu'.

Summary

- ✓ By narrators: mutawatir (certain) > mashhur > ahad (gharib/aziz).
- ✓ By authenticity: sahih (5 conditions), hasan, da'if; mawdu' = fabricated.
- ✓ Five conditions: continuity, uprightness, precision, no defect, no irregularity.

Exam Pointers

- ★ State the five conditions of a sahih hadith and explain each.

- ★ Distinguish mutawatir, mashhur and ahad; what knowledge does each give?
- ★ How are fabricated (mawdu') ahadith detected?

Unit 5: Isnad and Matn: The Two Pillars of Criticism

Learning Objectives

- Explain the structure of a hadith: isnad + matn
- Describe narrator criticism (al-jarh wa al-ta'dil)
- Explain matn criticism principles
- Appreciate the scholarly rigor of hadith sciences

Every hadith has two parts: the isnad (chain: 'A told us from B from C from the Prophet...') and the matn (the actual text). Classical scholarship scrutinized both - a sound chain with a problematic text, or a fine text with a broken chain, both fail.

Narrator criticism (al-jarh wa al-ta'dil) - 'wounding and validating': biographers recorded each narrator's birth/death dates (could A have met B?), character (truthfulness, piety), memory (did his reports match others' books?), teachers and students. Terms like thiqah (trustworthy), saduq (truthful), da'if (weak), kadhdhab (liar) graded thousands of narrators in works like Ibn Hajar's Taqrib.

Matn criticism: the text must not contradict the Quran, stronger ahadith, reason or established history; its language should suit the Prophet's speech; hidden defects (illah) - like a subtle misattribution - are exposed by comparing parallel chains. A famous principle: a hadith promising huge reward for a tiny act is suspect.

The result: mustalah al-hadith (hadith terminology) - a full critical methodology centuries before modern source criticism, with biographical dictionaries covering tens of thousands of transmitters. No other ancient literature was preserved with comparable rigor.

Key Terms

Al-jarh wa al-ta'dil	Narrator criticism: impugning and validating transmitters.
Thiqah / Saduq / Kadhdhab	Trustworthy / truthful / liar - narrator grades.
Illah	Hidden defect in isnad or matn detected by experts.
Mustalah al-hadith	The science of hadith terminology and criticism.

Example - date check: Narrator A (d. 150 AH) reports from B (b. 160 AH) - impossible meeting; the chain is broken (munqati'), hadith weak regardless of the text.

Example - matn check: A report contradicting the Quran's inheritance verses is rejected even with a decent chain - the Quran outranks all reports.

Summary

- ✓ Hadith = isnad (chain) + matn (text); both are critically examined.
- ✓ Narrators graded by character, memory, and verifiable meetings.
- ✓ Matn must agree with Quran, stronger reports, reason and history.

Exam Pointers

- ★ Explain isnad and matn and why both are scrutinized.
- ★ What is al-jarh wa al-ta'dil? Give the main narrator grades.
- ★ State three principles of matn criticism with examples.

Unit 6: Selected Ahadith I: Faith and Worship

Learning Objectives

- Quote and translate key ahadith on intentions and faith
- Explain the Hadith of Jibril: Islam, Iman, Ihsan
- Relate selected ahadith to daily worship
- Draw practical lessons from each hadith

1. Actions are by intentions: 'Innamal-a'malu bin-niyyat...' - 'Actions are but by intentions, and each person shall have only what they intended.' (Bukhari, Muslim). The foundation of sincerity (ikhlas): worship and deeds are judged by intention. Lesson: purify motives - work, study and worship count by why we do them.

2. Hadith of Jibril: The angel asked about Islam (the five pillars: shahadah, prayer, zakat, fasting, Hajj), Iman (belief in Allah, angels, books, messengers, Last Day, divine decree), and Ihsan ('worship Allah as though you see Him; though you see Him not, He sees you') - excellence and God-consciousness. Then the signs of the Hour. (Muslim). This hadith is called 'the mother of the Sunnah' - the whole religion in one narration.

3. Prayer: 'Pray as you see me praying' (Bukhari) - the Sunnah details the Quranic command. And: 'The covenant between us and them is prayer; whoever abandons it has disbelieved' (Tirmidhi) - showing prayer's central rank.

4. Zakat and fasting: 'Islam is built upon five...' lists zakat and Ramadan fasting among the pillars (Bukhari, Muslim). 'Whoever fasts Ramadan with faith and hope for reward, his past sins are forgiven' (Bukhari, Muslim). Worship purifies wealth, body and soul together.

Key Terms

Niyyah / Ikhlas	Intention / sincerity; the basis of accepted deeds.
Islam / Iman / Ihsan	Submission (pillars) / faith (beliefs) / excellence (God-consciousness).
Umm al-Sunnah	'Mother of the Sunnah' - the Hadith of Jibril.

Example - intentions: Two students study hard: one for Allah's pleasure and benefiting others, one only to show off - same action, different worth by intention.

Example - Ihsan at work: A shopkeeper who weighs honestly 'as though Allah sees him' practices Ihsan in business, not just in prayer.

Summary

- ✓ Intentions determine the worth of deeds.
- ✓ Hadith of Jibril: Islam (5 pillars), Iman (6 beliefs), Ihsan (excellence).
- ✓ Prayer is the covenant of Islam; zakat/fast purify wealth and soul.

Exam Pointers

- ★ Translate and explain 'Actions are but by intentions' with two lessons.
- ★ Summarize the Hadith of Jibril: what are Islam, Iman and Ihsan?
- ★ Quote one hadith on prayer and explain its importance.

Unit 7: Selected Ahadith II: Ethics and Character

Learning Objectives

- Quote and translate ahadith on truthfulness, mercy and brotherhood
- Explain the hadith on perfecting noble character
- Relate prophetic ethics to student life
- Memorize at least three ahadith with references

1. Purpose of the mission: 'I was sent only to perfect noble character' (Ahmad, Malik) - ethics is the mission statement of Islam. Ritual without character is hollow.

2. Truthfulness: 'Truthfulness leads to righteousness, and righteousness leads to Paradise...' (Bukhari, Muslim). And lying - even 'joking' lies - is condemned. Lesson: build a truthful tongue; it shapes destiny.

3. Mercy: 'The merciful will be shown mercy by the Most Merciful. Be merciful to those on earth, and the One above the heavens will have mercy upon you' (Tirmidhi). Mercy to people, animals and the young is a condition of receiving mercy.

4. Brotherhood: 'None of you truly believes until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself' (Bukhari, Muslim) - faith measured by altruism. And: 'The best among you are the best in character' (Bukhari). Character is the exam that never ends.

Key Terms

Akhlaq	Character/ethics; the perfection of which is Islam's mission.
Sidq	Truthfulness; leads to righteousness and Paradise.
Rahmah	Mercy; shown to creation, received from the Creator.

Ukhuwwah

Brotherhood; loving for others what you love for yourself.

Example - truthfulness: Admitting a mistake in an exam or at work, though costly short-term, builds the righteousness-habit the hadith promises.

Example - brotherhood: Sharing study notes with a struggling classmate instead of hoarding them - 'loving for your brother what you love for yourself' in campus life.

Summary

- ✓ The Prophet was sent to perfect noble character.
- ✓ Truthfulness -> righteousness -> Paradise; mercy to creation brings divine mercy.
- ✓ Faith is proven by altruism; the best are best in character.

Exam Pointers

- ★ Translate 'I was sent only to perfect noble character' and explain its implications.
- ★ Quote two ahadith on mercy and truthfulness with references.
- ★ How does 'love for your brother...' apply to student life?

Unit 8: Selected Ahadith III: Social Life and Dealings

Learning Objectives

- Quote ahadith on neighbors, parents and honesty in trade
- Explain Islamic business ethics from Hadith
- Relate ahadith to contemporary social issues
- Connect Hadith guidance to Pakistani society

1. Neighbors: 'Jibril kept advising me about the neighbor until I thought he would make him an heir' (Bukhari, Muslim) - neighbor-rights are nearly inheritance-grade. And: 'He does not believe whose neighbor is not safe from his harm' - faith tied to social safety.

2. Parents: 'Paradise lies beneath the feet of mothers' (Nasa'i) - service to parents, especially mothers, is a path to Paradise. A man asked about the best deed: 'Prayer on time, then kindness to parents, then jihad' (Bukhari, Muslim).

3. Honest trade: 'The truthful, trustworthy merchant will be with the prophets, the truthful and the martyrs' (Tirmidhi) - commerce with sidq and amanah is worship-grade. 'Whoever cheats us is not of us' (Muslim) - said when the Prophet found wet grain hidden under dry in the market.

4. Community: 'The believers, in their mutual mercy and affection, are like one body...' (Bukhari, Muslim) - social solidarity as faith in action. These ahadith directly address Pakistan's challenges: adulteration, tax evasion, neighbor disputes, elder neglect.

Key Terms

Huquq al-ibad

Rights of people; neighbor, parents, customers.

Amanah	Trustworthiness; the merchant's capital in the hadith.
Ghashsh	Cheating/fraud in trade; 'not of us'.

Example - market: A shopkeeper who discloses a defect before selling practices the 'truthful merchant' hadith - short-term loss, Paradise-grade rank.

Example - neighbors: Keeping noise down at night and sharing food in hardship are literal applications of the neighbor ahadith in apartment life.

Summary

- ✓ Neighbor's safety is a measure of faith; Paradise is under mothers' feet.
- ✓ Truthful trade ranks with prophets; cheating expels from the community.
- ✓ Believers are one body - solidarity is worship.

Exam Pointers

- ★ Quote the hadith on neighbors and explain its social implications.
- ★ What rank does the truthful merchant hold, and why?
- ★ Apply two of these ahadith to a current Pakistani social problem.

Unit 9: Hadith in Contemporary Life

Learning Objectives

- Explain how Hadith guides modern issues: environment, technology, finance
- Describe the methodology of applying Hadith today
- Warn against misusing ahadith: context and authenticity
- Plan personal action on three ahadith

Hadith speaks to today: environment - 'Do not waste water even if on a flowing river' (Ibn Majah) grounds conservation; planting trees is charity ('If the Hour comes while one of you has a seedling, plant it' - Ahmad). Knowledge/work ethic - 'Seeking knowledge is obligatory'; 'Allah loves that when one does a job, he perfects it' (itqan). Finance - the trade ahadith frame Islamic banking ethics.

Methodology: (1) verify authenticity (sahih/hasan from reliable collections); (2) read the full context - occasion (sabab), parallel narrations, scholarly commentary; (3) distinguish universal principles from time-bound applications (the Prophet's medicine vs his ethics); (4) consult scholarship - personal reading without tools breeds misreading.

Misuse warnings: quoting weak/fabricated ahadith (especially on social media); lifting texts out of context (e.g. jihad ahadith without their conditions); ignoring abrogation and scholarly consensus; using ahadith to judge others while excusing oneself. The rule: humility before texts, rigor in verification.

Personal plan: pick three ahadith from this handout, write one action for each (e.g. intentions - begin study with niyyah; mercy - weekly act of kindness; honesty - disclose

defects), and review monthly. Textual study must become lived study.

Key Terms

Itqan	Excellence/perfection in work; beloved to Allah.
Sabab al-wurud	The occasion/context of a hadith's occurrence.
Fada'il	Virtuous deeds; the limited valid use of weak ahadith.

Example - context: 'Whoever cheats us is not of us' was said about market fraud -

applying it to a student's exam cheating is valid extension; applying war-time ahadith to neighbors is invalid decontextualization.

Example - verification: A viral 'hadith' about a specific reward with no source: check Sihah Sittah/scholarly sites; if absent or graded mawdu', don't share - sharing fabrications is itself warned against.

Summary

- ✓ Hadith guides environment, work, finance and character today.
- ✓ Method: authenticate -> contextualize -> universalize principles -> consult scholars.
- ✓ Never share unverified 'ahadith'; never decontextualize.
- ✓ Turn study into action: three ahadith, three habits.

Exam Pointers

- ★ Give two examples of Hadith guidance applied to contemporary issues.
- ★ Describe the methodology for applying Hadith today.
- ★ What are three common misuses of Hadith, and how are they avoided?