

Salahuddin al-Idlibī's methodology of hadith matn criticism: An analysis of the hadith of the fly in a drink

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Submission: 20 June 2026

Revision: 30 June 2026

Accepted: 13 July 2026

Abstract

Debates surrounding the authenticity of hadith remain prominent in contemporary scholarship, particularly regarding traditions perceived to conflict with reason and modern science. This study examines Salahuddin al-Idlibī's methodology of *matn* criticism by applying its four evaluative criteria to the hadith of the fly narrated in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. Employing a qualitative library research approach, data were collected through documentation and analyzed using content analysis and descriptive-analytical methods. The analysis is based on four criteria: conformity with the Qur'an, consistency with more authentic hadiths, compatibility with reason, historical facts and scientific knowledge, and the linguistic characteristics of the Prophet's sayings. The findings show that the hadith fulfills all four criteria. Its content is consistent with the Qur'an and authentic hadiths, is rationally understandable in light of historical context and scientific findings, and reflects the Prophet's linguistic style. Therefore, al-Idlibī's methodology is both conceptually sound and practically applicable for evaluating debated hadiths.

Keywords: Hadith matn criticism; Salahuddin al-Idlibī; Hadith of the fly; Hadith studies; Hadith authenticity.

Abstrak

Perdebatan mengenai autentisitas hadis masih menjadi perhatian dalam kajian kontemporer, terutama terhadap hadis yang dianggap bertentangan dengan akal dan ilmu pengetahuan modern. Penelitian ini bertujuan mengkaji metodologi kritik matan Salahuddin al-Idlibī dengan menerapkan empat kriterianya pada hadis lalat dalam minuman yang diriwayatkan dalam *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode studi kepustakaan. Data dikumpulkan melalui dokumentasi dan dianalisis menggunakan analisis isi serta metode deskriptif-analitis. Analisis didasarkan pada empat kriteria, yaitu kesesuaian dengan Al-Qur'an, keselarasan dengan hadis yang lebih sahih, kesesuaian dengan akal, fakta sejarah, dan ilmu pengetahuan, serta karakteristik kebahasaan sabda Nabi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa hadis tersebut memenuhi keempat kriteria. Dengan demikian, metodologi kritik matan Salahuddin al-Idlibī memiliki landasan konseptual yang kuat sekaligus relevan diterapkan dalam mengkaji hadis-hadis yang masih diperdebatkan pada era kontemporer.

Kata Kunci: Kritik matan hadis; Salahuddin al-Idlibī; Hadis lalat; Studi hadis; Autentisitas hadis.

Introduction

The development of contemporary hadith studies has been marked by the increasing use of historical, interdisciplinary, and contextual approaches to understanding hadith as a primary source of Islamic teachings. While these approaches have enriched perspectives in hadith scholarship, they have also revived debates concerning the authenticity of hadith, particularly regarding the validity of both its transmission and textual content amid the rapid advancement of scientific knowledge and ongoing social change (Misbah et al., 2026; Pandika & Efendi, 2026). In this context, the issue of hadith authenticity is no longer confined to verifying the reliability of the chain of transmission (*sanad*), but also encompasses the critical examination of the textual content (*matn*) to ensure that its message remains scientifically defensible without undermining its authority as a source of Islamic teaching.

The preservation of hadith authenticity relies on two principal instruments: *sanad* criticism and *matn* criticism (Ferdiansah et al., 2026; Rahman, 2010). *Sanad* criticism focuses on assessing the continuity of transmission and the reliability of narrators, whereas *matn* criticism evaluates the validity of a hadith's content by examining its conformity with the Qur'an, stronger authentic hadiths, historical facts, reason, and empirical reality (Ferdiansah et al., 2026). These two forms of criticism are complementary rather than dichotomous. A sound *sanad* does not necessarily guarantee that the *matn* is free from interpretive problems, just as a rationally acceptable *matn* cannot be regarded as valid if its *sanad* fails to meet the standards of authenticity (Ismail, 1996; Rahman et al., 2025). Therefore, the integration of *sanad* and *matn* criticism constitutes a fundamental basis for a comprehensive methodology in hadith studies.

Among the scholars who have contributed significantly to the development of *matn* criticism, Salahuddin al-Idlibī proposed a systematic analytical framework (Hudaya, 2014). His methodology is based on four criteria: the *matn* must not contradict the Qur'an, must not conflict with more authentic hadiths, must not contradict sound reason, established historical facts, or well-established scientific knowledge, and must not contain linguistic or stylistic weaknesses inconsistent with the characteristics of the Prophet's sayings (Al-Idlibī, 1983). These criteria provide practical and operational parameters for evaluating the validity of hadith texts. Rather than merely emphasizing the importance of *matn* criticism in normative terms, al-Idlibī offers an analytical framework that can be systematically applied to specific hadiths (Hudaya, 2014). This methodological strength explains the continued relevance of his approach in addressing contemporary debates on hadith authenticity.

Previous studies have examined *matn* criticism from various perspectives. Some have explored its significance and its relationship with *sanad* criticism, while others have focused either on Salahuddin al-Idlibī's methodology or on the hadith concerning the

fly from the perspective of modern science (Hudaya, 2014; Nur Sahid, 2023; Rahman, 2010; Tanggareng & Nurani, 2025). Nevertheless, these studies remain largely disconnected. Research on al-Idlibī's methodology has generally remained at the conceptual level, whereas studies on the hadith of the fly have primarily concentrated on demonstrating its compatibility with contemporary scientific findings. Consequently, there remains a significant research gap concerning the systematic application of al-Idlibī's methodology of *matn* criticism to the analysis of the hadith of the fly, a tradition that continues to attract scholarly debate in contemporary hadith studies.

In light of this gap, the present study aims to analyze Salahuddin al-Idlibī's methodology of *matn* criticism and to apply its four evaluative criteria to the hadith concerning the fly in a drink. This study is expected not only to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the practical implementation of al-Idlibī's methodology but also to demonstrate its relevance for evaluating hadiths that continue to be debated in contemporary scholarship. Ultimately, this research seeks to enrich the methodological discourse of hadith studies and contribute to the development of a more applicable approach to *matn* criticism.

Method

This study employs a qualitative approach using library research as its primary research design (Sugiyono, 2019). The research focuses on Salahuddin al-Idlibī's methodology of *matn* criticism and its application to the analysis of the hadith concerning a fly falling into a drink. The primary sources consist of Salahuddin al-Idlibī's work on the methodology of *matn* criticism and the hadith of the fly narrated in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. Secondary sources include books, journal articles, and previous studies relevant to *matn* criticism, hadith research methodology, and scholarly discussions on the hadith of the fly.

Data were collected through documentation by examining various library sources related to the research topic (Sugiyono, 2019). The collected data were analyzed using content analysis to identify the concepts and the four criteria of *matn* criticism formulated by Salahuddin al-Idlibī. Subsequently, a descriptive-analytical method was employed to apply these four criteria as an analytical framework for examining the hadith concerning the fly in a drink. Through this process, the study seeks to evaluate the *matn* of the hadith based on al-Idlibī's four criteria, thereby providing a systematic understanding of the practical application of his methodology of *matn* criticism in contemporary hadith studies.

Results and Discussion

Matn criticism in hadith studies

Matn criticism is one of the essential instruments in hadith research methodology, aimed at examining the validity of a hadith's textual content after its chain of transmission (*sanad*) has been verified. In the tradition of *'ulūm al-ḥadīth*, the authenticity of a narration is determined not only by the continuity of its *sanad* and the reliability of its transmitters but also by the quality of its *matn* as the substantive message conveyed. Accordingly, *matn* criticism serves to ensure that the content of a hadith does not contradict the fundamental principles of Islam or verifiable historical and empirical facts (Hudaya, 2014; Tanggareng & Nurani, 2025).

Although *sanad* criticism developed earlier and in a more systematic manner, hadith scholars since the time of the Prophet's Companions had already examined the *matn* whenever they encountered narrations considered inconsistent with the Qur'an, more authentic hadiths, historical facts, or sound reason. This historical practice demonstrates that *matn* criticism is not a modern innovation in hadith studies but an integral component of the hadith verification tradition established during the earliest period of Islam (Ferdiansah et al., 2026; Rahman et al., 2025).

In its development, *matn* criticism has never been regarded as a substitute for *sanad* criticism but rather as a complementary instrument. While *sanad* criticism assesses the validity of the transmission chain through the examination of its continuity and the integrity of its transmitters, *matn* criticism evaluates the substance of the hadith to ensure that its meaning remains consistent with the sources of Islamic teachings and is free from inconsistencies or anomalies. This complementary relationship underscores that the authenticity of a hadith can only be established through the integration of both *sanad* and *matn* criticism (Pandika & Efendi, 2026).

The importance of integrating *sanad* and *matn* criticism has become increasingly evident in contemporary hadith scholarship. Current debates surrounding hadiths related to natural phenomena, health, and scientific developments require a methodological approach that extends beyond verifying the authenticity of the *sanad* to include a systematic evaluation of the *matn*. Consequently, there is a need for a methodology of *matn* criticism with clear operational criteria that can be applied in a comprehensive analysis of hadiths. One such framework was developed by Salahuddin al-Idlibī through his four criteria of *matn* criticism, which constitute the primary focus of this study (Al-Idlibī, 1983; Hudaya, 2014; Muhammad Nabat Ardli & Reza Hilmy Luayyin, 2024).

Salahuddin al-Idlibī's methodology of matn criticism

Salahuddin al-Idlibī is one of the contemporary scholars who devoted particular attention to the development of a systematic methodology for *matn* criticism. His

major contribution lies in formulating a set of operational criteria for evaluating the validity of a hadith's textual content while remaining faithful to the principles of classical *‘ulūm al-ḥadīth*. These ideas are presented in his work *Manhaj Naqd al-Matn ‘inda ‘Ulamā’ al-Ḥadīth al-Nabawī*, which has become an important reference in the study of matn criticism. Unlike many studies that primarily emphasize the authentication of the *sanad*, al-Idlibī argues that a comprehensive hadith analysis must integrate both *sanad* and *matn* criticism as complementary components in determining the authenticity of a hadith (Muhammad Nabat Ardli & Reza Hilmy Luayyin, 2024).

Among the various approaches to matn criticism, al-Idlibī's framework is particularly significant because it translates classical principles of hadith criticism into explicit operational criteria that can be systematically applied in textual analysis. Rather than discussing matn criticism only at the normative level, his methodology provides practical evaluative indicators that enable researchers to examine the content of hadith in a structured and transparent manner. This operational character makes the framework especially relevant for analyzing hadiths that continue to generate scholarly debate in contemporary contexts.

Al-Idlibī's methodology is based on the view that matn criticism has often received less scholarly attention than *sanad* criticism, despite the fact that both play equally significant roles in hadith research. According to al-Idlibī, many problems arise when a hadith is regarded as authentic solely on the basis of its *sanad*, while its textual content has not been critically examined (Al-Idlibī, 1983). This concern prompted him to develop a methodological framework that provides clear operational parameters for systematically evaluating the validity of the *matn*. Drawing upon the practices of classical hadith scholars, he formulated four criteria of matn criticism and organized them into a more structured analytical framework that can be applied to various hadiths.

Although al-Idlibī emphasizes the complementary relationship between *sanad* and *matn* criticism, the present study focuses specifically on matn criticism because the selected hadith has already been widely recognized as authentic in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. Consequently, the analysis does not re-evaluate the authenticity of the *sanad*, but rather examines whether the textual content of the hadith satisfies al-Idlibī's criteria for matn validity.

Al-Idlibī's methodology of matn criticism is founded upon four interrelated criteria. These criteria should not be understood as hierarchical stages or independent alternatives; instead, they function as complementary analytical parameters that collectively determine whether the content of a hadith can be accepted as authentic or requires further critical examination (Al-Idlibī, 1983). The four criteria are summarized in Figure 1 before being discussed individually.

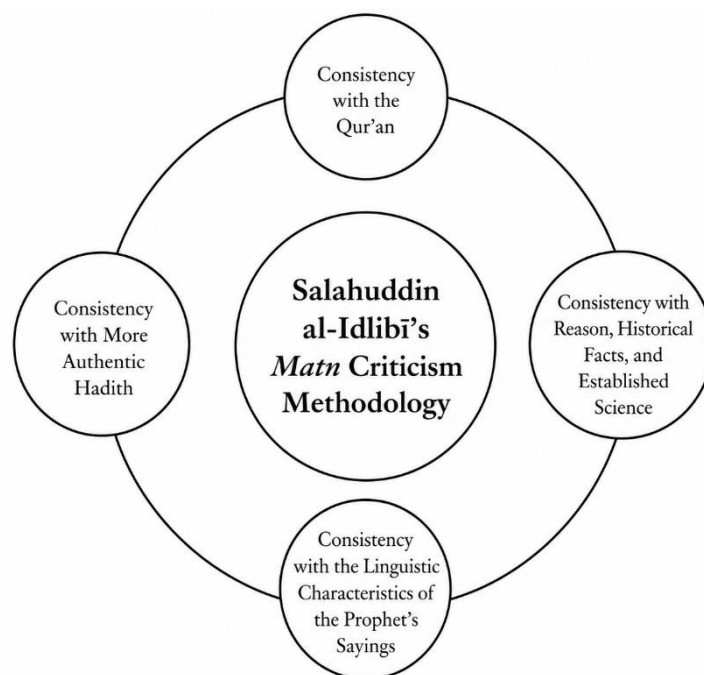


Figure 1. Conceptual framework of Salahuddin al-Idlibī's methodology of matn criticism

Source: Adapted from Al-Idlibī (1983).

The first criterion requires that the matn of a hadith be consistent with the Qur'an, which represents the highest authoritative source of Islamic teachings. According to al-Idlibī, any hadith that clearly contradicts Qur'anic principles requires further examination of both its *sanad* and *matn*. Accordingly, conformity with the Qur'an constitutes the primary criterion of matn criticism.

The second criterion requires that the matn be compared with other hadiths of equal or higher authenticity. This comparison seeks to identify possible contradictions in meaning or wording that may influence interpretation. Whenever inconsistencies arise, classical methods of *'ulūm al-ḥadīth*, including *al-jam' wa al-tawfiq* (reconciliation), *tarjīh* (preference), or other accepted approaches, should be employed before determining the status of the narration.

The third criterion requires that the content of a hadith be compatible with sound reason, verifiable historical facts, and well-established scientific knowledge. Nevertheless, al-Idlibī does not regard reason or science as authorities superior to revelation. Rather, they function as interpretive instruments for understanding hadith within the epistemological framework of Islamic scholarship. Consequently, the evaluation of the matn remains grounded in Islamic epistemology while maintaining openness to rational and empirical inquiry.

The fourth criterion emphasizes the linguistic and rhetorical characteristics of the Prophet Muhammad's sayings. According to al-Idlibī, a matn containing unusual wording, disproportionate meanings, or expressions inconsistent with the Prophet's established style of communication requires further critical examination. Therefore,

linguistic analysis and contextual understanding constitute essential components of matn criticism.

Accordingly, the four criteria formulated by al-Idlibī provide not only a conceptual understanding of matn criticism but also a practical analytical framework for evaluating debated hadiths systematically. In the present study, each criterion is operationalized as an analytical indicator to examine the hadith concerning a fly falling into a drink. Through this approach, al-Idlibī's methodology serves as the principal conceptual and analytical framework guiding the subsequent analysis.

Analysis of the hadith of the fly based on Salahuddin al-Idlibī's methodology of matn criticism

The practical value of Salahuddin al-Idlibī's methodology can be demonstrated through its application to hadiths that continue to generate scholarly debate in contemporary Islamic studies. Rather than remaining a purely theoretical framework, the four criteria of matn criticism provide operational analytical indicators for evaluating the textual validity of hadiths whose meanings have been questioned in relation to historical context, rational inquiry, and scientific developments. Among such narrations, the hadith concerning a fly falling into a drink represents one of the most frequently discussed examples because it has attracted sustained attention from both classical and contemporary scholars. Its recurring association with issues of hygiene, microbiology, and the relationship between revelation and scientific knowledge makes it an appropriate case for demonstrating the practical applicability of al-Idlibī's methodology.

إِذَا وَقَعَ الذُّبَابُ فِي إِنَاءٍ أَحَدِكُمْ فَلْيَغْمِسْهُ كُلَّهُ، ثُمَّ لِيَطْرَحْهُ؛ فَإِنَّ فِي أَحَدِ جَنَاحَيْهِ شِفَاءً، وَفِي الْآخَرِ دَاءٌ

"If a fly falls into the drinking vessel of one of you, let him immerse it completely and then remove it, for one of its wings carries disease while the other carries its cure" (al-Bukhārī, 2002, p. 5728).

The hadith concerning a fly falling into a drink is one of the traditions narrated in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* and is classified as authentic (*ṣaḥīḥ*), making it widely accepted by the majority of hadith scholars as an authoritative narration. Nevertheless, it remains one of the most frequently debated hadiths in contemporary scholarship. The debate primarily arises when the content of the hadith is examined in light of modern standards of hygiene and advances in scientific knowledge, particularly in microbiology. Some scholars argue that the instruction to immerse the fly in the drink contradicts contemporary health principles, while others seek to interpret it through contextual approaches or by exploring the relationship between hadith and modern science (Ahmad Haikal & Endad Musaddad, 2025; Zekrinaldi, 2026).

Historical evidence indicates that the people of the Hijaz during the Prophet Muhammad's lifetime had limited access to clean water and generally relied on wells,

household reservoirs, and open containers as their principal water sources. Under these environmental conditions, the presence of dust, insects, and flies in drinking vessels was a common occurrence, while water itself remained a valuable resource that could not easily be discarded. This historical setting provides an important context for understanding the Prophet's instruction, particularly because no authentic narration explicitly explains the circumstances surrounding the issuance of this hadith. Accordingly, reconstructing the historical context constitutes a necessary preliminary step before evaluating the *matn* according to the criteria formulated by Salahuddin al-Idlibī (Zekrinaldi, 2026).

Understanding this historical background is essential because Salahuddin al-Idlibī's methodology of *matn* criticism evaluates not only the wording of a hadith but also its consistency with Islamic principles, historical reality, and the circumstances in which the narration emerged. At the same time, the objective of the present study is **not** to establish the hadith as a scientific proposition or to verify its empirical truth solely through modern science. Rather, scientific findings are employed as interpretive references to assess whether the textual content of the hadith contradicts well-established knowledge, in accordance with al-Idlibī's third evaluative criterion. Thus, the analysis remains grounded within the epistemological framework of *'ulūm al-ḥadīth*, while engaging constructively with contemporary scientific discourse.

To ensure analytical consistency, the hadith is examined sequentially using al-Idlibī's four complementary criteria: (1) consistency with the Qur'an, (2) consistency with more authentic hadiths, (3) consistency with sound reason, historical facts, and established scientific knowledge, and (4) consistency with the linguistic characteristics of the Prophet's sayings. These criteria function collectively rather than independently, providing a systematic framework for evaluating the validity of the hadith's textual content. The analytical indicators employed in this study are summarized in Table 1 before each criterion is discussed in detail.

Table 1. Analytical framework for examining the hadith based on Salahuddin al-Idlibī's methodology of *matn* criticism

Criterion	Analytical Indicator	Focus of Analysis
Criterion I	Consistency with the Qur'an	Does the <i>matn</i> contradict the principles of the Qur'an?
Criterion II	Consistency with more authentic hadiths	Does the <i>matn</i> contradict other more authentic narrations?
Criterion III	Consistency with sound reason, historical facts, and established scientific knowledge	Can the <i>matn</i> be understood rationally and is it supported by historical evidence and scientific knowledge?

Criterion IV	Consistency with the characteristics of Prophet's sayings	with the the	Are the wording and substance of the <i>matn</i> consistent with the characteristics of the Prophet's sayings?
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Source: Developed by the Author (2026).

According to Salahuddin al-Idlibī, the first step in *matn* criticism is to examine whether the content of a hadith is consistent with the Qur'an, the highest authoritative source of Islamic teachings (Al-Idlibī, 1983). As divine revelation with *qaṭ'ī al-thubūt* (definitive authenticity), the Qur'an serves as the primary standard for assessing the validity of a hadith's *matn*. Therefore, if a hadith clearly contradicts the principles of the Qur'an and such a contradiction cannot be reconciled through *al-jam' wa al-tawfiq* (harmonization), its authenticity must be re-evaluated (Diana, 2020). Conversely, if the content of a hadith remains consistent with the values and principles of the Qur'an, it satisfies the first criterion of al-Idlibī's methodology of *matn* criticism.

With regard to the hadith concerning the fly, an examination of the relevant Qur'anic verses reveals no explicit text that contradicts its content. On the contrary, the Qur'an contains several general principles that provide a framework for understanding the hadith. One such principle is found in the statement of Allah in Qur'an 2:185 (Sūrat al-Baqarah):

يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ بِكُمُ الْيُسْرَ وَلَا يُرِيدُ بِكُمُ الْعُسْرَ

"...Allah intends for you ease and does not intend for you hardship."

According to Ibn Kathīr, this verse demonstrates that Islamic law is founded upon the principles of ease (*taysīr*) and the removal of hardship (*raf' al-ḥaraj*). The Sharī'ah is not intended to impose burdens beyond human capacity but rather to provide practical solutions suited to people's circumstances (Ad-Dimasyqi, 2000). A similar interpretation is offered by M. Quraish Shihab, who argues that the principle of ease does not imply neglecting religious obligations; instead, it reflects the fact that Islamic rulings always take into account human capability and actual conditions (Shihab, 2010). Thus, *taysīr* should be understood as one of the objectives (*maqāṣid*) of Islamic law in promoting public welfare and preventing unnecessary hardship.

According to Salahuddin al-Idlibī, evaluating a hadith against the Qur'an requires more than identifying the absence of explicit textual contradictions. The analysis must also consider whether the hadith is consistent with the broader objectives (*maqāṣid*) and normative principles established by the Qur'an. In the case of the hadith concerning the fly, no Qur'anic verse explicitly prohibits the instruction contained in the narration. Instead, several verses emphasize that Islamic law is founded upon the principles of facilitation (*taysīr*) and the removal of unnecessary hardship (*raf' al-ḥaraj*). One of the clearest expressions of this principle appears in Qur'an 2:286:

لَا يُكَلِّفُ اللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا

"Allah does not burden a soul beyond its capacity."

This verse affirms that Islamic law consistently considers human capability in the implementation of its rulings. When interpreted within the historical context of Arabian society during the Prophet Muhammad's lifetime, where access to clean water was limited, the Prophet's instruction concerning a fly falling into a drinking vessel can be understood as a practical application of this Qur'anic principle. Rather than requiring people to discard valuable water whenever a fly fell into it, the instruction offered a realistic solution suited to the environmental and social conditions of the time. This interpretation does not diminish the importance of cleanliness; instead, it demonstrates that Islamic law seeks to harmonize hygienic principles with the objectives of facilitating human welfare (*taysīr*) and preventing unnecessary hardship (*raf' al-ḥaraj*). Accordingly, from the perspective of al-Idlibī's first criterion, the hadith remains consistent with the broader principles established by the Qur'an.

Furthermore, the Qur'an contains no verse stating that the presence of a fly in a drink automatically renders it unlawful or unusable. On the contrary, Qur'an 22:73 mentions the fly as part of a parable illustrating human weakness before the power of Allah (Departemen Agama RI, 2009). According to Ibn Kathīr, the reference to the fly in this verse emphasizes humanity's inability to create even the smallest creature and does not establish any legal ruling concerning the impurity of flies or prohibit physical contact with them (Ad-Dimasyqi, 2000). Consequently, the verse does not contradict the hadith concerning the fly but addresses an entirely different subject.

Based on this analysis, the hadith concerning the fly does not conflict with the principles of the Qur'an. Rather, its content is consistent with the Qur'anic principles of ease (*taysīr*), the removal of hardship (*raf' al-ḥaraj*), and the Sunnah's function as an explanatory source (*bayān*) for matters that are not elaborated in detail in the Qur'an. Therefore, according to the first criterion formulated by Salahuddin al-Idlibī, the hadith satisfies the requirement of consistency with the Qur'an, and no weakness is identified in its *matn* from this perspective.

According to Salahuddin al-Idlibī, once a hadith is shown to be consistent with the Qur'an, the next step in *matn* criticism is to examine its consistency with other hadiths of equal or higher authenticity. The purpose of this analysis is to determine whether there is any substantive contradiction (*ta'āruḍ*) among the narrations. If such a contradiction exists, it should not immediately lead to the rejection of one narration. Instead, classical methods of hadith scholarship, such as *al-jam' wa al-tawfiq* (reconciliation), *tarjīḥ* (preference for the stronger narration), *naskh* (abrogation) where supported by reliable evidence, or *tawāqquf* (suspension of judgment), should be applied. Thus, al-Idlibī's second criterion evaluates a hadith within the broader corpus of Prophetic traditions rather than as an isolated text.

An examination of authentic hadiths related to cleanliness, food, and drink reveals no narration that explicitly contradicts the hadith concerning the fly. Hadiths encouraging cleanliness or prohibiting harmful substances address different contexts and therefore cannot be regarded as contradictory. Instead, these narrations should be understood as complementary, with each addressing different aspects of Islamic teachings concerning hygiene and the proper use of food and drink.

From al-Idlibī's perspective, the absence of any substantive contradiction with other authentic narrations indicates that the hadith concerning the fly fulfills the second criterion of *matn* criticism (Muhammad Nabat Ardli & Reza Hilmy Luayyin, 2024). Differences in context among narrations should not automatically be interpreted as contradictions but rather as examples of the Prophet's varied guidance in response to different situations. Accordingly, the hadith concerning the fly remains acceptable without disregarding other authentic traditions that emphasize cleanliness and health.

Based on this analysis, the hadith concerning the fly does not conflict with other authentic hadiths. Therefore, according to the second criterion proposed by Salahuddin al-Idlibī, it satisfies the requirement of consistency with more authentic narrations, and no weakness is identified in its *matn* from the perspective of intertextual comparison.

According to Salahuddin al-Idlibī, the *matn* of a hadith should not contradict sound reason, verifiable historical facts, or well-established scientific knowledge (Hudaya, 2014). However, the role of reason in *matn* criticism is not to place human rationality above divine revelation but to serve as a tool for interpreting hadith in accordance with the principles of hadith scholarship. Consequently, evaluating a hadith requires a dialogue between the text, its historical context, and contemporary scientific knowledge, thereby avoiding both overly literal and speculative interpretations.

One of the primary reasons why the hadith concerning the fly has become a subject of debate is that, when read literally, the instruction to immerse the fly in a drink appears inconsistent with modern principles of hygiene. The common housefly (*Musca domestica*) is widely recognized as a mechanical vector capable of carrying various pathogenic microorganisms on the surface of its body (Hastutiek & Fitri, 2013). From a public health perspective, concerns regarding the content of the hadith are therefore understandable.

Nevertheless, al-Idlibī's third criterion does not require conformity with every emerging scientific hypothesis but rather with scientific knowledge that has acquired a solid empirical foundation (Hudaya, 2014). Consequently, evaluating this hadith requires consideration of contemporary microbiological research in a broader context rather than relying solely on the assumption that flies function only as carriers of disease.

From a historical perspective, as discussed in the previous section, the hadith emerged within the context of Hijazi society, where access to clean water was limited. Under such conditions, flies frequently came into contact with water containers and drinking vessels. This historical context is essential for understanding the Prophet's instruction and prevents the hadith from being interpreted independently of the social realities in which it was delivered.

Several scientific studies suggest that, in addition to carrying pathogenic microorganisms, flies may also possess biological mechanisms capable of inhibiting the growth of certain bacteria. Research conducted by R. M. Atta identified microorganisms associated with the wings of *Musca domestica* that exhibit antagonistic activity against pathogenic bacteria (Atta, 2014). These findings indicate that the fly's body may function not only as a vector of disease but also as a source of biological agents with antimicrobial potential.

These findings are further supported by the study of Claresta et al., which demonstrated that fly wings possess the potential to neutralize beverages contaminated with microorganisms (Claresta et al., 2020). This research provides a possible biological explanation for the existence of antimicrobial compounds or agents associated with the fly, thereby opening the possibility of a constructive dialogue between the hadith and modern microbiological findings.

Similarly, Nur Sahid's study, which examined the hadith from the perspectives of both hadith scholarship and science, concluded that a number of contemporary scientific findings tend to provide empirical support for the content of the hadith (Nur Sahid, 2023). His study identified significant differences between beverages merely contacted by a fly and those in which the fly was fully immersed, suggesting that the Prophet's instruction may have a biological basis that has only become understandable through recent scientific developments.

Nevertheless, these findings should not be interpreted as definitive scientific proof of the hadith. Microbiological research concerning flies continues to evolve, particularly regarding the mechanisms of bacteriophages, antimicrobial compounds, and their biological effectiveness under different conditions. Therefore, these studies are better understood as evidence that the hadith cannot be dismissed as contradictory to science *a priori*. Instead, scientific developments increasingly demonstrate plausible explanations that support the content of the hadith without transforming it into a scientific theory.

Based on the synthesis of historical evidence and contemporary microbiological research, the hadith concerning the fly does not contradict the third criterion proposed by Salahuddin al-Idlibī. These scientific findings are not intended to establish the hadith as a source of scientific theory but rather to demonstrate that its content remains scientifically plausible and does not conflict with established knowledge. Accordingly,

the hadith satisfies al-Idlibī's third criterion of consistency with sound reason, historical facts, and established scientific knowledge.

Table 2. Synthesis of studies on the hadith of the fly from medical, microbiological, and hadith perspectives

Researcher	Research Focus	Main Findings	Relevance to the Hadith
Hastutiek & Fitri (2007)	<i>Musca domestica</i> as a disease vector	Houseflies carry various pathogenic microorganisms.	Explains the "disease" aspect mentioned in the hadith.
Atta (2014)	Microbiology of housefly wings	Antagonistic activity against pathogenic bacteria was identified.	Suggests the presence of biological agents capable of inhibiting bacterial growth.
Claresta et al. (2020)	The potential of housefly wings to neutralize microorganisms	Housefly wings exhibit the potential to neutralize microbial contamination.	Provides a scientific explanation for the hadith's reference to the "cure."
Nur Sahid (2023)	Hadith and science	A synthesis of previous studies demonstrates empirical support for the content of the hadith.	Reinforces the view that the hadith can be interpreted in dialogue with modern science.

Source: Developed by the Author (2026).

Table 2 demonstrates that contemporary studies present complementary rather than contradictory evidence regarding the hadith of the fly. While medical research consistently recognizes the housefly as a carrier of pathogenic microorganisms, microbiological studies also indicate the existence of biological mechanisms with antimicrobial potential. Collectively, these findings neither seek to transform the hadith into a scientific theory nor claim to provide definitive empirical verification of revelation. Instead, they demonstrate that the textual content of the hadith remains scientifically plausible and cannot be regarded as inherently inconsistent with established scientific knowledge. From the perspective of Salahuddin al-Idlibī's third criterion, this synthesis supports the conclusion that the hadith does not contradict sound reason, historical facts, or contemporary scientific understanding, thereby fulfilling the third evaluative criterion of matn criticism.

Having established that the hadith satisfies the first three criteria of Salahuddin al-Idlibī's methodology, the final stage of the analysis concerns its linguistic and rhetorical characteristics. This criterion shifts the focus from external consistency with the Qur'an, authentic hadiths, historical evidence, and scientific knowledge to the internal characteristics of the matn itself. Accordingly, the following discussion examines whether the wording, style, and rhetorical structure of the hadith correspond to the established linguistic characteristics of the Prophet Muhammad's sayings.

The hadith concerning the fly in a drink exhibits these characteristics. From a linguistic perspective, it is expressed in concise, clear, and instructive language. The Prophet addresses a practical issue encountered in daily life through a straightforward imperative without lengthy explanations or excessive rhetorical embellishment. This style of communication is commonly found in authentic Prophetic traditions, particularly those concerning acts of worship and everyday matters.

Furthermore, the hadith contains none of the features commonly associated with fabricated (*mawḍūʿ*) traditions, such as exaggerated promises of reward, disproportionate threats, or statements that contradict the fundamental principles of Islam. Its content is also internally coherent, as the reference to disease in one wing and its remedy in the other forms a unified and consistent meaning. Although this statement was once considered difficult to comprehend, developments in scientific research have demonstrated that its content remains scientifically plausible. Consequently, the hadith cannot be regarded as exhibiting *fasād al-maʿnā* (defective meaning) or as containing claims that are inherently irrational.

When compared with other Prophetic traditions, the explanatory style employed in this hadith is not unusual. In numerous hadiths, the Prophet explains the rationale or wisdom underlying a particular instruction by clarifying its cause or intended benefit. Accordingly, the mention of disease and its remedy in the hadith concerning the fly may be understood as part of the Prophet's characteristic method of explaining the wisdom behind a practical instruction rather than as a deviation from the linguistic style of authentic Prophetic discourse.

Based on this analysis, no indication of weakness is found in either the wording or the stylistic characteristics of the hadith concerning the fly. Its sentence structure reflects the Prophet's concise, communicative, and meaningful style of expression, while its content exhibits none of the characteristics associated with problematic or fabricated narrations. Therefore, according to the fourth criterion formulated by Salahuddin al-Idlibī, the hadith concerning the fly in a drink fulfills the requirement of consistency with the characteristics of the Prophet's sayings.

To provide a comprehensive overview of the findings, the results of applying Salahuddin al-Idlibī's methodology are synthesized in Table 3. Rather than presenting separate observations for each criterion, the table integrates the analytical findings into a single evaluative framework, illustrating how the hadith concerning the fly performs across all four dimensions of matn criticism. This synthesis facilitates a holistic assessment of the hadith's textual validity before drawing the overall conclusion.

Table 3. Analysis of the hadith of the fly based on Salahuddin al-Idlibī's methodology of matn criticism

Matn Criterion	Criticism	Analytical Findings	Conclusion
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Consistency with the Qur'an	No contradiction was found between the hadith and the principles of the Qur'an, particularly the principles of <i>taysīr</i> (facilitation) and <i>raf' al-ḥaraj</i> (removal of hardship).	Fulfilled
Consistency with More Authentic Hadiths	No contradiction was identified with other authentic hadiths or with the established practices of the Prophet.	Fulfilled
Consistency with Sound Reason, Historical Facts, and Established Scientific Knowledge	Historical context and developments in microbiological research indicate that the hadith does not conflict with verifiable historical facts or established scientific knowledge.	Fulfilled
Consistency with the Characteristics of the Prophet's Sayings	The wording of the hadith is eloquent and concise, contains no <i>fasād al-mā'nā</i> (defective meaning), and is consistent with the linguistic and rhetorical characteristics of the Prophet's sayings.	Fulfilled

Source: Developed by the Author (2026).

As summarized in Table 3, the hadith concerning the fly satisfies each of the four evaluative criteria formulated by Salahuddin al-Idlibī. No contradiction was identified between the hadith and the Qur'an, more authentic hadiths, sound reason, historical evidence, established scientific knowledge, or the linguistic characteristics of the Prophet's sayings. These findings demonstrate that the four criteria operate as complementary components of a unified methodological framework rather than as isolated standards of evaluation. Accordingly, the validity of the hadith's *matn* is supported not by a single line of evidence but by the convergence of textual, historical, rational, scientific, and linguistic analyses.

The present findings also illustrate the practical applicability of al-Idlibī's methodology in addressing contemporary debates surrounding hadith authenticity. Instead of relying exclusively on either traditional authentication or modern scientific interpretation, the framework integrates multiple dimensions of analysis within the epistemological principles of *'ulūm al-ḥadīth*. Consequently, the hadith concerning the fly fulfills all four evaluative criteria, demonstrating that al-Idlibī's methodology provides a coherent and systematic approach to *matn* criticism while remaining relevant to contemporary scholarly discussions.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that Salahuddin al-Idlibī's methodology of *matn* criticism provides a systematic analytical framework based on four principal criteria: consistency with the Qur'an, more authentic hadiths, sound reason, historical facts and established scientific knowledge, and the linguistic and rhetorical characteristics of the Prophet's sayings. These four criteria establish *matn* criticism not merely as a

complement to *sanad* criticism but as an operational instrument for comprehensively evaluating the validity of hadith texts.

The application of this methodology to the hadith concerning the fly in a drink indicates that the hadith satisfies all four of al-Idlibī's criteria and that the validity of its *matn* can therefore be maintained. These findings demonstrate the continued relevance of al-Idlibī's methodology for examining hadiths that remain subjects of contemporary debate while illustrating that constructive dialogue between hadith studies and modern scientific developments can be achieved without compromising the fundamental principles of *'ulūm al-ḥadīth*. Nevertheless, this study is limited to the application of al-Idlibī's methodology to a single hadith narrated in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. Future research may extend this approach to other debated hadiths, such as those concerning *al-ṭibb al-nabawī* (Prophetic medicine), astronomy, and natural phenomena. Comparative studies examining al-Idlibī's methodology alongside other approaches to *matn* criticism would also contribute to the further development of contemporary hadith scholarship.

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