

Procedure and Morality in Hadith-Based Leadership: A Thematic Study on Leader Selection and Ideal Character

Artikel	Abstract
<p>Authors: Sulis Setiyani^{1*}, Henggar Tiara Syazwani², Ita Nur Izzah³, Muhammad Haikal Nabil Prabowo⁴</p> <p>¹²³⁴ Universitas Islam Negeri Profesor Kiai Haji Saifuddin Zuhri Purwokerto, Indonesia</p> <p>Corresponding Author: *Email: 234110303127@mhs.uinsaizu.ac.id</p> <p>Data: Received: Feb 13, 2026; Accepted: April 4, 2026; Published: Mei 06, 2026.</p>	<p>Contemporary political dynamics in Muslim societies raise critical questions regarding ethical leadership and the standards for selecting public leaders. This article aims to analyze the concept of leader selection and the characteristics of the ideal leader through a thematic (<i>maudhu'i</i>) study of prophetic traditions employing <i>takhrīj</i> (hadith tracing), chain-of-narrators analysis, and classical commentary (<i>syarah</i>), as well as the <i>fiqh al-ḥadīth</i> approach (Sukron, 2021, 2024). Using qualitative library research, the study examines relevant hadiths from major canonical collections (Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, Sunan Abū Dāwūd, Jāmi' al-Tirmizī) and engages classical commentaries such as <i>Fath al-Bārī</i> and <i>Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim</i>. The findings reveal that hadith literature constructs leadership as a moral-spiritual trust (<i>amānah</i>), emphasizing collective responsibility, consultation (<i>syūrā</i>), and the prohibition of ambition-driven office-seeking. Essential qualities of an ideal leader include justice (<i>ʿadl</i>), trustworthiness (<i>amānah</i>), integrity, competence (<i>kifāyah</i>), and accountability. The study concludes that procedural legitimacy and moral qualification are inseparable dimensions of prophetic political ethics. This research contributes to the development of political hadith studies and offers a normative ethical framework for interpreting contemporary democratic practices from an Islamic perspective. Furthermore, it enriches discourses on religious moderation, ecological justice, and gender bias deconstruction in the interpretation of political hadiths</p> <p>Keywords: <i>Imāmah; Syūrā; Takhrīj al-Ḥadīth; Political Hadith Studies; Islamic Political Ethics.</i></p>

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Introduction

Contemporary political dynamics, both globally and nationally, demonstrate that leadership remains a central issue in the socio-religious life of Muslims. The increasingly established practice of electoral democracy in various Muslim countries, including Indonesia, presents distinct challenges concerning the ethics of leader selection and the moral standards of candidates worthy of election. Phenomena such as transactional politics, identity-based populism, and the integrity crisis among political elites constitute undeniable social facts. In this context, Islamic discourse on leadership can no longer be adequately understood normatively; it requires a re-reading based on primary Islamic sources, particularly the Prophetic hadith, using a sound methodology, including the *fiqh al-ḥadīth* approach that emphasizes not only textual authenticity but also contextual understanding and the objectives of Sharia (Sukron, 2021, 2024).

Hadith, as the second source of Islamic teaching after the Qur'an, regulates not only ritual dimensions but also contains comprehensive socio-political guidelines, including the concepts of *imārah* (leadership), *amānah* (trust), *ʿadl* (justice), *syūrā* (consultation), and public responsibility. Several studies affirm the strong relevance of the theme of leadership in hadith to governance and social stability (Hendro, 2023; Nur et al., 2025). However, these studies generally separate the discussion of the leader selection process from the characteristics of the ideal leader, thus failing to provide a holistic conceptual construction of the relationship between the two in a hadith perspective. Moreover, most of these studies are descriptive-normative without systematically employing a thematic (*maudhu'i*) approach that includes *takhrij*, sanad criticism, matn analysis with *asbāb al-wurūd* (occasions of revelation), and classical commentary (*syarah*). The tendency to use hadith merely as moral legitimation for existing political systems, without critical analysis of the normative construction built by the hadith itself, remains dominant.

In the last five to ten years, research on leadership from a hadith perspective has developed significantly. Some studies focus on the criteria of the ideal leader, such as justice, trustworthiness, and moral integrity (Pane, 2024; Maysa, 2025). Other research highlights the prohibition of seeking office and the urgency of competence in holding public authority (Novrisantika, 2022; Fadli & Sarkawi, 2021). Meanwhile, there are also studies that attempt to link hadith values with modern electoral practices and contemporary political ethics (Hendro, 2023). Nevertheless, these studies still have several weaknesses.

First, most are descriptive-normative and have not fully employed the thematic (*maudhu'i*) approach systematically to collect and analyze all hadiths related to leader selection and ideal leadership characteristics in an integrative manner. *Second*, no study has explicitly integrated the procedural dimension (selection process) and the substantive dimension (leader character) within a single thematic hadith analysis framework that meets the standards of hadith scholarship (*takhrij*, sanad criticism, matn analysis with *syarah*). *Third*, the tendency to use hadith merely as moral legitimation for existing political systems, without critical analysis of the normative construction built by the hadith itself, remains common. *Fourth*, in the Indonesian academic tradition of hadith studies, there is still a scarcity of research connecting prophetic leadership with contemporary issues such as religious moderation, ecological

justice, and gender bias deconstruction (Khotimah & Sukron, 2023; Ismail & Sukron, 2025; Subkiyyah & Sukron, 2025).

Therefore, there is a significant academic space to formulate a more comprehensive conceptual framework of how hadith frames the leadership selection process while establishing ethical standards for leadership figures. The development of *political hadith studies* also needs to be dialogued with modern approaches such as environmental movements (Sukron, 2024) and critiques of exploitative anthropocentrism (Ismail & Sukron, 2025), demonstrating that hadith has the potential to respond to contemporary issues dynamically.

Conceptually, leader selection and the character of the ideal leader are two inseparable dimensions. A selection process without clear moral standards can produce ethically weak leadership, while ideal criteria without a proper selection mechanism will be difficult to implement in political reality. In hadith literature, several narrations affirm collective responsibility in leadership, such as the hadith "*kullukum rā'in*" (each of you is a shepherd), which emphasizes social accountability, and the hadith prohibiting the seeking of office (*lā tas'al al-imārah*), which warns of the dangers of power ambition (Nur et al., 2025). Furthermore, the hadith about the just leader as one of the seven who receive Allah's shade shows that leadership legitimacy is not merely procedural but also moral-spiritual (Hendro, 2023).

The theoretical position of this article is that political ethics in hadith are reciprocal, binding both the candidate for leadership and the voters as part of the moral community. By employing the thematic hadith study approach (*maudhu'i*) that follows standard procedures (theme determination, *takhrīj*, selection of sanad quality, matn analysis with *syarah*, and contextualization), this research unites two previously separate discourses: the ethics of the leadership selection process and the substantive criteria of the ideal leader. Additionally, this study adopts the *fiqh al-ḥadīth* perspective developed by Sukron (2021, 2024), which emphasizes the integration of text, context, and *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*.

Based on the above background, this article aims to thematically analyze hadiths related to leader selection and the characteristics of the ideal leader, as well as to formulate the normative construction resulting from their integration. The academic contribution of this research is not only to enrich the treasury of hadith studies in the socio-political domain but also to offer an ethical framework that can serve as a reference for reading modern democratic practices from the perspective of prophetic tradition. More broadly, this article is expected to strengthen the development of *political hadith studies* as an interdisciplinary field bridging hadith studies, political science, sociology, and environmental ethics (Sukron & Nawawi, 2021; Ismail & Sukron, 2025).

Method

This research is a qualitative study based on library research with a thematic hadith approach (*maudhu'i*) following five standard stages in *Ulūm al-Ḥadīth* (hadith sciences), enriched by the *fiqh al-ḥadīth* approach as developed by Sukron (2021, 2024), which emphasizes the integration of textual analysis, contextual understanding, and Sharia objectives.

Stage 1: Theme and Sub-Theme Determination

The main theme is leadership selection and the characteristics of the ideal leader. Sub-themes include: *syūrā* (consultation), *amānah* (trust), *ʿadl* (justice), prohibition of seeking office, competence (*kifāyah*), accountability, and voter responsibility. The selection of these sub-themes is based on preliminary observations of hadith literature indicating the frequency of these keywords in *al-Jāmiʿ al-Ṣaḥīḥ* and *Sunan* collections.

Stage 2: *Takhrij al-Ḥadīth* (Hadith Tracing)

Hadith tracing was conducted using keywords (*imārah, syūrā, amānah, ʿadl, sāʿala al-imārah, kullukum rāʿin*) in major canonical hadith books: *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, Sunan Abū Dāwūd, Sunan al-Tirmizī, Sunan al-Nasāʿī, and Sunan Ibn Mājah*. Each quoted hadith is presented with its Arabic text, complete source (book, chapter, hadith number), and quality status based on hadith scholars' assessments (*ṣaḥīḥ, ḥasan, ḍaʿīf*). To ensure completeness, we also referred to *Mawsūʿah al-Ḥadīth al-Sharīf* (computerized hadith program) and al-Suyūṭī's *al-Jāmiʿ al-Ṣaḥīḥ*.

Stage 3: Sanad (Chain of Narrators) Analysis

Sanad analysis was conducted concisely but thoroughly, referring to the assessments of prominent hadith critics such as al-Bukhārī, Muslim, Abū Dāwūd, al-Tirmizī, al-Nawawī, Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, and al-Albānī. For each hadith used as a primary proof, we traced the chain of transmission (*ṭabaqāt al-ruwāt*) for at least three generations to ensure the absence of *ʿillah* (hidden defect) or *syāzz* (irregularity). Due to space limitations, the complete sanad analysis is presented in summary form, relying on the established verdicts of hadith scholars.

Stage 4: Matn (Text) Analysis with *Asbāb al-Wurūd* and *Syarah*

Matn analysis involved the following steps: (a) understanding the lexical and contextual meaning of each keyword; (b) tracing *asbāb al-wurūd* (occasions/reasons for the hadith's utterance) from works such as al-Suyūṭī's and al-ʿIrāqī's *Asbāb Wurūd al-Ḥadīth*; (c) referring to classical commentaries, especially *Fatḥ al-Bārī* (Ibn Ḥajar), *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (al-Nawawī), *ʿAwn al-Maʿbūd* (al-ʿAzīmābādī), and *Tuḥfat al-Aḥwadhī* (al-Mubārakfūrī); (d) using the contemporary *fiqh al-ḥadīth* approach (Sukron, 2021, 2024) to understand hadith contextually without abandoning classical commentary principles.

Stage 5: Contextualization and Synthesis

Interpretation of hadiths within the framework of contemporary socio-political context, particularly electoral democracy, public leadership ethics, religious moderation, ecological justice, and gender bias deconstruction. Reference is made to research on religious moderation (Khotimah & Sukron, 2023), the zero-waste movement (Sukron, 2024), critique of anthropocentrism (Ismail & Sukron, 2025), and gender deconstruction (Subkiyyah & Sukron, 2025).

Primary sources: Major canonical hadith books (*al-Kutub al-Sittah*) and their classical commentaries. Secondary sources: Peer-reviewed journal articles from the last five to ten years (2015–2025) discussing leadership from a hadith perspective, Islamic politics, *fiqh siyāsah*, and interdisciplinary hadith studies. This includes works by Mokhammad Sukron and colleagues (2021–2025), as well as other researchers such as Hendro (2023), Pane (2024), Nur et al.

(2025), Fadli & Sarkawi (2021). Tertiary sources: Hadith dictionaries (*Lisān al-Ḥadīth, al-Muʿjam al-Mufahras li Alfāz al-Ḥadīth al-Nabawī*), digital hadith encyclopedias, and methodology books.

Data analysis involved: (1) data reduction by selecting the most relevant and authentic hadiths; (2) thematic categorization based on predetermined sub-themes; (3) contextual interpretation considering historical dimensions (*asbāb al-wurūd*) and contemporary socio-political relevance; (4) synthesis across hadiths and sub-themes to build a coherent normative construction; (5) cross-verification with the opinions of classical and contemporary scholars.

Result

The Concept of Leader Selection in Hadith Perspective

1. Leadership as a Trust and Collective Responsibility

In human social structure, leadership (*imāmah*) is considered a necessity (*ḍarūrah*) to maintain order and prevent chaos. Without a leadership figure, society becomes fragmented and loses direction. Islam places leadership not as a prerogative right of a few individuals but as a trust (*amānah*) for which one will be held accountable. The foundational principle of this is the well-known hadith *kullukum rāʿin*.

Hadīth 1:

عن عبد الله بن عمر رضي الله عنهما أن رسول الله ﷺ قال: أَلَا كُلكُمْ رَاعٍ وَكُلكُمْ مَسئُولٌ عَن رَعِيَّتِهِ، فَالِإِمامِ الَّذِي عَلى النَّاسِ رَاعٍ وَهُوَ مَسئُولٌ عَن رَعِيَّتِهِ، وَالرَّجُلِ رَاعٍ عَلى أَهْلِ بَيْتِهِ وَهُوَ مَسئُولٌ عَنهُمْ، وَالْمَرْأَةُ رَاعِيَةٌ عَلى بَيْتِ رَواجِها وَوَلَدِها وَهِيَ مَسئُولَةٌ عَنهُمْ، وَالعَبْدُ رَاعٍ عَلى مَالِ سَيِّدِهِ وَهُوَ مَسئُولٌ عَنهُ

Narrated by ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Umar (may Allah be pleased with them) that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said: "Indeed, each of you is a shepherd, and each of you will be asked about his flock. The imam (leader) over the people is a shepherd and he will be asked about his flock..." (HR. al-Bukhārī, Kitāb al-Jum‘ah, Bāb al-Jum‘ah fī al-Qurā wa al-Mudun, no. 893; HR. Muslim, Kitāb al-Imārah, Bāb Faḍl al-Imām al-‘Ādil, no. 1829)

Takhrīj and Quality:

This hadith was narrated by al-Bukhārī (no. 893) and Muslim (no. 1829) from ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb. All narrators in its chain are *thiqāt* (trustworthy) with no *‘illah* (hidden defect). Status: *ṣaḥīḥ (muttafaq ‘alayh)*.

Syarah (Commentary):

Al-Nawawī in *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (12:213) explains that the word *rāʿin* derives from the root *raʿā*, meaning to maintain, guard, and manage. A *rāʿin* (shepherd/leader) is tasked with protecting the interests of those under his care, providing food, clothing, education, and security. Specifically for the *imām* (public leader), responsibilities include upholding law, distributing justice, managing state finances, and defense. Ibn Ḥajar in *Fath al-Bārī* (13:111) adds that this hadith demonstrates the universality of leadership responsibility, every Muslim is a leader within their own sphere and will be held accountable.

2. Prohibition of Seeking Office and Critique of Power Ambition

Islam issues a stern warning against those who desire leadership positions solely for worldly gain. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) forbade his followers from seeking office, as it can corrupt integrity and the purpose of leadership.

Hadīth 2:

عن عبد الرحمن بن سمرة قال: قال لي رسول الله ﷺ: يَا عَبْدَ الرَّحْمَنِ، لَا تَسْأَلِ الْإِمَارَةَ، فَإِنَّكَ إِذَا أُعْطِيَتْهَا عَنْ مَسْأَلَةٍ وُكِّلْتَ إِلَيْهَا، وَإِنْ أُعْطِيَتْهَا عَنْ غَيْرِ مَسْأَلَةٍ أُعِنْتَ عَلَيْهَا

Narrated by 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Samurah that the Messenger of Allah said to him: "O 'Abd al-Raḥmān, do not seek leadership (imārah). For if you are given it because of your request, you will be left to your own devices (without divine help); but if you are given it without request, you will be assisted (by Allah)." (HR. al-Bukhārī, Kitāb Aḥādīth al-Anbiyā', Bāb Mā Yudhkar 'an Banī Isrā'īl, no. 3472; HR. Muslim, Kitāb al-Imārah, Bāb Karāhat al-Imārah min ghayri ḍarūrah, no. 1854)

Syarah:

Al-Nawawī (*Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 12:197) states that the prohibition of seeking office is to preserve purity of intention and to avoid dependence on power obtained through request, because those who seek are usually driven by ambition, love of the world, and fear of losing position. Ibn Ḥajar (*Fath al-Bārī*, 13:122) explains the difference between two conditions: if one is given office without request, he will receive Allah's help; if because of request, he will be left alone (without special help) and will feel the burden of the trust.

Hadīth 3:

عن أبي هريرة قال: قال رسول الله ﷺ: مَنْ سَأَلَ الْإِمَارَةَ حَقًّا أُعْطَاهُ اللَّهُ إِيَّاهَا، وَمَنْ سَأَلَهَا بَاطِلًا أُعْطَاهُ اللَّهُ إِيَّاهَا ثُمَّ وُكِّلَ إِلَيْهَا

Narrated by Abū Hurairah that the Messenger of Allah said: "Whoever seeks office (imārah) with right (ḥaqq), Allah will grant it to him; and whoever seeks it with falsehood (bāṭil), Allah will grant it to him, and then he will be left to its care." (HR. Abū Dāwūd, Kitāb al-Kharāj wa al-Imārah wa al-Fay', Bāb fī al-'Amal 'alā al-Ra'iyah, no. 2936; HR. al-Tirmidzī, Kitāb al-Fitan, Bāb Mā Jā'a fī Karāhiyyat al-Imārah, no. 2166)

Takhrīj:

Al-Tirmidzī stated *ḥasan gharīb*, while al-Albānī in *Ṣaḥīḥ Sunan Abī Dāwūd* (no. 2936) declared it *ṣaḥīḥ*. The chain: Abū Hurairah ← from the Prophet. All narrators are trustworthy except for one who is disputed, but other lines strengthen it.

Syarah:

Al-'Aẓīmābādī (*'Awn al-Ma'būd*, 9:456) explains that *ḥaqq* here means a request for office based on a genuine belief in one's ability and the community's need for one's service, accompanied by sincere intention to uphold truth. *Bāṭil* is a request driven by ambition, desire

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for power, and personal interests. The consequence for the *bāṭil* seeker is destruction, both in this world (loss of reputation) and the Hereafter (punishment).

Selection Process: *Syūrā*, *Bay'ah*, and Relevance to Modern Democracy

The process of leader selection in Islamic tradition is neither authoritarian nor absolute heredity; it is rooted in the principle of *syūrā* (consultation) and collective consent (*bay'ah*). The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) often involved his companions in strategic decision-making, such as the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah and war strategies.

Although the Qur'an mentions the principle of *syūrā* more frequently (Q.S. Āli 'Imrān: 159; Q.S. al-Syūrā: 38), the Prophet's practice recorded in hadith shows that strategic decisions involved consultation with experts and representatives of the community. In the context of leader selection, this implies that the legitimacy of a leader must be based on the consensus of the community represented through a legitimate mechanism. This rejects the concept of leadership that is imposed or seized unilaterally without public consent (Suparman, 2024).

Hadīth 4:

عن أبي هريرة قال: قال رسول الله ﷺ: الْمُؤْمِنُ مِرْآةُ الْمُؤْمِنِ، وَالْمُؤْمِنُ أَخُو الْمُؤْمِنِ، يَكْفُ عَلَيْهِ ضَيْعَتَهُ وَيَحْوَطُهُ مِنْ وِرَائِهِ

Narrated by Abū Hurairah that the Messenger of Allah said: "The believer is the mirror of the believer, and the believer is the brother of the believer; he protects him against loss and defends him behind his back." (HR. Abū Dāwūd, Kitāb al-Adab, Bāb fī al-Naṣīḥah, no. 4918; declared ḥasan by al-Albānī).

Syarah:

Al-Khaṭṭābī in *Ma'ālim al-Sunan* (4:123) interprets *mir'āh* (mirror) as a symbol of mutual advice and reminding of shortcomings without exaggeration. *Yakuffu 'alayhi ḍay'atahu* means mutually protecting neglected interests. In the context of leader selection, this means the believing community is obliged to advise one another in choosing the right figure, not to let others choose wrongly, and to monitor governance.

Voter Responsibility from a Hadith Perspective

Leader selection through elections requires active voter participation. From a hadith perspective, voters have a moral responsibility to choose figures who are ethically worthy and competent. Voting is not merely a political right but part of the trust (*amānah*). If voters choose based on popularity, money, or identity sentiments without regard for qualifications, they have neglected the principle of *kullukum rā'in*, for which they will also be held accountable for their choices (Itsnaini et al., 2025).

Responsibility in leader selection is reciprocal: on one side, candidates must meet standards of trust and competence; on the other side, voters must be intelligent and critical. The Prophet emphasized honesty and integrity in every social interaction, including in electing

leaders. Based on thematic analysis of authentic hadiths, we formulate five main non-overlapping criteria directly supported by hadith texts and classical commentaries: (1) justice ('*adl*), (2) trustworthiness (*amānah* and integrity), (3) competence (*kifāyah*), (4) accountability, and (5) piety (*taqwā*).

Justice ('*Adl*): The Principle of Leadership Legitimacy

Hadīth 5

عن أبي هريرة عن النبي ﷺ قال: سَبْعَةٌ يُظِلُّهُمُ اللَّهُ فِي ظِلِّهِ يَوْمَ لَا ظِلَّ إِلَّا ظِلُّهُ: إِمَامٌ عَادِلٌ، وَشَابٌّ نَشَأَ بِعِبَادَةِ اللَّهِ، وَرَجُلٌ قَلْبُهُ مُعَلَّقٌ بِالْمَسَاجِدِ، وَرَجُلَانِ تَحَابَّا فِي اللَّهِ اجْتَمَعَا عَلَيْهِ وَتَفَرَّقَا عَلَيْهِ، وَرَجُلٌ دَعَتْهُ امْرَأَةٌ ذَاتُ مَنْصِبٍ وَجَمَالٍ فَقَالَ: إِنِّي أَخَافُ اللَّهَ، وَرَجُلٌ تَصَدَّقَ بِصَدَقَةٍ فَأَخْفَاهَا حَتَّى لَا تَعْلَمَ شِمَالُهُ مَا تُنْفِقُ يَمِينُهُ، وَرَجُلٌ ذَكَرَ اللَّهَ خَالِيًا فَفَاضَتْ عَيْنَاهُ

Narrated by Abū Hurairah that the Prophet said: "Seven (types of people) will be shaded by Allah under His shade on the Day when there will be no shade except His shade: a just leader (imām 'ādil), a youth who grew up in the worship of Allah, a man whose heart is attached to the mosques, two men who love each other for Allah's sake, meeting and parting for His sake, a man who is called by a woman of status and beauty and says 'I fear Allah,' a man who gives charity so secretly that his left hand does not know what his right hand spends, and a man who remembers Allah in solitude and his eyes overflow with tears." (HR. al-Bukhārī, Kitāb al-Adhān, Bāb Faḍl al-'Adl, no. 1423; HR. Muslim, Kitāb al-Zakāh, Bāb Ikhfā' al-Ṣadaqah, no. 1031)

Syarah:

Al-Nawawī (*Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 6:170) explains that *al-imām al-'ādil* (the just leader) is one who upholds Allah's law, is impartial, distributes resources fairly, and serves the people with justice. Justice is a primary condition of leadership legitimacy. Ibn Hajar (*Fath al-Bārī*, 4:337) adds that justice encompasses five aspects: (a) equality before the law, (b) non-discrimination based on ethnicity, religion, or group, (c) prioritizing public welfare over personal or group interests, (d) economic and fiscal justice, and (e) justice in reward and punishment.

Trustworthiness (*Amānah*): The Core of Public Leadership

Hadīth 6:

عن أبي هريرة قال: قال رسول الله ﷺ: إِذَا ضَيِّعَتِ الْأَمَانَةُ فَانْتَظِرِ السَّاعَةَ. قَالَ: كَيْفَ إِضَاعَتُهَا يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ؟ قَالَ: إِذَا أُسْنِدَ الْأَمْرُ إِلَى غَيْرِ أَهْلِهِ فَانْتَظِرِ السَّاعَةَ

Narrated by Abū Hurairah that the Messenger of Allah said: "When trust (*amānah*) is lost, then wait for the Hour." He was asked: "How is it lost, O Messenger of Allah?" He said: "When authority (or affairs) is entrusted to other than its people, then wait for the Hour." (HR. al-Bukhārī, Kitāb al-'Ilm, Bāb Man Sa'ala wa Huwa Qā'im, no. 59)

Syarah:

Al-'Azīmābādī ('*Awn al-Ma'būd*, 11:278) explains that *amānah* includes all rights that must be preserved, whether Allah's rights (such as prayer, fasting) or human rights (such as positions, entrusted property, secrets). Entrusting public affairs to those who are not qualified (incompetent or dishonest) is a form of betrayal of trust (*khiyānah*) signaling societal destruction. In leadership, trust means: (a) the leader's pledge to serve the people, (b) non-corruption, (c) no abuse of power, (d) protection of state secrets, and (e) transparent accountability.

Hadith 7

عن ابن مسعود قال: قال رسول الله ﷺ: عَلَيْكُمْ بِالصِّدْقِ، فَإِنَّ الصِّدْقَ يَهْدِي إِلَى الْبِرِّ، وَإِنَّ الْبِرَّ يَهْدِي إِلَى الْجَنَّةِ، وَمَا يَزَالُ الرَّجُلُ يَصْدُقُ وَيَتَحَرَّى الصِّدْقَ حَتَّى يُكْتَبَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ صِدِّيقًا. وَإِيَّاكُمْ وَالْكَذِبَ، فَإِنَّ الْكَذِبَ يَهْدِي إِلَى الْفُجُورِ، وَإِنَّ الْفُجُورَ يَهْدِي إِلَى النَّارِ، وَمَا يَزَالُ الرَّجُلُ يَكْذِبُ وَيَتَحَرَّى الْكَذِبَ حَتَّى يُكْتَبَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ كَذَّابًا

Narrated by Ibn Mas'ūd that the Prophet said: "You must be truthful, for truthfulness leads to righteousness, and righteousness leads to Paradise. A man continues to tell the truth and strives for truth until he is recorded with Allah as a truthful person. Beware of lying, for lying leads to wickedness, and wickedness leads to the Fire. A man continues to lie and strives for falsehood until he is recorded with Allah as a liar." (HR. Muslim, Kitāb al-Birr wa al-Ṣilah wa al-Ādāb, Bāb Qubḥ al-Kadhib wa Ḥusn al-Ṣidq, no. 2607).

In the context of leadership, this hadith emphasizes that honesty is the foundation of trust between leader and people.

Professional and Managerial Capacity

No single hadith explicitly uses the word *kafā'ah* for public leadership, but the principle of *man ahluhu* (qualified person) in the above hadith (HR. Bukhari no. 59) clearly mandates placing the right person in the right position. Additionally, the hadith rejecting office for the weak further establishes competence as a requirement.

Hadith 8

عن أبي ذر قال: قلت: يا رسول الله ألا تستعملني؟ قال: فَضْرَبَ بِيَدِهِ عَلَى مَنْكِبِي ثُمَّ قَالَ: يَا أَبَا ذَرٍّ، إِنَّكَ ضَعِيفٌ، وَإِنَّهَا أَمَانَةٌ، وَإِنَّهَا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ خِزْيٌ وَنَدَامَةٌ، إِلَّا مَنْ أَخَذَهَا بِحَقِّهَا وَأَدَّى الَّذِي عَلَيْهِ فِيهَا

Narrated by Abū Dharr: I said: "O Messenger of Allah, will you not appoint me as a governor?" He struck me on the shoulder with his hand and said: "O Abū Dharr, you are weak (*ḍa'if*), and it (governorship) is a trust. It will be a source of disgrace and regret on the Day of Judgment except for one who takes it with right and fulfills what is incumbent upon him therein." (HR. Muslim, Kitāb al-Imārah, Bāb Karāhat al-Imārah min ghayri ḍarūrah, no. 1825).

Syarah:

Al-Nawawī (*Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 12:198) emphasizes that the Prophet rejected Abū Dharr because of his weakness (*ḍa'f*), this shows that competence (physical, intellectual, and managerial strength) is an absolute condition for holding public office. *Ḍa'f* here does not only mean physical weakness but also weakness in knowledge, decision-making, or assertiveness.

Accountability

The hadith *kullukum rā'in* (presented in section 3.1.1) explicitly states that every leader will be held accountable for those under his care. Accountability in Islamic leadership has two dimensions: (a) vertical accountability to Allah in the Hereafter; (b) horizontal accountability to society through public oversight, legal mechanisms, and social sanctions (Maysa, 2025).

Hadith 9

عن أبي سعيد الخدري قال: قال رسول الله ﷺ: مَنْ رَأَى مِنْكُمْ مُنْكَرًا فَلْيُغَيِّرْهُ بِيَدِهِ، فَإِنْ لَمْ يَسْتَطِعْ فَبِلِسَانِهِ، فَإِنْ لَمْ يَسْتَطِعْ فَبِقَلْبِهِ، وَذَلِكَ أَضْعَفُ الْإِيمَانِ

Narrated by Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī that the Prophet said: "Whoever among you sees an evil, let him change it with his hand; if he cannot, then with his tongue; if he cannot, then with his heart and that is the weakest of faith." (HR. Muslim, Kitāb al-Īmān, Bāb Bayān Kawn al-Nahy 'an al-Munkar min al-Īmān, no. 49).

In the context of leadership, this hadith obligates citizens and oversight bodies to warn leaders if they commit wrongdoing (corruption, injustice, negligence).

Piety (Taqwā) and Moral Foundation

Hadith 10

عن ابن عمر قال: قال رسول الله ﷺ: إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَنْظُرُ إِلَى صُورِكُمْ وَأَمْوَالِكُمْ، وَلَكِنْ يَنْظُرُ إِلَى قُلُوبِكُمْ وَأَعْمَالِكُمْ

Narrated by Ibn 'Umar that the Messenger of Allah said: "Indeed, Allah does not look at your forms or your wealth, but He looks at your hearts and your deeds." (HR. Muslim, Kitāb al-Birr wa al-Ṣilah, Bāb Taḥrīm al-Zulm, no. 2564)

Syarah:

Although this hadith is general, in the context of leadership it emphasizes that inner qualities (piety, sincerity, moral integrity) are more important than appearance, wealth, or popularity. The contemporary *fiqh al-ḥadīth* approach also stresses that the intended piety is not merely ritual but includes social and environmental concern (Sukron, 2024; Khotimah & Sukron, 2023). An ideal leader is responsible not only for vertical relationship with Allah but also for public welfare, poverty alleviation, environmental protection, and prevention of excessive resource exploitation (Ismail & Sukron, 2025).

Integration of Prophetic Morality and Administrative Professionalism

The five criteria above are not independent but mutually reinforcing. Ideal leadership in the hadith perspective is an integration of prophetic morality (justice, trustworthiness, piety) and administrative professionalism (competence, accountability). A leader who is personally pious but incompetent will fail in managing public affairs. Conversely, a highly competent leader who is not trustworthy and just will damage society through corruption and injustice (Nur et al., 2025).

Summary Table of Primary Hadiths and Their Quality

No.	Theme	Brief Text	Source	Quality
1	Collective responsibility	Kullukum rā'in	HR. Bukhari no. 893, Muslim no. 1829	Ṣaḥīḥ (muttafaq 'alayh)
2	Prohibition of seeking office	Lā tas'al al-imārah	HR. Bukhari no. 3472, Muslim no. 1854	Ṣaḥīḥ
3	Seeking with right vs. falsehood	Man sa'ala al-imārah haqqan...	HR. Abu Daud no. 2936, Tirmidzi no. 2166	Ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ
4	Consultation (syūrā)	Al-mu'min mir'āh al-mu'min	HR. Abu Daud no. 4918	Ḥasan
5	Just leader	Sab'ah yuḥilluhum Allāh fi ḥillihī	HR. Bukhari no. 1423, Muslim no. 1031	Ṣaḥīḥ
6	Trust and competence	Idhā ḥuyyiat al-amānah...	HR. Bukhari no. 59	Ṣaḥīḥ
7	Competence (weakness)	Innaka ḍa'if	HR. Muslim no. 1825	Ṣaḥīḥ
8	Honesty	'Alaykum bi al-ṣidq	HR. Muslim no. 2607	Ṣaḥīḥ
9	Piety	Inn Allāh lā yanḥuru ilā ṣuwarikum	HR. Muslim no. 2564	Ṣaḥīḥ
10	Accountability (supervision)	Man ra'ā minkum munkaran...	HR. Muslim no. 49	Ṣaḥīḥ

Discussion

Integration of *Syūrā* and Democracy: Between Normativity and Historical Practice

The hadith literature shows that the mandate of human leadership is rooted in the concept of caliphate, which is laden with ethical and social responsibilities (Muthi'ah, 2017). Within this framework, leadership is understood not merely as formal authority but as a trust that must be morally accounted for.

The principle of *syūrā* in prophetic tradition demonstrates that public decision-making ideally involves collective participation. Several studies affirm that legitimate leaders should emerge from processes that consider public aspirations and general welfare (Pane, 2024). This meeting point shows the normative compatibility between *syūrā* and modern democracy, especially regarding popular participation.

Nevertheless, contemporary democracy tends to focus on electoral procedures and majority legitimacy. The hadith perspective offers a different emphasis by including the dimension of voters' moral responsibility. Fadli & Sarkawi (2021) remind us that the mistake

of electing a leader who does not meet Sharia qualifications can potentially cause widespread social harm. Furthermore, reflections on recent electoral dynamics show that hadith values can serve as an ethical tool to correct the overly procedural and pragmatic tendencies of democracy (Hendro, 2023).

In modern Islamic modernist discourse, the principle of *syūrā* is often dialogued with democracy as a mechanism of public participation (Sukron & Nawawi, 2021). However, it is important to avoid reducing *syūrā* to mere formal procedure. As reminded by Khotimah & Sukron (2023) in the context of religious moderation, public participation in electing leaders must be based on values of justice, brotherhood (*ukhuwwah*), and collective responsibility, not solely on electoral pragmatism or primordial sentiments. Likewise, the reinterpretation of hadith on leadership needs to consider the deconstruction of patriarchal and hierarchical biases that may be embedded in classical interpretations (Subkiyyah & Sukron, 2025), so that the prophetic leadership model can be more inclusive and responsive to modern social dynamics.

Hadith Critique of Pragmatic Politics and Power Ambition

Normatively, the hadiths discussed (especially HR. Bukhari no. 59, HR. Muslim no. 1854, and HR. Abu Daud no. 2936) contain critical messages against power orientation driven by personal ambition. Leadership is presented as a heavy trust whose consequences are not only administrative (performance decline, state losses) but also eschatological (Hereafter punishment). In hadith leadership studies, it is emphasized that public office is not an object worthy of ambitious pursuit (Muthi'ah, 2017; Pane, 2024).

This view contrasts sharply with contemporary political realities often characterized by transactional practices, identity exploitation, public perception manipulation (hoaxes, image-building), and the instrumentalization of power for personal or group interests. Studies on ideal leadership figures in the context of elections also highlight the integrity problems of some modern political elites (Hendro, 2023). From a hadith perspective, leadership detached from moral foundations is seen as a form of betrayal of public trust (*khiyānah*). In the Indonesian context, the prevalence of corruption cases among public officials uncovered by the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) demonstrates the relevance of this hadith critique.

Interestingly, as mentioned, hadith places responsibility not only on leaders but also on the society as voters. Fadli & Sarkawi (2021) affirm that the community has an obligation to ensure that the elected leader meets the standards of justice and competence. Thus, political ethics in hadith are reciprocal: binding both rulers and citizens. This aligns with the principles of healthy participatory democracy.

Constructing a Prophetic Leadership Model in the Contemporary Context

The hadiths analyzed collectively construct a leadership model oriented toward trust, justice, and public accountability. The leader is positioned as a protector and caretaker, not merely as a holder of power authority (Muthi'ah, 2017). Other studies emphasize that leadership positions should be held by individuals who possess professional capacity in their

respective fields (Pane, 2024). This principle aligns with the hadith warning about the danger of entrusting affairs to incompetent parties.

Contemporary research also identifies a set of prophetic characteristics inherent in the ideal leader, including religiosity, honesty, trustworthiness, intelligence, firmness, and social responsibility (Hendro, 2023). These findings show that hadith demands an integration of moral-spiritual qualities, intellectual acumen, managerial ability, and commitment to justice. This formulation has strong correspondence with ethical leadership theory and good governance paradigms that emphasize integrity and accountability as the core of leadership.

Empirical studies on the implementation of Sharia economics in Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) show that the values of trust (*amānah*) and accountability in hadith can be translated into transparent and professional organizational governance, such as audited financial reporting, complaint mechanisms, and leadership rotation (Supani et al., 2025). This proves that prophetic leadership ethics are not only normative but also operational. Meanwhile, analysis of the social power in the formation of *qirā'āt* (canonical readings) reminds us that religious authority is often concentrated in certain groups; therefore, the process of selecting public leaders must ensure fair representation and avoid monopoly by specific religious or political elites (Nawawi & Sukron, 2025). The hadith critique of power ambition serves as a primary bulwark against oligarchic practices.

Contribution to Contemporary Hadith Studies

This research demonstrates that hadith has ongoing significance in modern political discourse. The study of prophetic leadership affirms that the theme of leadership is an inherent part of Islamic teachings covering socio-political dimensions (Rosyid, 2016). This approach expands the orientation of hadith studies from a previously ritual-focused domain toward the realm of public ethics and governance. Methodologically, the tendency to use the thematic (*maudhu'i*) approach shows a systematic effort to contextualize hadith with contemporary political realities.

In the Indonesian context, the proliferation of research on leadership criteria, election ethics, and prophetic leadership indicates the emerging development of *political hadith studies* as a potential field bridging hadith sciences and modern political science. This aligns with efforts to integrate religious values into democratic practice (Sukron & Nawawi, 2021). Additionally, the integration of perspectives from *fiqh al-ḥadīth*, religious moderation, environmental justice, and gender deconstruction (Sukron, 2021, 2024; Khotimah & Sukron, 2023; Ismail & Sukron, 2025; Subkiyyah & Sukron, 2025) enriches hadith studies and makes them more responsive to contemporary issues.

Conclusion

This research set out to examine how hadith frames the concept of leader selection and the characteristics of the ideal leader from a prophetic perspective. Based on thematic analysis of several major hadiths that have undergone *takhrīj*, sanad criticism, matn analysis with classical commentaries, and contemporary *fiqh al-ḥadīth*, the following conclusions are drawn:

First, leader selection in the hadith perspective must be based on: (a) collective responsibility (the *kullukum rā'in* principle), (b) consultation (*syūrā*), (c) awareness that public office is a heavy trust, and (d) the prohibition of ambitiously seeking office (*lā tas'al al-imārah*). Leadership legitimacy according to hadith does not depend solely on formal mechanisms (elections, *bay'ah*) but also on moral qualification and commitment to public welfare.

Second, hadith formulate five non-overlapping characteristics of the ideal leader: justice (*'adl*), trustworthiness (integrity and honesty), competence (*kifāyah*), accountability, and piety (*taqwā*). A leader is not sufficient merely to have public support (popularity) or wealth; they must possess moral and professional capacity to carry out their duties. Leadership in the hadith perspective is ethical and accountable, because every decision will be accounted for not only before society but also before Allah. Third, political ethics in hadith are reciprocal: binding both rulers and voters. Voters have a moral responsibility to choose worthy figures, to monitor, and not to abstain from voting apathetically.

Academically, this article contributes by: (1) uniting two previously separate discourses, the ethics of the leadership selection process and the moral standards of the ideal leader, in hadith studies; (2) employing the thematic (*maudhu'i*) approach that meets hadith scholarship standards (*takhrīj*, sanad criticism, matn analysis with classical commentaries), thus methodologically more robust; (3) demonstrating that hadith provides a normative framework relevant to reading modern political practices, especially in the context of electoral democracy; (4) integrating insights from *fiqh al-hadīth*, religious moderation, ecological justice, and gender deconstruction (Sukron, 2021, 2024; Khotimah & Sukron, 2023; Ismail & Sukron, 2025; Subkiyyah & Sukron, 2025) to make the study of political hadith more interdisciplinary; (5) providing a summary table of primary hadiths and their quality for reader convenience.

This study has several limitations. First, the sanad analysis was conducted concisely, relying on the verdicts of classical and modern hadith scholars, rather than independent, in-depth sanad research (such as tracing all chains and independently assessing each narrator's credibility). Second, the majority of hadiths used are *ṣaḥīḥ*, but a few narrations (e.g., HR. Abū Dāwūd no. 2936) are *ḥasan* and require further investigation. Third, this study is conceptual and has not empirically tested how the values of prophetic leadership are implemented in contemporary political practice in Indonesia or other Muslim countries. Fourth, this article does not discuss in detail the differences among schools of jurisprudence (*madhāhib*) regarding the mechanism of leader selection (whether *bai'ah* by *ahl al-ḥall wa al-'aqd* is obligatory or whether general elections suffice). Fifth, due to its focus on hadith, the analysis does not deeply explore the historical-sociological dimensions of leadership practice during the era of the Rightly Guided Caliphs.

Theoretical implications: This article strengthens the development of *political hadith studies* as an interdisciplinary field bridging hadith studies, political science, sociology, and ethics. Practical implications: Stakeholders (voters, political parties, election supervisory bodies, and candidates) can use these hadith criteria as an ethical reference in the recruitment and evaluation of leadership. Future research agenda: (1) conduct more comprehensive sanad and matn criticism of all hadiths related to political leadership, including those on *bai'ah*, *khalīfah*, and *imāmah*; (2) compare interpretations between classical scholars (al-

Māwardī, Ibn Taymiyyah, al-Juwaynī) and contemporary scholars (Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī, Muḥammad ‘Abduh, Rashīd Riḍā) regarding public leadership; (3) develop empirical studies (surveys, in-depth interviews, case studies) linking the concept of leadership in hadith with actual political dynamics in Muslim societies, such as legislative elections and local elections in Indonesia; (4) integrate perspectives such as contextual *fiqh al-ḥadīth* (Sukron, 2021, 2024), religious moderation (Khotimah & Sukron, 2023), critique of environmental exploitation (Ismail & Sukron, 2025), and gender deconstruction (Subkiyyah & Sukron, 2025) so that hadith studies on leadership become not only normative but also responsive to ecological crises, gender injustice, and radicalism; (5) conduct a comparative study between the hadith leadership model and contemporary ethical leadership theories (transformational leadership, servant leadership).

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