

Al-Albani's Methodology in Strengthening Hadith through Shawahid and Mutaba'at

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Abstract

Taqwiyah al-Hadith is part of the process of tashīh (authentication) and taḍ'īf (weakening) of hadiths attributed to the Prophet (PBUH). The efforts of tashīh and taḍ'īf were also undertaken by the contemporary hadith scholar, Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī. However, al-Albānī is often regarded as a figure categorized as mutasāhil (lenient) in applying taqwiyah al-hadith. Hence, this study was conducted to examine the extent of al-Albānī's manhaj (methodology) of taqwiyah al-hadith through the presence of shawāhid and mutāba'āt. To achieve this objective, a qualitative study was carried out through content analysis of his work entitled *Silsilah al-Aḥādīth al-Ṣaḥīḥah*. In addition, data collection was also conducted through an extensive literature review. The data obtained were then analyzed using inductive and deductive methods. The findings of the study indicate that al-Albānī is in line with other hadith scholars who apply the manhaj taqwiyah al-hadith through shawāhid and mutāba'āt within the discipline of hadith strengthening. Furthermore, the study shows that al-Albānī developed his own distinctive approach, whereby he did not simply authenticate a hadith merely due to the presence of multiple ṭuruq (chains of transmission). Instead, he first examined the reliability of each individual narration before employing it for taqwiyah.

Keywords: Al-Albani, Taqwiyah al-Hadith, Mutaba'ah & Syawahid

Introduction

Taqwiyah al-hadith constitutes one of the fundamental subfields in the study of hadith sciences. This process is an integral part of tashīh (authentication) and taḍ'īf (weakening) of hadiths attributed to the Prophet (PBUH), serving as a mechanism through which weak (da'īf) narrations may be elevated to ḥasan, and ḥasan may be strengthened to ṣaḥīḥ (Abu al-Layth,

2011). A key element in this process is the identification and analysis of multiple *ṭuruq* (chains of transmission), as their convergence can not only reinforce each other but also expose hidden defects (*ʿillah*) in a narration (Ibn Taymiyyah, 1995).

The application of *shawāhid* and *mutābaʿāt* plays a critical role in the practice of *taqwiyyah*, allowing scholars to re-evaluate narrations that may have been previously classified as *mardūd* (rejected), and potentially elevate them to the level of *maqbul* (accepted) (Umar Mohd Noor, 2016). This methodology is especially relevant today, as modern scholars continue to revisit classical narrations in light of new findings and approaches.

Among the contemporary scholars, Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī has been a prominent figure in the reevaluation of hadith narrations. His approach to *taqwiyyah al-hadith*, particularly through the use of *shawāhid* and *mutābaʿāt*, has been the subject of both recognition and critique. He is frequently categorized among the *mutasāhilūn* (lenient scholars) in hadith authentication, with Ibn ʿUthaymīn (2013) notably describing al-Albānī as displaying leniency in his evaluation methodology.

Despite the criticisms, al-Albānī's contributions have had a profound influence on contemporary hadith discourse, especially among students and researchers in the field of *ʿulūm al-hadith*. However, a comprehensive and focused study of his *manhaj* (methodology) in conducting *taqwiyyah al-hadith*, especially in relation to *shawāhid* and *mutābaʿāt*, remains relatively underexplored in current literature. This gap highlights the need for a critical yet balanced evaluation of his approach.

Therefore, this article aims to examine al-Albānī's methodology in applying *taqwiyyah al-hadith* through the lens of *shawāhid* and *mutābaʿāt*. By doing so, the study seeks to assess both the utility and implications of his approach within the broader context of hadith scholarship. The findings of this study are expected to benefit scholars, students, and researchers of Islamic sciences by providing a clearer understanding of a highly influential, yet often controversial, methodological framework.

Definition of Taqwiyyah al-Hadith

Before discussing *taqwiyyah al-hadith* further, it is important to first examine its definition. According to *Lisān al-ʿArab*, the word *taqwiyyah* is derived from the Arabic root *qawwa* or *qawiya*, which means "strong" (Ibn Manzur, 1993). From a technical perspective, however, researchers do not find a specific definition outlined by the scholars. Nevertheless, Ibn Ḥajar is found to have indicated a conceptual understanding of *taqwiyyah*. According to him, if a narration contains a transmitter with weak memory, is *mastūr* (obscure), associated with *mursal* or *mudallas*, yet accompanied by an acceptable hadith, then that narration is elevated to the status of *ḥasan*. The change in status in such a case is not due to the narration itself, but rather due to the presence of corroborating reports (*mutābaʿāt*) that collectively strengthen it (Ibn Ḥajar, 2008).

Similarly, al-Qāsimī (n.d.) asserts that a *ḥasan* hadith that is identified with another chain of transmission can be elevated to *ṣaḥīḥ* due to strength derived from two aspects: the standing of the *ḥasan* transmitter and the presence of a *mutābaʿah*. In this regard, each factor reinforces the other. The transmitter of a *ḥasan* hadith is ranked slightly below a transmitter

who is *dābiṭ*, even though he may be known for truthfulness and uprightness. Thus, if his hadith is supported by another chain—even if only one—its strength is enhanced through *mutābaʿah*, thereby eliminating doubts about his weak memory. Consequently, the hadith is elevated from *ḥasan* to *ṣaḥīḥ*.

Based on the views of Ibn Ḥajar and al-Qāsimī, *taqwiyah al-hadith* can be defined as the process of strengthening the status of a hadith narration, whether it leads to its elevation in rank, through the tracing of its *ṭuruq* (chains of transmission), which specifically refers to *al-iʿtibār*. This demonstrates the close relationship between *taqwiyah al-hadith* and *al-iʿtibār*. However, *taqwiyah* is more specific, referring to the process of elevating the rank of a hadith after tracing its *ṭuruq*, while *al-iʿtibār* is broader, referring generally to the tracing of *ṭuruq* to detect the presence of *shawāhid* or *mutābaʿāt*.

Literature Review

Based on the researcher's examination, it was found that studies specifically addressing al-Albānī's methodology (*manhaj*) in *taqwiyah al-hadith* with the presence of *shawāhid* and *mutābaʿāt* have not yet been conducted by either past or contemporary scholars.

In addition, there exists a variety of writings related to *taqwiyah al-hadith* accessible in both Arabic and Malay, in the form of articles, books, and other publications, which can assist in the execution of this study. Among them is *Taqwiyah al-Hadith al-Daʿīf ʿinda al-ʿAllāmah Abī al-ʿAlā al-Mubārakfūrī* (2020), a doctoral thesis by ʿAbd al-Raḥīm Shaʿīdānī at the University of Batna 1, Algeria. This work focuses on the methodology of *taqwiyah al-hadith daʿīf* by al-ʿAllāmah Abū al-ʿAlā al-Mubārakfūrī in his work *Tuhfat al-Aḥwadhī*, without discussing in detail al-Albānī's approach to *taqwiyah al-hadith*.

Another relevant work is the book *al-Irshādāt fī Taqwiyah al-Aḥādīth bi al-Shawāhid wa al-Mutābaʿāt* (1998), authored by Ṭāriq bin ʿAwad Allāh bin Muḥammad. This book deals extensively with *taqwiyah al-hadith*, focusing particularly on strengthening hadiths through *shawāhid* and *mutābaʿāt*. However, the author does not specifically address the methodology of individual scholars, as is the aim of the present study.

The researcher also identified a doctoral thesis entitled *Manāhij al-Muḥaddithīn fī Taqwiyah al-Aḥādīth al-Ḥasanah wa al-Ḍaʿīfah* (1994) by Dr. al-Murtaḍā al-Zayn Aḥmad. This work, which has been published and disseminated, focuses on weak (*daʿīf*) hadiths, their classifications, and the methods of strengthening them, but does not elaborate in detail on al-Albānī's *manhaj* in *taqwiyah al-hadith* with the presence of *shawāhid* and *mutābaʿāt*.

In addition, an article entitled *Taqwiyah al-Hadith: Satu Kajian dalam Kitab Faḍāʿil Shahr Ramaḍān* by Mohd Nor Adli Osman et al. (2018) examines weak (*daʿīf*) narrations found in Ibn Shāhīn's work. The study focuses on the strengthening of weak hadiths that can be elevated to *ḥasan li ghayrih*. However, it does not explore al-Albānī's *manhaj* in *taqwiyah al-hadith* with *shawāhid* and *mutābaʿāt*, since the study is limited to the narrations within *Kitāb Faḍāʿil Shahr Ramaḍān* alone.

Another relevant article is *Nazariyyāt Taqwiyah al-Hadith bi al-Shawāhid wa al-Mutābaʿāt ʿinda al-Muḥaddithīn* by Hanaffie Hasin et al. (2019). This study discusses the

theory of taqwiyah al-hadith concerning shawāhid and mutāba'āt as understood by hadith scholars. It emphasizes the methods of strengthening hadiths through shawāhid and mutāba'āt, and practically demonstrates this through the approach applied by al-Tirmidhī.

Although these works have addressed aspects of taqwiyah al-hadith, they remain general in nature, focusing either on the methodology of certain scholars or on methods of taqwiyah. None have examined in detail al-Albānī's manhaj in taqwiyah al-hadith through the presence of shawāhid and mutāba'āt.

Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research design. Data collection for this qualitative research was conducted through the method of content analysis, which refers to a research approach that applies subjective interpretation of textual data, including the process of identifying writing patterns and themes. In content analysis, data are analyzed in several ways, such as transforming the data into text, generating categories, and drawing conclusions (Rozmi Ismai, 2015). Accordingly, this study examines al-Albānī's *Silsilah al-Aḥādīth al-Ṣaḥīḥah* in order to obtain data for analysis. More specifically, the primary focus is placed on data related to al-Albānī's manhaj in the context of taqwiyah al-hadith and its application within the work.

From the perspective of sources, al-Albānī's own writings, particularly *Silsilah al-Aḥādīth al-Ṣaḥīḥah*, constitute the primary source of this study. In addition, other works authored by al-Albānī were also utilized as primary references to gather relevant data regarding his methodology in taqwiyah al-hadith. Among these are *Taḥdhīr al-Sājid min Ittikhād al-Qubūr Masājid*, *Ṣaḥīḥ Sunan Ibn Mājah*, and *Tamām al-Minnah fī al-Ta'liq 'alā Fiqh al-Sunnah*.

Furthermore, several secondary sources were employed, including books, journal articles, and unpublished scholarly works (theses and dissertations) related to the methodology of taqwiyah al-hadith. These include *Taqwiyah al-Hadith al-Ḍa'if 'inda al-'Allāmah Abī al-'Alā al-Mubārakfūrī*, *al-Irshādāt fī Taqwiyah al-Aḥādīth bi al-Shawāhid wa al-Mutāba'āt*, *Manāhij al-Muḥaddithīn fī Taqwiyah al-Aḥādīth al-Ḥasanah wa al-Ḍa'if*, *Taqwiyah al-Hadith: Satu Kajian dalam Kitab Faḍā'il Shahr Ramaḍān*, and *Nazariyyāt Taqwiyah al-Hadith bi al-Shawāhid wa al-Mutāba'āt 'inda al-Muḥaddithīn*. The data collected were subsequently analyzed using both inductive and deductive methods.

Findings and Discussion

The Role of al-Mutāba'āt and al-Shawāhid in Taqwiyah al-Hadith

Linguistically, al-mutāba'ah is an Arabic word derived from the active participle (ism fā'il) of *taba'a*–*yutābi'u*–*mutāba'ah*, which means “to agree with” (Ibrāhīm Muṣṭafā, n.d.). Terminologically, it refers to the sharing of a hadith narration by two transmitters from a single Companion of the Prophet (PBUH) through the same teacher, either with identical wording or equivalent meaning (al-Qudah, 2004; al-Ṭaḥḥān, 2004). This indicates that more than one student had heard the hadith from the same teacher.

The term al-shawāhid is also derived from Arabic, from the root al-shahādah, which carries the meaning “well-known” or “recognized.” In technical usage, al-shawāhid refers to the narration of a hadith by two or more Companions of the Prophet (PBUH) with the same

wording or meaning (Abu al-Layth, 2011). This means that the hadith was transmitted not by a single Companion alone, but by multiple Companions.

In the context of taqwiyah al-hadith, al-mutāba'āt and al-shawāhid play a crucial role as corroborating reports that can strengthen other chains of transmission. For instance, a hadith with a weak (da'īf) chain can be elevated to ḥasan li ghayrih. Likewise, a ḥasan li dhātih narration can be raised to ṣaḥīḥ li ghayrih through the presence of supporting reports in the form of mutāba'āt and shawāhid. According to Ibn Ḥajar (2008), in certain cases, mutāba'āt can reinforce a hadith, especially when it has been narrated by a transmitter of weak memory, a mastūr narrator, or one associated with mursal or mudallas transmission. However, it should also be understood that the mere presence of multiple chains does not necessarily strengthen a hadith; in fact, in some cases, numerous chains may render the hadith even weaker (al-Qāsimī, n.d.).

Furthermore, according to contemporary hadith scholar Umar Mukhtar Mohd Noor (2018), the roles of al-shawāhid and al-mutāba'āt can be outlined as follows:

The role of al-Shawāhid:

- i. To strengthen the rank of a hadith, elevating it from ḥasan to ṣaḥīḥ, or from da'īf to ḥasan.
- ii. To remove or resolve the strangeness (shudhūdh) of a narration.
- iii. To interpret ambiguous (mujmal) narrations and clarify obscure (mubham) elements.
- iv. Sometimes, to explain the reasons for the hadith's occurrence (asbāb wurūd al-hadith).

The role of al-Mutāba'āt:

- i. To remove or resolve the strangeness of a narration.
- ii. To interpret ambiguous narrations and clarify obscurities.
- iii. Sometimes, to explain the reasons for the hadith's occurrence.
- iv. In certain cases, what is found in a mutāba'ah may remove an 'illah (defect) that exists in another narration.

It is thus clear that taqwiyah al-hadith requires meticulous examination of hadith chains (isnād), particularly in terms of al-mutāba'āt and al-shawāhid, since their role extends beyond strengthening narrations to also revealing hidden 'ilal (defects) within them.

Guidelines for Taqwiyah al-Hadith With al-Mutaba'ah And al-Syawahid Taqwiyah Hadith Hasan li dhatih to Sahih li ghayrih

According to Muhammad Jamal al-Din al-Qasimi (n.d.), if a hadith hasan is transmitted through other turuq (chains of transmission), then it is strengthened (taqwiyah) to the level of sahih due to its reinforcement from two aspects, each one supporting the other. The status of a hadith hasan narrator is slightly lower compared to that of an al-hafiz al-dabt narrator, even though he is well-known for truthfulness and righteousness. Therefore, if a hadith is transmitted through another tariq (chain), even if it is only through a single additional chain, it becomes stronger by way of mutaba'ah, thus eliminating doubts regarding the narrator's weakness in memorization. Consequently, the hadith is strengthened (taqwiyah) from hasan to sahih. This is evident from his statement which means:

"If a hadith hasan is transmitted through other turuq, then it is strengthened to sahih because of reinforcement from two aspects, each one strengthening the other. The rank of a hadith hasan narrator is slightly lower than that of an al-

hafiz al-dabt narrator, even if he is renowned for truthfulness and righteousness. Therefore, if his hadith is transmitted through another tariq, even if only one additional chain, it becomes strong by means of mutaba'ah, and the doubt concerning the narrator's weakness in memorization is removed. Consequently, the hadith is strengthened from hasan to sahih."

In addition, Abu al-Layth al-Khayr Abadi (2011) affirms that hadith scholars clearly permit a hadith hasan li dhatih to be strengthened (taqwiyah) into a hadith sahih li ghayrih when supported by another narration of equal or greater strength. This is because the suspicion concerning the narrator's errors, mistakes, or forgetfulness is eliminated when corroborated by another chain.

Among the examples of hadith hasan li dhatih that are strengthened (taqwiyah) to sahih li ghayrih is as follows:

Meaning: From Abi Hurayrah, the Prophet s.a.w. said: "If it were not a burden to my people, I would have ordered them to perform siwak every time they wanted to perform prayers." (al-Tirmidhi, No. 22)

Taqwiyah Hadith Hasan li ghayrih to Sahih li ghayrih

According to al-Baqa'i (n.d.), two ḥadīths classified as ḥasan may be strengthened (taqwiyah) to the level of ṣaḥīḥ li-ghayrih if they are supported by multiple transmission routes (ṭuruq), whereby a ḥasan li-dhātih ḥadīth is reinforced by the transmission of a ḥasan li-ghayrih ḥadīth with multiple chains. This represents the lowest tier of ṣaḥīḥ li-ghayrih ḥadīth. In addition, according to Ibn Kathīr (n.d.) in his work Ikhtisār 'Ulūm al-Ḥadīth, a weak (ḍa'īf) ḥadīth may be elevated in rank through mutāba'ah, whether the transmitter of the ḥadīth has poor memory or it is narrated by a transmitter of a mursal ḥadīth. Thus, it may be strengthened from the lowest level of ḍa'īf to the highest level of ḥasan, or even to ṣaḥīḥ. This is clear from his statement, which means:

"Indeed, a weak ḥadīth can be elevated in rank through mutāba'ah, whether the transmitter of the ḥadīth has weak memory or it is narrated by a transmitter of a mursal ḥadīth. It can thus be strengthened from the lowest level of ḍa'īf to the highest rank of ḥasan, or even to ṣaḥīḥ."

Nevertheless, Ibn Qutlubāghā (2008), in his work Sharḥ al-Nukhbah, prohibited this. He stated that Ibn Ḥajar stipulated a condition concerning the al-Mutābi', namely that its strength must either be greater or at least equal. Therefore, if a ḥasan li-dhātih ḥadīth is transmitted through other ṭuruq, specifically through ḥasan li-ghayrih chains, it cannot be judged as ṣaḥīḥ. Al-Murtaḍā al-Zayn (1994), a contemporary ḥadīth scholar, adopted the view of al-Baqa'i, namely that a ḥasan li-ghayrih ḥadīth can be strengthened to ṣaḥīḥ li-ghayrih. This is clear from his statement, which means:

"In my view, it is not impermissible to elevate a ḥasan li-ghayrih ḥadīth to ṣaḥīḥ li-ghayrih when supported by multiple transmission routes. Furthermore, the level of strengthening a ḥasan li-dhātih ḥadīth to ḥasan li-ghayrih represents the lowest tier of ṣaḥīḥ li-ghayrih."

Accordingly, this study adopts the opinion of Ibn Qutlubāghā, namely that a ḥasan li-dhātih ḥadīth cannot be strengthened to ṣaḥīḥ li-ghayrih when supported by multiple ṭuruq of ḥasan

li-ghayrih ḥadīths, based on the justification that the attribute of the al-Mutābi' must be of equal or greater strength, as stipulated by Ibn Ḥajar.

Taqwiyah Hadith Da'if Khafif to Hasan li ghayrih

A da'if khafif (lightly weak) hadith can be strengthened (taqwiyah) to the level of hasan li ghayrih if it is supported by multiple transmission routes (turuq). According to 'Ajjaj al-Khatib (1996) in his book Usul al-Hadith, a weak hadith whose weakness is due to deficiencies in memory retention and recollection—without affecting the narrator's integrity ('adalah)—such as negligence (ghaflah), poor memory, delusion (wahm), or confusion (ikhtilat), may be elevated from da'if to hasan li ghayrih when supported by multiple routes of transmission. However, if the weakness of the hadith is due to accusations against the narrator's integrity ('adalah), such as fabricating reports about the Prophet (PBUH), being accused of lying, frequently lying in ordinary speech, engaging in fisq (sinful conduct), or committing innovations (bid'ah) that lead to disbelief (kufr), then the hadith cannot be strengthened even if supported by numerous transmission routes. This is evident from his statement, which means:

“Every weak hadith whose weakness stems from accusations against the narrator's 'adalah—such as fabricating reports against the Messenger of Allah (PBUH), being accused of lying, lying in human speech, engaging in fisq in words or actions, or committing an innovation leading to disbelief, and similar causes—such a hadith cannot be strengthened, even if it is supported by multiple routes. This is because the underlying causes of its weakness are extremely critical, and the flaw of the narrator in this case cannot be corrected. However, through the presence of multiple routes, the hadith may change in status from munkar or la aslah (without any basis) to mastur or sayyi' al-hifz. Meanwhile, weak hadiths whose weakness is due to deficiencies in memory retention and recollection—without affecting the 'adalah of the narrators—such as negligence, poor memory, delusion, confusion, and so forth, when supported by multiple routes, can be strengthened from da'if to hasan li ghayrih. This is because the convergence of transmission routes, whether from the same or different narrators, helps to mitigate their weaknesses. Likewise, weak hadiths caused by irsal (disconnection), tadlis (obfuscation), or narrations from unknown narrators (majhul), their weaknesses can also be mitigated by the support of other transmission routes. Consequently, such hadiths may be elevated to the level of hasan li ghayrih.”

One example of a weak hadith that is strengthened by another weak hadith is:

Meaning: From Hajjaj, from 'A'tiyah, from Ibn 'Umar, he said: "I prayed zohor with the Prophet s.a.w. when I was traveling for two rakaat, and after that two rakaat. (al-Tirmidhi, No. 551)

Al-Tirmidhi graded this hadith as hasan. The hadith scholars understood that when al-Tirmidhi classifies a hadith as hasan, it generally refers to hasan li ghayrih. Al-Tirmidhi also transmitted another narration related to the hadith, namely:

Meaning: From Ibn Abi Layla, from 'A'tiyah, from Ibn 'Umar, who said: "I prayed with the Prophet (peace be upon him) during residence and travel. When in residence, I prayed zuhr with the Prophet (peace be upon him) four rak'ahs and

after it four rak'ahs; and when in travel, I prayed zuhr with the Prophet (peace be upon him) two rak'ahs and after it two rak'ahs ..." According to *al-Tirmidhi*, this hadith is graded as *hasan*. (*al-Tirmidhi*, No. 552)

According to Abu al-Layth (2011), in the first hadith narration there is a transmitter named al-Hajjaj, who is assessed as *ṣadūq* but prone to making many mistakes and known for *tadlīs*. In the second narration, there is Ibn Abi Layla, whose full name is Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Abi Layla. He is likewise graded as *ṣadūq* but described as having very weak memory. Thus, both narrations are originally *da'if*; however, they are strengthened to the level of *ḥadīth ḥasan li ghayrih* when they mutually support one another.

Hadiths Eligible for Taqwiyah

Scholars have set several conditions for performing *taqwiyah al-hadith*. They only accept *da'if* hadiths with minor weaknesses (*da'if khafif*) to be elevated in rank. According to Abu al-Layth (2011), the factors considered as light weaknesses are as follows:

1. Weak memory, such as the hadith of *al-Mukhtalit*, *al-Mutalaqqin*, and others.
2. Disconnected chains of transmission (*sanad*), either explicitly or implicitly, such as *al-Mu'allaq*, *al-Mursal*, *al-Mu'dal*, *al-Munqati'*, *al-Mudallas*, and *al-Mursal al-Khafi*.
3. Unknown status of *'adalah*, such as the hadith of *majhul al-'ain*, *majhul al-hal*, and *al-Mubham*.

In the context of an *al-Mubham* narrator, Ahmad Shakir (n.d.) quoted the opinion of Ibn Kathir (d. 774H), who stated that if a narrator is either unnamed or named but with an unknown status, the hadith scholars do not accept his narration. However, if such narrations occur during the era of the *Tabi'in* and within centuries that are collectively acknowledged as virtuous, then the narrations are accepted. This is because narrators from the generation of the *Tabi'in* would not transmit hadiths except from individuals who were truly reliable. According to Ibn Kathir (d. 774H), this can be observed in *Musnad Ahmad* and other hadith compilations.

Therefore, the hadiths that can be elevated include: *hasan li dhatih*, *hasan li ghayrih*, *al-Mu'allaq*, *al-Mursal*, *al-Mu'dal*, *al-Munqati'*, *al-Mudallas*, *al-Mursal al-Khafi*, *majhul al-hal*, *majhul al-'ain*, *al-Mubham*, *al-Mukhtalit*, and *al-Mutalaqqin* (Abu al-Layth, 2011; Mohd Nor Adli Othman et al., 2018). This indicates that there are several categories of *da'if* hadiths that can be strengthened (*taqwiyah*), particularly those weakened due to disconnected chains of transmission, subject to the conditions stipulated by hadith scholars.

Hadiths That Cannot Be Strengthened (Taqwiyah)

Tracing multiple *turuq* (chains of transmission) for a hadith is a method frequently emphasized by hadith scholars. This method not only serves to strengthen and support a hadith but also helps to identify an anonymous narrator (*mubham*), detect hidden defects (*'illah*) within the hadith, and other issues. However, the multiplicity of *turuq* does not necessarily guarantee the elevation of a hadith's status. In fact, in some cases, numerous *turuq* may further increase the weakness of the hadith. Al-Albani (1999), in his work *Tamam al-Minnah fi al-Ta'liq 'ala Fiqh al-Sunnah*, addressed this matter in the following statement:

“Among the well-known notions among scholars is that if a hadith comes through multiple turuq, it becomes strong and authoritative even if each individual chain is weak. In reality, this statement is not to be applied absolutely. According to the precise scholars, it depends on the nature of the weakness—specifically when it pertains to the weak memory of a narrator—and not in cases involving narrators accused regarding their truthfulness or religious integrity. If the weakness stems from narrators accused in this regard, then the hadith will not be strengthened even if it is reported through numerous turuq.”

Al-Albani’s opinion is consistent with that of al-Qasimi (n.d.), who also asserted that not every weak hadith can be upgraded merely by the presence of multiple turuq. On the contrary, many turuq may further amplify the existing weakness of such a hadith. In this regard, one example of a weak hadith that cannot be elevated, as pointed out by al-Murtada al-Zayn (1994), is the following hadith:

Meaning: “Whoever memorizes from my ummah forty hadiths concerning their religious affairs, Allah will raise them up on the Day of Resurrection with the fuqaha’ and scholars”.

In his discussion, al-Murtada al-Zayn cites the opinion of al-Nawawi (d. 676H), who stated that the huffaz (hadith masters) unanimously agreed on the weakness of this hadith despite its numerous turuq. More specifically, although it has twenty-five turuq transmitted from thirteen Companions, this hadith cannot be elevated to the status of hasan li ghayrih, as it falls under the category of severely weak (da’if jiddan) hadith. The details are presented in Table 1 below:

Table 1

Details of the Sanad Hadith “Whoever of my people memorizes forty hadiths”

Number	Assessment of Narrators	Number of Hadith Sanad
1	Fabricator or accused fabricator of ḥadīth.	16 sanad
2	Matrūk al-ḥadīth transmitter.	3 sanad
3	Majhūl and weak transmitters (involving a mu’allaq hadith).	5 sanad
4	Two transmitters are majhūl (unknown), and there is an inqitā’ (discontinuity) in the chain of transmission.”	1 sanad

Al-Suyūṭī (d. 911H) also held the view that severely weak ḥadīth can neither strengthen nor be strengthened by other narrations. Hence, severely weak ḥadīth cannot undergo taqwiyaḥ. Among the characteristics of severely weak ḥadīth are when one of its transmitters is a fabricator, accused of fabrication, a fāsiq (open sinner), or when the ḥadīth is shādh or munkar, in addition to possessing a ‘illah qādiḥah either hidden or apparent (Abu al-Layth, 2011). Accordingly, the categories of ḥadīth that cannot be subjected to taqwiyaḥ are as follows:

1. Ḥadīth munkar
2. Ḥadīth ma'ūl
3. Ḥadīth shādh such as al-mudraj, al-maqlūb, al-mazīd fī mutṭaṣil al-asānīd, al-muḍṭarib, al-muṣaḥḥaf, and al-muḥarraf (Abu al-Layth, 2011).

In general, weak ḥadīth that are due to 'illah (defects) or contradictions with stronger narrations fall under the category of ḥadīth that cannot undergo taqwiyaḥ.

Manhaj Hadith Scholars in Tracking Turuq and Research on the Presence of Shawahid and Mutaba'ah

The consensus of the scholars of ḥadīth from the mutaqqaddimīn, muta'akhhirīn, and contemporary scholars regards the methodology of examining multiple transmission routes (turuq) and investigating the presence of shawāhid and mutāba'āt as a principal factor in performing taqwiyaḥ al-ḥadīth. These diverse chains or routes mutually support and strengthen one another, thereby elevating the status of a ḥadīth. According to al-Dhahabī (n.d.), this methodology was originally established by the Companions, and it is also known as the method of ta thabb ut (verification) in accepting transmitted reports. He further states that Abū Bakr (RA) was the earliest Companion to employ this method when he sought confirmation from al-Mughīrah ibn Shu'bah and other Companions on whether they had heard the ḥadīth of al-Jaddah (the grandmother's share in inheritance) (Mālik, n.d.) directly from the Prophet (SAW). Similarly, 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (RA) requested Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī to produce another witness to corroborate a ḥadīth concerning al-isti'dhān (seeking permission) (al-Bukhārī, No. 6245).

Thus, the practice of tracing transmission routes to support narrations can be traced back to the time of the Companions, as evidenced by the actions of Abū Bakr and 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb in requiring corroboration of ḥadīth. According to 'Ajjāj al-Khaṭīb (1996) in *Uṣūl al-Ḥadīth*, this methodology continued during the era of the Tābi'ūn and, according to researchers, has persisted until today.

The scholars of ḥadīth from the mutaqqaddimīn, muta'akhhirīn, and mu'āṣirīn carried forward the legacy of the Companions in preserving the ḥadīth of the Prophet (SAW) by making this methodology central to the process of taqwiyaḥ al-ḥadīth. Sufyān al-Thawrī (d. 161H) was among those who employed this method by writing down ḥadīth so that they could serve as a basis for comparison (i'tibār) with other narrations. He is reported to have said:

"Indeed, I write ḥadīth for three purposes: a ḥadīth that I act upon, a ḥadīth that I take as i'tibār for other narrations, and a ḥadīth that I write simply to know of it."

Similarly, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241H) also compiled many ḥadīth, even those transmitted through Ibn Lahī'ah — who was known for his weakness (Ibn Ḥajar, n.d.) to strengthen narrations through mutual support. This is reflected in his statement:

"The ḥadīth of Ibn Lahī'ah cannot serve as proof, but I write down many such ḥadīth to take i'tibār from them, and they serve to reinforce one another."

Al-Tirmidhī, in his definition of ḥadīth ḥasan, also alludes to the importance of multiple turuq. He states that among the conditions of a ḥadīth ḥasan is that it is narrated through

another chain of transmission like it. According to al-Syīmālī (2006), what al-Tirmidhī meant was that there exists another chain either of equal or greater strength, and it is not necessary that the wording be identical, but narrations by meaning (al-riwāyah bi al-ma'nā) are sufficient. This clarification indicates that al-Tirmidhī, too, emphasized the role of examining multiple turuq in taqwiyah al-ḥadīth.

Later scholars also continued to regard this methodology as a key principle for strengthening narrations. Al-Nawawī (n.d.), for example, explained that multiple turuq are not by themselves sufficient to elevate a weak ḥadīth. However, if the weakness lies in a transmitter who is ṣadūq (truthful though not strong in memory) or in a mursal transmission, then such ḥadīth may be elevated to ḥasan when supported by multiple turuq. He stated:

“If a weak ḥadīth is narrated through other chains of equal strength, this does not guarantee it becomes ḥasan. But if the weakness lies in a narrator who is ṣadūq, it can be elevated to ḥasan with supporting chains. Likewise, if its weakness is due to being mursal, it can also be strengthened. However, if the weakness is due to a narrator who is fāsiq, then multiple turuq add no value.”

In summary, al-Nawawī stressed that examining multiple turuq is essential for determining whether a ḥadīth may be strengthened, but the specific cause of weakness must first be assessed. According to Ibn Taymiyyah (1995), diverse turuq not only reinforce one another but also help uncover hidden defects (‘ilal) in a narration. He argued that if narrations transmitted by weak narrators can be strengthened through multiple turuq, then certainly the reports of prominent scholars such as ‘Abdullāh ibn Lahī‘ah — before his memory became compromised — should also be accepted. He explained:

“Indeed, multiple turuq support one another, such that even if narrated by those guilty of misconduct, they can still yield knowledge. What then of major scholars who were upright but committed errors in ḥadīth, such as ‘Abdullāh ibn Lahī‘ah? He was a great scholar and judge in Egypt who narrated many ḥadīth, but after his books were burned he relied on memory, which led to mistakes. His earlier narrations, however, were generally sound.”

From this statement, one of the benefits of tracing multiple turuq is to expose errors and ‘ilal within ḥadīth. Ibn Ḥajar (1981), in al-Qawl al-Musaddad, likewise stated that when a ḥadīth possesses multiple turuq from independent sources, this increases the strength of its matn (text). This illustrates that the textual content of a ḥadīth may itself be strengthened through diverse turuq.

Ibn Kathīr (n.d.) further refined this methodology by clarifying that numerous turuq do not necessarily guarantee that a weak ḥadīth may be elevated. For example, weak ḥadīth transmitted by liars, those accused of lying, or matrūk narrators cannot be strengthened even if supported by numerous turuq. By contrast, certain weak ḥadīth, such as those with transmitters of weak memory or those that are mursal, may be strengthened by mutāba‘āt. He stated:

“The abundance of turuq does not automatically render a ḥadīth ḥasan. Some weak narrations cannot be strengthened by mutāba‘āt, such as those transmitted by liars or matrūk narrators. However, some weak narrations can be strengthened, such as those transmitted by narrators of weak memory or mursal reports, and through mutāba‘āt these may be elevated to ḥasan or even ṣaḥīḥ.”

In conclusion, the methodology of the scholars of ḥadīth in performing taqwiyah al-ḥadīth involves tracing multiple turuq to identify mutāba‘āt and shawāhid for the purpose of reinforcing the isnād and the matn. The examination of diverse turuq also uncovers errors and defects within the ḥadīth of the Prophet (SAW).

Al-Albani’s Methodology in Strengthening Hadith with the Presence of Syawahid and Mutaba‘ah

The methodology that can be described as an essential requirement for al-Albani when carrying out the strengthening (taqwiyah) of hadith is the tracing of the various turuq (chains of transmission) in order to examine the presence of syawahid (supporting narrations) and mutaba‘ah (parallel narrations). This can be observed from several excerpts as follows:

“Indeed, those who came later and were well-versed in this discipline have expanded the tracing of the turuq (chains of transmission) from the repositories of the Sunnah for given hadith. This has assisted them in strengthening the hadith by identifying it through its syawahid (supporting reports) and mutaba‘at (parallel narrations). This is among my methodologies in al-Takhrij, as I have indicated concerning this matter later (p. 525). As for declaring weak (taḍ‘if) a chain of transmission that outwardly appears sound, this is because the tracing of the turuq unveils a defect (‘illah) that compromises it—such as irsal (omission), inqita‘ (disconnection), tadlis (concealment), and others—which would not become apparent without such tracing of the turuq. And we—by the grace of Allah—are among those acquainted with this matter both theoretically and practically for more than half a century, and my books are the greatest proof of this, particularly Irwa‘, this Silsilah and the other Silsilah.” (al-Albani, 2002)

“Accordingly, I have exerted my utmost effort in every one of my books, especially this Silsilah, so that I do not declare a hadith weak except after a thorough investigation of its turuq and syawahid.” (al-Albani, 2002)

“...When I declare a hadith weak, I do not suffice with declaring it weak merely by observing its deficient chain of transmission alone. Rather, I trace in this regard every source I can access, whether printed materials or manuscripts—while relying on the statements of authoritative scholars. This is because it is feared that there may exist another chain of transmission that is valid for argumentation, in which case I would fall into error due to my failure to examine it. I believe this is a methodology that is observable to the attendees and readers of my works, particularly in al-Aḥadith al-Da‘ifah wa al-Mawdu‘ah, where they often see in one article multiple hadiths recurring with the same meaning, each discussed in succession. This is done solely to apply this methodology and to deliberate upon the chain of each of them in terms of weakening (taḍ‘if) and criticism (jarh).” (al-Albani, n.d.)

From the above excerpts, it can be concluded that the determination of a hadith's status and the process of taqwiyah al-hadith (strengthening a hadith) is incomplete without expanding the search for other turuq (chains of transmission) that may possibly exist for the hadith in question. Furthermore, the above quotations also highlight that al-Albani's efforts in tracing the turuq of hadiths bring about several advantages. Among them is the ability to detect the existence of hidden defects (ilal) that could undermine the authenticity of an isnad, especially in cases where certain chains outwardly appear to be sound. At the same time, this approach also grants him a wider scope to deliberate on whether a hadith should be elevated to a higher status or instead be retained as da'if (weak) or even severely weak.

From another perspective, the term "tracing the turuq" (in Arabic: تتبع الطرق) which al-Albani referred to as one of his methodologies in determining the status of a hadith, upon examination in several works of mustalah al-hadith, has in fact been explicitly mentioned by Ibn Hajar (2008), meaning:

"And know that tracing the turuq from the jawami', masanid and ajza' of a hadith that is thought to be tafarrud (singularly transmitted) to determine whether it has a mutabi' or not, constitutes al-i'tibar; that is, the process by which one arrives at either al-mutabi' or al-shahid."

This quotation clarifies that tatabbu' al-turuq (tracing the various chains), according to Ibn Hajar (d. 852H), typically leads to al-i'tibar in determining the presence or absence of mutabi'at as well as shawahid. This statement signifies that the method was indeed employed by the earlier hadith scholars, and that al-Albani was continuing its legacy.

The presence of turuq of a hadith, whether in the form of shawahid or mutabi'at, which are of varying levels of quality, led al-Albani to revive and further popularize a methodological formula more broadly, known as the principle of strengthening hadiths by virtue of the multiplicity of their turuq, but not in an absolute sense. In Arabic, this is expressed as:

قاعدة تقوية الأحاديث بكثرة طرقها ليست على إطلاقها

("the principle of strengthening hadiths through the abundance of their chains is not to be taken in an unrestricted sense").

This principle was reiterated multiple times in his works, among them in the introduction of volume 5, where he states (paraphrased):

"And in particular, what is considered as a good example is that the principle of strengthening a hadith through its many turuq is not absolute. Rather, it is bound by several conditions that must be adhered to by the researcher... Among them is the clarification that the principle of strengthening a hadith through its many turuq is not absolute, and indeed, it cannot be applied except by those scholars who are well-versed in this science." (al-Albani, 2002)

The application of this principle in the work Silsilat al-Ahadith al-Da'ifah can be observed especially through the citations presented by al-Albani, usually at the conclusion of his discussions on hadiths that possess shawahid and mutabi'at, whether stated in detail or briefly. Among his statements, translated, is the following:

“And in totality: the turuq of this hadith are all weak, and some of them are even weaker than others, as al-Sakhawi has explained in his book al-Maqasid (p. 81), and we have disclosed this to you through this takhrij. Therefore, the heart does not incline towards strengthening it by the abundance of its turuq, particularly as Imam Ahmad has made it clear—as has been mentioned earlier—that it is fabricated hadith.” (al-Albani, 2002)

This study believes that the method highlighted by al-Albani was formulated with the awareness to give a reminder that not every weak hadith (da’if) which has multiple turuq (chains of transmission) can be elevated to the rank of hasan. Rather, it is subject to certain rules established by the hadith scholars that must be given due attention before passing judgment on a hadith’s sanad (chain of transmission). To better understand the conditions laid down in the application of this method, the following is al-Albani’s explanation regarding this methodology, which means:

“Among what is well known among the scholars is that when a hadith comes through multiple turuq, indeed it can be strengthened thereby, becoming a proof, even though each individual tariq on its own is weak. However, this is not an absolute rule; rather, it is restricted, according to the muhaqqiq scholars among them, to the case where the weakness of its narrators in the various turuq stems from poor memory, not from an accusation concerning their truthfulness or their religiosity. Otherwise, it cannot be strengthened, even if its turuq are many... And for that reason, it is necessary for anyone who intends to strengthen a hadith that has numerous turuq to examine carefully the narrators of each tariq until the degree of weakness therein becomes clear. Unfortunately, very few scholars undertake such an effort, including among the later scholars. They would claim, among other scholars, that a hadith has other turuq without investigating them and determining what the weaknesses are! Whoever wishes to know this can find it in the books of takhrij, especially in my book Silsilah al-Ahadith al-Da’ifah.” (Al-Albani, 1999)

One example of a hadith strengthened by al-Albani with the presence of shawahid in his work Silsilah al-Ahadith al-Sahihah is as follows:

Meaning: “Beautify the Qur’an with your voices, for indeed a good voice adds to the goodness when reciting it.”

According to al-Albani, this hadith was narrated by Tamam in his work al-Fawa’id (2/159) and by al-Hakim (1/575) through the turuq of Sadaqah ibn Abi ‘Imran, from ‘Alqamah, from Zadhan, from al-Bara’ (may Allah be pleased with him), who said: The Prophet (peace be upon him) said... Al-Albani cited the views of al-Hakim and al-Dhahabi, who stated that this hadith is “sakata ‘anhu.” However, in the view of al-Albani, its sanad is jayyid (good) and conforms to the conditions of Muslim. Moreover, he also stated that this hadith has shawahid from Abu Hurayrah and ‘A’ishah, reported in Sahih Abi Dawud (1320), and further supported by another shahid narrated by Ibn Mas’ud, marfu’, with the wording (حسن الصوت تزيين للقران). (Al-Albani, 2002).

Another example of a hadith strengthened by al-Albani with the presence of mutaba'ah in his work *Silsilah al-Ahadith al-Sahihah* is as follows:

Meaning: "The Jews will split into seventy-one sects, the Christians will split into seventy-two sects, and my ummah will split into seventy-three sects."

According to al-Albani, this hadith was narrated by Abu Dawud (2/503), al-Tirmidhi (3/367), Ibn Majah (2/479), Ibn Hibban in his *Sahih* (1834), al-Hakim (1/128), Ahmad (2/332), and Abu Ya'la in his *Musnad* (2/280), through the *turuq* of Muhammad bin 'Amru, from Abu Hurayrah, *marfu'*. Al-Albani cited the view of al-Tirmidhi, who said that the hadith is *hasan sahih*, while al-Hakim stated that it is *sahih* according to the conditions of Muslim. However, al-Albani assessed Muhammad bin 'Amru, one of its narrators, as (فيه كلام) "there is some criticism of him." He further stated that this hadith is considered *hasan* when supported by *mutaba'ah*. (Al-Albani, 2002).

Therefore, it may be concluded that al-Albani had a methodology consistent with earlier and contemporary scholars in making *mutaba'ah* and *shawahid* a basis for strengthening *hasan* and *da'if* hadith. This proves that al-Albani did not deviate from the true methodology of hadith studies.

Conclusion

The findings of this study indicate that al-Albani possessed a high level of hadith scholarship, as he employed the principles of *usul al-hadith* as guidelines in conducting *taqwiyah* of hadiths according to his methodology. He also urged, especially among Islamic scholars, to always carry out thorough research and exercise independent *ijtihad* in hadith evaluation without contradicting the established principles of *usul* outlined by the earlier scholars. In addition, the findings reveal that al-Albani had his own methodology of *taqwiyah*, among which were tracing the *turuq* (chains of transmission) and strengthening hadith through the presence of *shawahid* and *mutaba'at*. The study also shows that the accusation of being *mutasahil* (overly lenient) against al-Albani is rather inaccurate, since much of his *taqwiyah* methodology is in line with other hadith scholars.

The following is a table presenting the conclusion of al-Albani's methodology and examples of hadiths

Number	Manhaj Taqwiyah by Al-Albani	Examples of Hadith	Volume (<i>Silsilah al-Ahadith al-Sahihah</i>)
1	Keeping track of diverse <i>turuq</i>	Hadith No 4,14,21,34,36,39,42, 56,65,90,105,106,109,115, 119,154	1
		Hadith No 510,512, 518, 520, 536, 538, 551, 555, 570	2
2	<i>Taqwiyah</i> of hadith with the presence of <i>shawahid</i> and <i>mutaba'ah</i>	Hadith No 44, 99, 107, 124, 183, 258, 273, 283, 284, 285, 345, 413, 500.	1
		Hadith No 520, 512, 565, 703, 737, 775, 789, 760, 994	2

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