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Orchestrating the Sunnah:
How Muslim Actors Negotiate Prophetic Texts in Social Life

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Abstract: Living Hadith studies in Indonesia have grown rapidly, yet many remain descriptive and justificatory: they describe Muslim practices and then search for supporting prophetic texts, while often treating Muslim communities as passive recipients of tradition. This article addresses that limitation by integrating sociological agency theory into Living Hadith methodology. Using interdisciplinary library research that combines contemporary sociology, anthropology of Islam, and hadith studies, the article develops a three-layered analytical framework. The study finds, first, that hadith agency operates through three temporal orientations: the past-oriented reactivation of inherited prophetic norms, the future-oriented reconfiguration of hadith meanings in response to social aspirations, and the present-oriented evaluation of normative choices in concrete situations. Second, the study shows that Sewell's concept of schema transposability helps explain how prophetic norms move into new social resources and institutional settings, enabling both innovation and continuity in Muslim practice. Third, the article demonstrates that hadith practice is not produced by isolated individuals, but through relational agency and embodiment: communities, emotional bonds, and bodily habits become the media through which prophetic texts are internalized and lived. These findings shift Living Hadith studies from textual legitimation toward a critical and relational analysis of how Muslims actively negotiate, transmit, and embody hadith in social life. The article also offers a three-step operational guide for field research in Living Hadith studies.
Keywords: *agency theory; discursive tradition; embodiment; Living Hadīth; schema transposability.*

Abstrak: Artikel ini mengkaji ulang hadis-hadis tentang perang, kemurtadan, dan mata-mata melalui kerangka *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah*, khususnya perlindungan agama (*ḥifẓ al-dīn*) dan perlindungan jiwa (*ḥifẓ al-nafs*). Dengan metode kualitatif berbasis studi kepustakaan, penelitian ini menganalisis sejumlah riwayat dalam *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* dan *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* dengan merujuk pada kitab syarah, literatur fikih, serta studi kontemporer tentang jihad, murtad, radikalisasi, dan Islamofobia. Studi ini menemukan tiga hal utama. Pertama, hadis "Aku diperintahkan memerangi manusia hingga mereka mengucapkan *lā ilāha illā Allāh*" bukan perintah umum untuk membunuh non-Muslim, melainkan berkaitan dengan penghentian kondisi perang; jika dibaca bersama QS. 9:29, hadis ini menunjukkan tujuan ketertiban publik dan keamanan komunitas, bukan pemaksaan keyakinan. Kedua, hadis "siapa

yang mengganti agamanya, bunuhlah dia" tidak menunjuk pada perubahan keyakinan privat semata, tetapi pada kemurtadan yang disertai pengkhianatan publik, pemberontakan, atau pemisahan diri dari komunitas Muslim (*al-mufāriq li-l-jamāʿah*). Ketiga, pembunuhan mata-mata musyrik berada dalam konteks keamanan perang dan mencerminkan *ḥifẓ al-nafs*, yaitu perlindungan kehidupan komunitas dari intelijen musuh, bukan izin untuk menarget non-Muslim yang damai. Artikel ini menyimpulkan bahwa hadis-hadis tersebut merupakan respons defensif dan politis terhadap ancaman nyata, bukan mandat pemaksaan agama. Penggunaannya untuk melegitimasi radikalisme atau kekerasan terhadap non-Muslim yang damai bertentangan dengan tujuan luhur syariat Islam.

Kata Kunci: *agensi relasional; embodiment; Living Hadis; teori agensi; transposabilitas skema.*

1. Introduction

Islamic studies in Indonesia has undergone a notable paradigmatic shift. The field is no longer concerned only with textual analysis or scripturalism, but increasingly attends to religion as it is lived in everyday social practice. This shift is visible in the rise of Living Hadīth studies, a field that examines how the sayings, actions, and norms attributed to the Prophet Muḥammad do not remain merely normative texts but take form as traditions, rituals, habits, and everyday conduct. In Indonesia, this practice-to-text orientation began to receive clearer academic shape in 2005, when UIN Sunan Kalijaga published the anthology *Metodologi Penelitian Living Qur'ān dan Hadis*, a work often treated as an institutional marker in the emergence of the field.[1] The distinction is methodological: conventional *ma'ānī al-ḥadīth* studies generally move from text to practice, whereas Living Hadīth studies begin with social practice and ask how prophetic texts are received, interpreted, embodied, and transmitted in lived communities.[2]

The rapid growth of Living Hadīth research, however, has raised serious questions about its methodological quality. Junianto et al.'s study of Living Hadīth publications from 2017 to 2023 shows that interdisciplinary approaches have not yet been applied optimally. Many studies still end with descriptions of tradition followed by the search for textual justification, a pattern that may be called descriptive-justificatory.[3] This tendency is supported quantitatively by Fatkhi and Firdausy's analysis of 1,272 undergraduate theses from five major State Islamic Universities between 2018 and 2025. Their study reports that normative text-based research still dominates at 53 percent, while Living Hadīth accounts for only 21 percent, and modern or hybrid approaches appear inconsistently; in

[1] Saifuddin Zuhri Qudsy and Subkhani Kusuma Dewi, *Living Hadis: Praktik, Resepsi, Teks, dan Transmisi*, 1st ed. (Yogyakarta: Q-Media, 2018).

[2] Saifuddin Zuhri Qudsy et al., "The Making of Living Ḥadīth: A New Direction of Ḥadīth Studies in Indonesia," *Culture and Religion* 23, no. 4 (2023): 353–72, https://doi.org/10.1080/14755610.2024.2336461.

[3] Viki Junianto, Mo'afi, and Amrulloh, "The Interdisciplinary Approach and Its Contribution to the Study of Living Hadith," *Jurnal Living Hadis* 8, no. 2 (2024): 139–54, https://doi.org/10.14421/livinghadis.2023.4912.

many institutions, up to 93 percent of instructional hours remain oriented toward *riwāyah* courses.[4] Their conclusion is that rapid institutional growth has produced selective adaptation rather than genuine paradigmatic transformation. This diagnosis confirms an earlier observation by Qudsy and Dewi that Living Hadīth research continues to grow like a snowball but remains conceptually hesitant and methodologically immature.[5]

The deeper academic problem behind this tendency is the neglect of active subjects. Muslim communities are often depicted as followers of tradition who are determined by social structure, or what Harold Garfinkel famously criticized as *cultural dopes*: actors imagined as puppets of norms rather than as interpreters of their own situations. Yet every practice of hadīth involves some degree of agency. Actors negotiate, improvise, remember, evaluate, and respond to the concrete conditions they face.[6] Existing Living Hadīth studies often describe what a community does, but they do not always explain why and how the community does it within specific social, historical, emotional, and material relations.[7]

For this reason, this article argues that agency theory is needed as a conceptual tool for Living Hadīth studies. Agency theory makes it possible to understand Muslims not as passive subjects but as actors who possess the capacity to act consciously and creatively within the structure of tradition. Following Saba Mahmood, agency in Islamic tradition need not be understood only as resistance to norms. It may also appear as the capacity to discipline the self, the body, and desire in pursuit of the ethical goal of piety.[8] This position resonates with Talal Asad's formulation of Islam as a discursive tradition, in which agents continuously connect inherited texts and past practices with the demands of present life through active reasoning.[9] Read through the broader literature on lived religion, this approach also helps move religious studies beyond the narrow focus on institutional texts and toward the everyday work through which people inhabit, adapt, and reproduce religion.[10]

[4] Rifqi Muhammad Fatkhi and Hilmy Firdausy, "Stagnant Textualism and Epistemological Crisis: Revisiting Hadith Scholarship in Indonesia's Islamic Universities," *Jurnal Studi Ilmu-Ilmu Al-Qur'ān Dan Hadis* 27, no. 1 (2026): 303–26, https://doi.org/10.14421/qh.v27i1.6727.

[5] Qudsy and Dewi, *Living Hadis*.

[6] Mustafa Emirbayer and Ann Mische, "What Is Agency?" *American Journal of Sociology* 103, no. 4 (1998): 962–65, https://doi.org/10.1086/231294.

[7] Sobri Febrianto and Munawir, "Living Hadis: Sebuah Metode Baru Memaknai Hadis Nabi Muhammad Saw Melalui Fenomena Sosial-Keagamaan Di Indonesia," *Jurnal Ilmiah Mahasiswa Raushan Fikr* 12, no. 1 (2023): 48, https://doi.org/10.24090/jimrf.v12i1.7534.

[8] Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*, rev. ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 153–54.

[9] Talal Asad, *The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Center for Contemporary Arab Studies, 1986), 14–17.

[10] Nancy T. Ammerman, "Rethinking Religion: Toward a Practice Approach," American Journal of Sociology 126, no. 1 (2020): 6–51, https://doi.org/10.1086/709779; Kim Knibbe and Helena Kupari, "Theorizing Lived Religion: Introduction," Journal of Contemporary Religion 35, no. 2 (2020): 157–76, https://doi.org/10.1080/13537903.2020.1759897.

The conceptual frame proposed here is operationalized through the chordal triad of agency developed by Mustafa Emirbayer and Ann Mische, who define agency as a temporally embedded process of social engagement composed of iterational, projective, and practical-evaluative dimensions.[11] It is then combined with William H. Sewell Jr.'s concept of the transposability of schemas, which explains how actors move rules or cultural schemas from one context into new resources and institutional settings.[12] Finally, the framework is expanded through Ian Burkitt's relational agency and the literature on embodiment, which together show that religious action is rarely the work of isolated individuals. It is co-authored through emotional ties, social dependence, disciplined bodies, and material infrastructures.[13]

Based on this background, the article addresses two main questions. First, how can the components of agency theory be operationalized as an analytical framework for Living Hadīth studies? Second, to what extent can this approach overcome the methodological limits of descriptive research and one-sided textual justification? By answering these questions, the article seeks to produce a methodological guide that enables researchers to read Living Hadīth as a complex, multidimensional sociological negotiation. The discussion proceeds in four stages: reconceptualizing agency within Islamic discursive tradition; explaining the anatomy of agency and its application to Indonesian Living Hadīth cases; examining relational agency and embodiment in social space; and translating agency theory into an operational fieldwork guide.

2. Method

This article is a qualitative study based on library research. This approach is appropriate because the problem addressed here is conceptual and methodological: the article does not seek to produce new ethnographic data but to formulate an analytical framework for Living Hadīth studies through the integration of sociological agency theory. The research therefore works through critical reading, comparison, and synthesis of relevant literature. It brings together three main epistemic fields: hadīth studies, contemporary sociology, and anthropology of Islam.

The research was conducted in three interrelated stages. The first stage was inventory and classification. Primary theoretical data were drawn from major works on sociological agency, especially Emirbayer and Mische's chordal triad of agency, Sewell's theory of structure and transposable schemas, and Burkitt's relational agency. These were read alongside the anthropology of Islam, particularly the works of Saba Mahmood and Talal Asad, which provide a conceptual basis

[11] Emirbayer and Mische, "What Is Agency?" 970–71.

[12] William H. Sewell Jr., "A Theory of Structure: Duality, Agency, and Transformation," *American Journal of Sociology* 98, no. 1 (1992): 1–29, https://doi.org/10.1086/229967.

[13] Ian Burkitt, "Relational Agency: Relational Sociology, Agency and Interaction," European Journal of Social Theory 19, no. 3 (2016): 322–39, https://doi.org/10.1177/1368431015591426; Chris Shilling, "Towards an Embodied Understanding of the Structure/Agency Relationship," The British Journal of Sociology 50, no. 4 (1999): 543–62, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-4446.1999.00543.x.

for thinking about agency inside religious tradition rather than outside it. Secondary data were collected from Living Hadīth research in Indonesia published in scholarly journals, especially studies from 2017 to 2023. The inclusion criteria were: (a) articles that explicitly use Living Hadīth as their main approach, and (b) articles that analyze social-religious practices rooted in hadīth reception. Studies that are purely normative-textual and lack social-empirical dimensions were excluded.

The second stage was discursive and comparative analysis. The collected materials were examined through content analysis to identify recurring methodological patterns in Living Hadīth research. Discourse analysis was then used to examine how agency is constructed or ignored in these studies. At this stage, descriptive Living Hadīth research was compared with studies that employ social theory, in order to map the contribution of interdisciplinary approaches in reducing subjective judgment and one-sided justification.

The third stage was synthesis and operationalization. The components of agency theory were synthesized into a workable framework through theoretical framework construction. This stage formulated operational steps that researchers can apply in the field, especially for tracing the transposability of schemas: how actors move prophetic norms into new resources, new social spaces, and new historical conditions. The whole procedure aims to position Muslim subjects as active and creative actors in living tradition, not merely as passive recipients of normative texts.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Reconceptualizing Agency within Islamic Discursive Tradition

Agency is one of the most important yet most unstable terms in sociology. It often functions as a placeholder for multiple assumptions without being defined carefully. In general, agency refers to the capacity for will, choice, initiative, and practical judgment in relation to the pressures of social structure. The debate usually turns on a central question: to what extent can actors critically evaluate and reconstruct the conditions of their own lives rather than merely respond mechanically to the structures surrounding them? Classical sociology often oscillated between two poles. On one side, rational-choice approaches reduced agency to instrumental calculation. On the other, normative approaches treated human action as the reflection of values imposed by society. Both tendencies, although different, risk producing passive subjects.[14]

Contemporary sociologists have attempted to move beyond this impasse. Anthony Giddens, through structuration theory, and Pierre Bourdieu, through the concept of *habitus*, both begin from the assumption that structure and agency recursively shape one another. Giddens challenged the subject-object dualism in social theory, while Bourdieu showed how bodily dispositions, tastes, and

[14] Emirbayer and Mische, "What Is Agency?" 963–65.

perceptions are produced through internalized social structures.[15] Emirbayer and Mische, however, argue that both models still tend to offer a static and synchronic account of agency because they do not sufficiently explain how agency operates through the flow of time. In their view, actors never face only the present. They carry inherited patterns from the past, imagine possible futures, and make practical judgments in ongoing situations.[16]

Ian Burkitt raises a different but related critique. He argues that much Western social theory locates agency too strongly in the internal cognitive reflexivity of autonomous individuals, neglecting the relational and emotional dimensions of action. Human beings are not isolated agents but interactants. Their agency emerges from networks of interdependence, emotional relatedness, loyalty, trust, fear, and attachment.[17] This critique is important for the study of religion because religious action often happens in dense social settings: families, mosques, pesantren, neighborhood communities, study circles, and ritual networks.

When agency is brought into Islamic studies, an even deeper paradigmatic problem appears. Liberal social theory often assumes that authentic agency is expressed through resistance to authority, rejection of norms, or liberation from constraining tradition. This assumption places obedient Muslims in a paradoxical position: the deeper their obedience, the more powerless they appear to liberal analysis. Mahmood's ethnography of women's mosque movements in Cairo directly challenges this assumption. She shows that deep obedience to religious norms is not necessarily the absence of agency. It can be a distinctive capacity to act, by which subjects discipline the body and desire in order to cultivate the ethical self.[18] For Living Hadīth studies, the implication is crucial: Muslims may feel empowered precisely when they bind themselves to the *sunnah*, not because they are coerced by it, but because it becomes the grammar through which they form a pious self.

Mahmood's argument is complemented by Asad's idea of Islam as a discursive tradition. For Asad, Islam is not merely a set of beliefs or a cultural identity. It is a tradition of reasoning, argumentation, correction, and transmission in which agents continually connect texts and past practices with present circumstances.[19] Tradition is therefore neither static nor mechanically deterministic. It requires active subjects who interpret, defend, adapt, and sometimes contest inherited norms. From this perspective, every practice of hadīth, whether *dhikr*, clothing, mosque management, almsgiving, or everyday bodily discipline, is a discursive event that involves active reasoning rather than blind repetition.

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[15] Sohaira Siddiqui, "Genealogy and Tradition as Methods in Islamic Studies," *Political Theology* 23, no. 7 (2022): 692–97, https://doi.org/10.1080/1462317X.2022.2092333.

[16] Emirbayer and Mische, "What Is Agency?" 963.

[17] Burkitt, "Relational Agency," 322; Ellen McLarney, "Agency versus Insurgency," Journal of Middle East Women's Studies 17, no. 2 (2021): 256–64, https://doi.org/10.1215/15525864-8949464.

[18] Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, 14.

[19] Asad, *The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam*, 14–17.

At the same time, bringing these perspectives together requires epistemological caution. Emirbayer and Mische operate within relational-pragmatist sociology, understanding agency as an open and contingent process of social engagement. Mahmood works within a post-Foucauldian anthropology of ethics and seeks to question the liberal assumptions that shape the very definition of agency. Bangstad's critique of Mahmood is relevant here: by focusing intensely on how norms are inhabited, Mahmood may leave less space for critically questioning the historicity and internal contradictions of religious practices.[20] Burkitt, meanwhile, proceeds from a sociology of emotions that emphasizes interdependence and emotional ties rather than cool cognitive monitoring.[21]

This article therefore does not treat these theories as a single seamless doctrine. It proposes a layered analytical instrument. Temporal agency, from Emirbayer and Mische, is used to examine how actors orchestrate past, present, and future in religious practice. Pious agency, from Mahmood, explains why obedience to the *sunnah* can be experienced as empowerment rather than subordination. Relational agency, from Burkitt, reveals how communities and emotional networks become the real units of action. The strength of this layered synthesis lies not in claiming perfect coherence among the theories, but in capturing three dimensions that Living Hadīth research often separates or overlooks: when actors act (temporality), why they act within the ethical frame of piety (pious motivation), and with whom they act (relationality). Without these three dimensions, Living Hadīth analysis risks falling into reductionism.

3.2. The Anatomy of Agency: Temporal Dynamics and the Transposability of Schemas

After reconceptualizing agency as an active capacity within a discursive tradition, the next step is to examine the anatomy of agency itself. How do cognition, memory, expectation, and practical judgment operate when an actor practices a seventh-century prophetic text in contemporary life? Emirbayer and Mische answer this question by defining agency as a temporally embedded process of social engagement. Agency is not a single static entity. It consists of three temporal dimensions that are always present together, resonating like three strings in a chord: the iterational, the projective, and the practical-evaluative.[22] To connect this theory to field analysis, the article also uses Sewell's concept of transposability of schemas, namely the capacity of actors to take schemas, rules, or cultural logics from one context and move them into new social conditions.[23]

The first dimension is the iterational orientation toward the past. This refers to the actor's capacity to selectively reactivate patterns of thought and action from previous experience and incorporate them into practical activity. The iterational dimension gives stability and continuity to

[20] Sindre Bangstad, "Saba Mahmood and Anthropological Feminism after Virtue," *Theory, Culture & Society* 28, no. 3 (2011): 28–54, https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276410396914.

[21] Burkitt, "Relational Agency," 322.

[22] Emirbayer and Mische, "What Is Agency?" 970–71.

[23] Sewell, "A Theory of Structure," 16–20.

social life.[24] In Living Hadīth research, this dimension helps challenge the assumption that religious routines are merely mechanical habits without meaning. The practice of *dhikr fidā'* in Ponorogo, for instance, in which communities gather on the sixth or seventh day after a death to recite *tahlīl* many thousands of times, can be read through this dimension. The practice is not simply blind repetition of tradition. It is an active reproduction of communal memory, prophetic values of remembrance, and social bonds that stabilize the psychological and spiritual condition of a grieving community.[25]

The second dimension is the projective orientation toward the future. This dimension concerns the actor's imaginative capacity to reconfigure schemas of action in relation to hopes, fears, and desired futures.[26] Actors do not merely reproduce the past; they imagine and construct a better social order through normative texts. The Kubro Siswo art tradition in Magelang offers one example. Prophetic values are acculturated into dance and poetry as a projective medium for *da'wah* and moral formation among future generations. A more personal example is *ʿaqīqah*. In economically difficult circumstances, some communities slaughter chickens instead of goats. From a projective perspective, this is not merely pragmatic improvisation. It is an attempt to respond to the hadīth idea that a child is *murtaḥan* or "pledged" through *ʿaqīqah*, so that the child may enter a future imagined as blessed and protected.

The third dimension is the practical-evaluative orientation toward the present. This dimension refers to the actor's capacity to make normative and practical judgments among alternative courses of action in response to dilemmas, demands, and ambiguities in an ongoing situation.[27] In Living Hadīth studies, a purely textual approach often becomes insufficient when Muslim actors face modern problems. Here Sewell's transposability of schemas becomes highly operational. Actors take a value or rule associated with hadīth and move it into new resources, new spaces, or new social contexts.[28]

The management innovation of Jogokaryan Mosque in Yogyakarta provides a strong illustration that also shows how the three dimensions of the chordal triad do not operate separately but together. The mosque administrators faced a real dilemma: many residents around the mosque were reluctant to attend congregational prayer. Instead of relying only on verbal preaching, they transposed the normative schemas of the virtue of congregational prayer and *ṣadaqah* into concrete programs such as umrah prizes and staple-food assistance for the most consistent worshippers. In this single collective action, the iterational dimension appears in the activation of inherited hadīth values about congregational prayer; the projective dimension appears in the imagined future of a thriving mosque and a more pious neighborhood; and the practical-evaluative dimension appears in

[24] Emirbayer and Mische, "What Is Agency?" 971.
[25] Junianto, Mo'afi, and Amrulloh, "The Interdisciplinary Approach," 114.
[26] Emirbayer and Mische, "What Is Agency?" 971.
[27] Emirbayer and Mische, "What Is Agency?" 971.
[28] Sewell, "A Theory of Structure," 16–20.

the judgment that material incentives can serve as a legitimate vehicle for spiritual goals under contemporary social conditions.[29]

This program should not be reduced to the materialization or marketization of worship. On the contrary, it shows Living Hadīth as a process of externalization and objectivation: a subjective meaning rooted in hadīth is objectified into a social program that can be felt, observed, repeated, and evaluated by a community.[30] Transposability here means that old rules do not disappear. They are moved into new resources. The same analysis prevents two methodological errors. The first error is romanticizing actor creativity as if innovation were free from structure. The second is treating all change as the mechanical effect of institutions. Researchers must ask: which rule is being moved, which resource is being used, who authorizes the movement, and what consequences does it produce for the limits of possible action? The institutionalization of the Fammi bi-Shawqin ritual in a pesantren setting is an example of conservative transposition: the format changes when the practice moves from community space to pesantren space, but its function as a mechanism of tradition transmission is preserved.[31]

3.3. Relational Agency and Embodiment in Social Space

An analysis of Living Hadīth will remain trapped in individualism and cognitivism if agency is treated only as an internal capacity possessed by isolated individuals. To avoid this problem, two shifts are necessary: from individual agency to relational agency, and from cognitive belief to embodied practice. Burkitt's critique of conventional Western sociology is useful here. Theories such as those of Margaret Archer or Anthony Giddens often treat agency as a property centered on individual reflexivity. This tendency can make communal action, dependence, obedience, and tradition appear less agentic, even though they are central to religious life.[32]

Burkitt proposes replacing the image of the lone agent with the idea of interactants.[33] Muslims never encounter the structure of tradition or the authority of hadīth in isolation. They always act within networks of interpersonal and impersonal dependence. Agency therefore does not arise only from cognitive self-monitoring. It emerges from emotional relatedness: love, loyalty, trust, affiliation, shame, fear of social sanction, reverence for teachers, and attachment to community.[34]

[29] Qudsy and Dewi, *Living Hadis*, 22.

[30] Qudsy and Dewi, *Living Hadis*, 22.

[31] Alyssa Qothrunnada and Amrulloh Amrulloh, "Living Hadis Penerapan Fammi Bisyauqin Di Pondok Pesantren Hamalatul Qur'ān Putri Jogoroto," *Jurnal Ekshis* 3, no. 2 (2025): 163–76, https://doi.org/10.59548/je.v3i2.501.

[32] Burkitt, "Relational Agency," 322–24.

[33] Burkitt, "Relational Agency," 322–30.

[34] Ian Burkitt, "Social Relationships and Emotions," *Sociology* 31, no. 1 (1997): 37–55, https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038597031001004.

The implication is that religious agency is often co-authored. It rarely expresses the pure will of a single individual; it is produced by multiple bonds, pressures, and alignments.[35] This is visible in communal Living Hadīth practices such as collective Monday-Thursday fasting in Kampung Pekaten, Kotagede. The agency of residents in fasting does not arise from an empty social space. It is encouraged by neighborhood solidarity, mosque networks, and a shared sense of belonging. The dense settlement pattern in Pekaten even strengthens this solidarity: the smell of food from neighbors can become an emotional reminder that sustains commitment to the practice. Actors' reflexivity is relational because their identities are tied to how they behave before and with others in the congregation.[36]

Relational agency must also be joined to embodiment, because religion is not merely a system of beliefs in the mind. It is a physical practice that actively disciplines the body. Prayer movements, eating and drinking etiquette, dress, listening, recitation, fasting, and bodily comportment all train the body to align outward conduct with inward disposition. The highest aspiration of this process may be described as becoming a *living hadīth*: prophetic texts are internalized so deeply that the actor's body becomes a visible manifestation of prophetic example.

Empirical work on embodied religion supports this claim. Daniel Winchester's study of Muslim converts in the United States shows how practices such as prayer, fasting, and modest dress help form a Muslim moral *habitus*. Religious practice does not shape only ideas; it shapes posture, reflex, perception, and bodily memory.[37] This corresponds to Bourdieu's notion of bodily *hexis*: religious meaning is not simply remembered as information but becomes a disposition enacted spontaneously by the body. A simple example is the habit of eating and drinking according to the *sunnah*. Over time, the practice may no longer require explicit reflection because it has become part of bodily memory.

This embodied dimension is also linked to the materiality of religion. Webb Keane argues that religious practices should not be treated merely as outward evidence of inner belief; material and sensory activity are themselves part of religious life.[38] In Living Hadīth contexts, objects and infrastructures such as water basins placed before mosque toilets in response to the hadīth of two *qullah*, or rice-donation boxes at Jogokaryan Mosque, function as extensions of communal agency. They are material forms created by collective action, and they in turn shape the agency of later generations who grow up within those infrastructures.[39]

[35] Burkitt, "Relational Agency," 335.

[36] Qudsy and Dewi, *Living Hadis*, 139–50.

[37] Daniel Winchester, "Embodying the Faith: Religious Practice and the Making of a Muslim Moral Habitus," *Social Forces* 86, no. 4 (2008): 1753–80, https://doi.org/10.1353/sof.0.0038.

[38] Webb Keane, "The Evidence of the Senses and the Materiality of Religion," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 14, no. s1 (2008): S110–S127, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9655.2008.00496.x.

[39] Qudsy and Dewi, *Living Hadis*, 10.

Thus, agency in Living Hadīth is an inseparable combination of relational attachment and embodied discipline. Community provides the emotional network that makes bodily discipline meaningful, while disciplined bodies strengthen communal cohesion. This is why Living Hadīth cannot be reduced either to ideas in texts or to social rituals on the surface. It is a practice in which texts, bodies, emotions, objects, and institutions work together.

3.4. Agency Theory as an Analytical Tool for Living Hadīth Studies

After tracing the conceptual layers of agency, the most important task is to translate them into a methodological guide for field analysis. The weakness of many studies of religious practice appears when research stops at description and fails to show how actors' actions are connected to specific structural features of society.[40] In such cases, analysis easily falls into a methodological platform that already favors one side of the agency-structure debate. The following three operational steps are designed to read Living Hadīth as a social negotiation that unfolds within the simultaneous tension between autonomy and structural constraint.[41]

The first step is to map the temporal orientation of action. Researchers must ask how remembered pasts, imagined futures, and present situations work together in practical decisions.[42] Because actors carry "a past" and "imagined future possibilities," the researcher should identify the sources of remembered experience, the horizon of expectation, and the practical reasons considered appropriate at the moment of action.[43] In *dhikr fidā'* or *tahlīlān*, for example, the past appears in inherited recitation patterns and ritual sequences. The future appears in the expectation of blessing, safety, forgiveness, or communal healing. The present appears in practical judgments about place, time, committee work, food, roles, and available resources. This mapping enables the researcher to distinguish between mere habitual reproduction and action that includes situational judgment.

This first step must reject the assumption that participants in religious practices are *cultural dopes* who simply perform normative scripts. Practice theory locates agency and structure in routine activity. Even repetitive action may contain cognitive and informational processes through which actors project meaning onto the social world.[44] At the same time, researchers must avoid attaching the label "agency" to every act too easily, because structures can limit options through rules and

[40] Wahyudin Darmalaksana et al., "Analisis Perkembangan Penelitian Living Al-Qur'ān dan Hadis," *Jurnal Perspektif* 3, no. 2 (2019): 134–44, https://doi.org/10.15575/jp.v3i2.49.

[41] Junianto, Mo'afi, and Amrulloh, "The Interdisciplinary Approach."

[42] Emirbayer and Mische, "What Is Agency?"

[43] Steven Hitlin and Glen H. Elder Jr., "Time, Self, and the Curiously Abstract Concept of Agency," *Sociological Theory* 25, no. 2 (2007): 170–91, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9558.2007.00303.x.

[44] Steven Loyal and Barry Barnes, "'Agency' as a Red Herring in Social Theory," *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 31, no. 4 (2001): 507–24, https://doi.org/10.1177/004839310103100403.

resources. The task is not to choose between agency and structure, but to identify field indicators showing when actors evaluate, improvise, negotiate, or merely follow institutionalized paths.[45]

The second step is to trace the transposability of schemas. Researchers should examine how normative rules are moved into new configurations of resources without losing their traditional legitimacy.[46] In Sewell's terms, structure consists of virtual rules and actual resources. Change often occurs when the same rules meet different resources. Since rules are transposable and resources are polysemic, structure is always at risk in the very encounters that reproduce it. Variation becomes possible without assuming unlimited freedom.

The Jogokaryan Mosque case again illustrates this procedure. The key research question is not only whether prizes for worshippers are allowed, but what rule is being transposed through what resource. The rule is the hadīth-based value of congregational prayer, mosque prosperity, and generosity. The resources are modern management, neighborhood mapping, food assistance, prize programs, and public recognition. The consequence is a new form of mosque-based piety that is both spiritual and organizational. The same method can be used to ask whether a transposition is expansive, creating a new social possibility, or conservative, preserving a threatened schema in a new institutional form.[47]

The third step is to map agency as a relational achievement. Action is formed through the connection of actors with rules, resources, and networks of power that mediate choices.[48] In this framework, agency occurs in connection with structure, because action is carried out through institutionalized rules and through allocative and authoritative resources available in particular relationships. The collective Monday-Thursday fasting practice in Kampung Pekaten, Kotagede, is an ideal case. Local figures such as Pak Fauzan and Pak Amron initiate the practice by using their authority as agents of religious discourse. Yet the analysis cannot stop with these initiators. The practice lasts because it is supported by the relational agency of residents who are tied together by neighborhood solidarity.

The communal breaking of the fast at Mushala As-Salam becomes a strategic medium of *ṣilat al-raḥim*, strengthening neighborly relations and reducing social distance through repeated practice. Researchers also need to examine the emotional dimensions that operate as social control. Feelings of reluctance, embarrassment, shame, and communal expectation shape behavior in the ecology of a dense settlement. By mapping subtle power relations, emotional bonds, and networks of

[45] Nigel Pleasants, "Free Will, Determinism and the 'Problem' of Structure and Agency in the Social Sciences," *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 49, no. 1 (2019): 3–30, https://doi.org/10.1177/0048393118814952.

[46] Sewell, "A Theory of Structure."

[47] Qudsy et al., "The Making of Living Ḥadīth."

[48] Burkitt, "Relational Agency."

interdependence, analysis can show that the practice is moved by the pulse of community, not only by isolated individual obedience.

These three steps should be treated as one procedural package, not as separate options to be chosen according to preference.[49] Temporal mapping shows how remembered pasts and imagined futures guide present action. Transposability analysis gives a concrete structural lens by breaking down structure into rules and resources. Relational mapping shows how authoritative and allocative resources flow through networks, making agency neither purely individual nor fully determined by structure. This package helps researchers avoid descriptive bias, voluntarism that ignores structure, and determinism that erases human efficacy. As a research strategy, agency theory is best understood as a sensitizing device that guides empirical questions, not as a final ontology that closes down field findings.[50]

Ultimately, Living Hadīth can be read as a complex sociological arena of negotiation, because action always stands in the simultaneous tension between autonomy and constraint.[51] Future research may develop comparative studies across communities to test how variations in rules and resources produce different forms of hadīth reception. Another promising direction is life-course-sensitive research, because institutions provide transitions and pathways that structure timing and path dependency. In this sense, agency theory helps explain how individuals and communities set goals, act, and interpret practice within social parameters, including the possibility of changing those parameters through their own action.[52]

4. Conclusion

Integrating agency theory into Living Hadīth studies offers an important analytical shift. It moves research from the description of ritual and the search for textual proof toward a more complex and emancipatory sociological reading. The central finding of this article is that Muslim obedience to hadīth is not passive compliance or structural determinism. It is an active agentive maneuver. Through the proposed framework, hadīth practice appears as a praxis in which actors orchestrate time, transpose classical norms into contemporary resources, and co-author piety through communal bonds, material arrangements, and bodily discipline.

This article provides a conceptual foundation and an initial operational guide structured around three steps: mapping temporal orientations, tracing the transposability of schemas, and mapping relational agency. The framework remains open to testing and development. Future

[49] Ammerman, "Rethinking Religion."

[50] Helena Kupari, "Lived Religion and the Religious Field," *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 35, no. 2 (2020): 213–30, https://doi.org/10.1080/13537903.2020.1759901.

[51] Qudsy et al., "The Making of Living Ḥadīth."

[52] Mark Hewitson, "Theories of Action and the Archaeology of Knowledge," in *History and Causality*, ed. Mark Hewitson (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 180, https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137372406_7.

scholarship may apply it comparatively across Indonesian social landscapes to examine how class, gender, demography, institutional authority, and local culture constrain or enable agency in the same hadīth-based practice. Further studies may also explore the transposition of Living Hadīth into digital ecosystems and virtual spaces, or conduct longitudinal research on how religious agency changes across the life course. Such work would enrich Living Hadīth studies by making them more theoretically grounded, socially precise, and attentive to the living actors who transform prophetic texts into practice.

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