

**REINTERPRETATION THE HADITH ON MARRIAGE
PREFERENCES FROM GADAMER'S HERMENEUTICS
PERSPECTIVE: Integrating Textual Meaning and Contemporary
Social Relevance**

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ABSTRACT

The hadith regarding preferences in choosing a life partner, which states, "Women are married for four reasons..." is often interpreted in a partial and hierarchical manner, where physical aspects such as beauty, wealth, and lineage are positioned equally or even above religious values. This textual-literal interpretation tends to reproduce patriarchal norms and disregards the historical context in which the hadith was revealed. This study aims to reinterpret the hadith through the philosophical hermeneutics of Hans-Georg Gadamer, emphasizing pre-understanding and the fusion of horizons between the text and the reader. A qualitative-critical approach is employed, drawing on classical (turāth) and contemporary literature as the foundation for analysis. The findings reveal that religion, as mentioned in the hadith, is not merely one of four equal considerations but represents a normative critique against the materialistic and status-driven tendencies of Arab society at the time. Non-physical criteria such as moral integrity, responsibility, and mutual respect are identified as the essence of religious values to be prioritized. Through Gadamerian hermeneutics, this hadith can be contextualized as an ethical guideline for establishing marital relationships that are balanced, just,

and free from patriarchal domination. Thus, this study offers an alternative, reflective, and contextually grounded interpretation of the hadith, reaffirming the importance of religious values in contemporary social practice.

Keywords: *Hadith; Gadamerian Hermeneutics; Contextualization*

ABSTRAK

Abstrak berisi: Hadis tentang preferensi memilih pasangan hidup yang berbunyi “Wanita dinikahi karena empat hal...” sering kali dipahami secara parsial dan hierarkis, di mana aspek fisik seperti kecantikan, harta, dan keturunan diposisikan setara atau bahkan lebih dominan daripada aspek agama. Pemahaman tekstual semacam ini berisiko mereproduksi nilai-nilai patriarkal dan mengabaikan konteks historis lahirnya hadis tersebut. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menafsirkan ulang hadis tersebut melalui pendekatan hermeneutika filosofis Hans-Georg Gadamer yang menekankan pentingnya *pra-pemahaman (pre-understanding)* dan *peleburan cakrawala makna (fusion of horizons)* antara teks dan pembaca. Metode yang digunakan adalah pendekatan kualitatif-kritis dengan analisis literatur klasik (turats) dan kontemporer sebagai basis reflektif. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa aspek agama dalam hadis bukanlah satu dari empat pilihan, melainkan merupakan kritik normatif terhadap orientasi masyarakat Arab kala itu yang mengedepankan materialisme dan status sosial. Aspek non-fisik seperti integritas moral, tanggung jawab, dan kesalingan justru merupakan inti dari nilai keagamaan yang harus diutamakan. Melalui pendekatan hermeneutika Gadamer, hadis ini dapat dikontekstualisasikan sebagai panduan etis dalam membentuk relasi pernikahan yang setara, adil, dan bebas dari dominasi budaya patriarkal. Dengan demikian, penelitian ini menawarkan pembacaan alternatif yang lebih reflektif dan kontekstual atas hadis, sekaligus memperkuat signifikansi pemahaman agama dalam praksis sosial kontemporer.

Kata kunci: *Hadis; Hermeneutika Gadamer; Kontekstualisasi*

INTRODUCTION

Advice on marriage and choosing a life partner often refers to the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad, which states, "Women are married for four reasons: for their wealth, their lineage, their beauty, and their religion. So choose the one who is religious, and you will be fortunate" (HR. al-Bukhari No. 4700, HR. Muslim 2661, HR. Abu Daud 1751, HR. an-Nasa'i 3178). This hadith is quite popular, but in practice, understanding of this hadith is often partial and textual, leading to a hierarchical paradigm in viewing the criteria for women to be married. Many understand that the four aspects mentioned by the Prophet in the hadith wealth, lineage, beauty, and religion are a normative and prescriptive order of priority, rather than a descriptive one based on the social reality at hand. The paradigm of understanding that has developed so far which tends to understand the hadith literally and fragmentarily can actually narrow the meaning of the main message that the Prophet Muhammad wanted to convey. In many cases, interpretations that place wealth, lineage, and beauty as normative criteria in choosing a life partner can obscure the transcendent moral and ethical message, namely the call to make religion or religious quality the main foundation in building a household.

Based on this background, it is necessary to make an effort to understand the context and substantial value of hadith in a more comprehensive structure. The epistemological problem in understanding hadith reflects a broader crisis of interpretation in Islamic discourse, where normative texts are often understood textually without a comprehensive exploration of meaning (Rahmatullah, 2019). In this case, Hans-Georg Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutic approach is relevant to use as an analytical tool. Gadamer emphasizes that understanding a text does not lie solely in its literal meaning, but rather in the dialogical process between the text, the author, and the reader (Gadamer, 1976). He rejects the idea of a single, definitive meaning in a text, and instead emphasizes the importance of fusion of horizons—the merging of the author's intent and the reader's horizon—as a way to uncover the deeper, contextual meaning of a text (Gadamer, 2004).

Analytical studies of hadith using Hans-Georg Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics approach are not entirely new in contemporary hadith discourse. Several previous studies have attempted to apply Gadamer's analytical tools in reinterpreting hadiths that contain complex social or ethical problems, especially those related to issues of power relations, gender, and individual freedom. In reviewing the literature and previous studies, a number of scientific works were found that used Gadamer's hermeneutics as the main theoretical framework for reading hadith. For example, a re-reading of the hadith about "the deficiency of reason and religion in women." (Andriyani, 2016). Similarly, the hadith about "the command for wives to prostrate to their husbands" (Taufiqotuzzahro', 2019) . Other relevant studies include an analysis of hadiths on "the right to freedom of religion and warfare" (Ihsanuddin, 2017), a reading of hadiths on "the prohibition of drawing living creatures" (Komarudin, 2019), and a reading of "hadiths that are conventionally considered misogynistic" (Muhtador, 2018). The second type of tendency is studies related to hadiths on preferences in choosing a life partner. Among the previous studies are those by Arif Maulana and Asep Saepullah on the principle of kafa'ah in hadiths on choosing a partner (Maulana & Saepullah, 2024), and a study by Nurun Najwa (Najwah, 2018).

Based on the literature review described above, there appears to be significant scope for further study of hadiths that explicitly contain recommendations and preferences for choosing a life partner. Hadith that mention four main criteria namely wealth, lineage, beauty, and religion are often understood literally and hierarchically, thus potentially reducing the normative message that the Prophet wanted to convey. This partial understanding not only limits the horizon of interpretation, but also tends to perpetuate materialistic and patriarchal social constructs in the process of choosing a life partner. Therefore, this study considers it important to re-read these hadiths through Hans-Georg Gadamer's hermeneutic approach.

With this approach, the text of the hadith is not positioned as a fixed entity with a single meaning, but rather as a dialogical medium containing a constantly evolving horizon of meaning. This approach allows readers to not only interpret the text literally, but also to uncover the historical and contextual

dimensions behind the emergence of the hadith text (Muhtador, 2018). This process aims to explore the ethical and spiritual messages contained in the text, while articulating them in a way that is relevant to contemporary life (Taufiqotuzzahro', 2019).

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative method with a library research approach, which involves an in-depth examination of various written sources relevant to the research theme (Darmalaksana, 2020), including classical books, works of hadith interpretation, and contemporary literature discussing hermeneutics and textual criticism. The use of qualitative methods in this study refers to the main characteristics of qualitative research, namely exploring the understanding and meaning of social phenomena or texts through in-depth interpretation (Malahati, B, Jannati, Qathrunnada, & Shaleh, 2023). Data were collected through primary and secondary source searches (Bungin, 2001). Primary sources were hadiths about marriage preferences and their commentaries, such as *Syarah Sahih Muslim* by Imam Nawawi and *Syarah Sunan Nasa'i* by Ibn Ruslan. Secondary sources included the philosophical works of Hans-Georg Gadamer, such as *Truth and Method*, as well as literature explaining the hermeneutic approach and its application in Islamic studies.

The approach used in data analysis was descriptive-analytical and hermeneutic-philosophical, which aimed to explore the meaning of hadiths in a contextual and transformative manner. The focus is on building a dialogue between the horizon of the text (the historical context of the hadith) and the horizon of the reader (current experiences and social realities), as in the concept of fusion of horizons in Gadamer's hermeneutic theory. With this approach, this study not only attempts to.

READING THE HADITH ON RECOMMENDATIONS AND PREFERENCES FOR MARRIAGE ACCORDING TO GADAMER'S HERMENEUTICS

1. Teks of The Hadith

Advice on marriage and choosing a life partner often refers to the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad, which states, "Women are married for four reasons: their wealth, their lineage, their beauty, and their religion. Therefore, choose the one who is religious, and you will be fortunate." This hadith is quite popular and often serves as a basis for choosing criteria for a life partner. The text of the hadith is as follows:

حَدَّثَنَا مُسَدَّدٌ حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى عَنْ عُبَيْدِ اللَّهِ قَالَ حَدَّثَنِي سَعِيدُ بْنُ أَبِي سَعِيدٍ عَنْ أَبِيهِ عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ تَنْكُحُ الْمَرْأَةُ لِأَرْبَعٍ لِمَالِهَا وَلِحَسَبِهَا وَجَمَالِهَا وَلِدِينِهَا فَاظْفَرْ بِذَاتِ الدِّينِ تَرِبَتْ يَدَاكَ

“Musaddad told us, Yahya told us from Ubaidullah, he said, Sa'id bin Abu Sa'id told me from his father from Abu Hurairah, may Allah be pleased with him, from the Prophet ﷺ, he said, ‘A woman is married for four reasons: for her wealth, for her lineage, for her beauty, and for her religion. So choose her for her religion, and you will be blessed.’” (Reported by al-Bukhari, No. 4700)

The process of takhrij al-hadith is an essential stage in the study of hadith, as it serves to verify and validate the quality and authority of a hadith text (Qomarullah, 2016). Through this stage, a researcher can trace the source, chain of transmission, and status of a hadith to ensure that it is valid as authentic evidence in religious discourse. One of the leading hadith scholars, Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani, classified hadiths about the recommendation to choose a life partner based on four criteria as hadiths that have the degree of muttafaq 'alaih—that is, their validity is agreed upon by two great imams, al-Bukhari and Muslim. This hadith is narrated through seven chains of transmission, six of which reach the degree of sahih, as stated in: Sahih al-Bukhari No. 4700, Sahih Muslim No. 2661, Sunan Abu Dawud No. 1751, Sunan Ibn Majah No. 1848, Sunan al-Nasa'i No. 3178, and Musnad Ahmad No. 9158. Meanwhile,

another chain has a hasan degree, as stated in Sunan al-Darimi No. 2076. The following is a more detailed diagram of the hadith chain:

No	Rawi	Kunyah	Land of Life	Year of Death	Category	Scholarly Judgments
1.	Abdur Rahman bin Shakhr	Abu Hurairah	Madinah	57 H	Sahabat	Ibnu Hajjar al' Asqalani : <i>Sahabat</i>
2.	Kaisan	Abu Sa'id	Madinah	100 H	Tabi'in kalangan tua	AnNasa'i : <i>La ba'sa bih</i> Ibnu Hajar al 'Asqolani : <i>Tsiqoh Tsabat</i>
3.	Sa'id bin Abi Sa'id Kaisan	Abu Sa'ad	Madinah	123 H	Tabi'in kalangan pertengahan	Ibnu Madani, An Nasa'i, Ibnu Kharasy : <i>Tsiqoh</i>
4.	Ubaidillah bin 'Umar	Abu Utsman	Madinah	147 H	Tabi'in kalangan biasa	Ibnu Hajar, Adz Dzahabi, Abu Hatim : <i>Tsiqoh</i>
5.	Yahya bin Sa'id bin Farrukh	Abu Sa'id	Bashrah	198 H	Tabi'ut tabi'in kalangan biasa	AnNasa'i, Abu Hatim : <i>Tsiqoh</i> Adz Dzahabi : <i>Hafidz kabir</i>
6.	Musaddad Bin Musarhad	Abu Al Hasan	Bashrah	228 H	Tabi'ul Atba'	Yahya bin Ma'in, Ahmad bin Hambal : <i>Shaduq</i> An Nasa'i : <i>Tsiqoh</i>

Based on an analysis of the table and sanad scheme, it can be concluded that the hadith regarding preferences in choosing a life partner—narrated by Abu Hurairah—is sahih (authentic). This authenticity is proven through the continuity of the sanad (ittishāl al-sanad), in which the entire chain of narration is consistently connected to the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. This connection can be verified through chronological data, such as the birth and death years of the narrators, which indicate a high possibility of direct meetings and transmission of knowledge between narrators. In addition, geographical factors—namely, the narrators living or studying in the same area—also reinforce the possibility of the continuity of the sanad (liqa’). Furthermore, all narrators listed in the sanad of this hadith have a good reputation in terms of fairness (‘adalah) and accuracy (ḍabt), as evidenced by various positive comments from the scholars of jarh wa ta’dil. There is no indication of any syādzdz (deviation from stronger accounts) or ‘illah (hidden flaws) in the transmission of this hadith that could diminish its validity. Thus, methodologically, this hadith fulfills all the criteria of a maqbūl (acceptable) and shahih (authentic) hadith.

2. Historical Background Of The Hadith

A historical study of the hadith on preferences in choosing a life partner is an essential step in understanding the social construction and cultural reality of Arab society at the time of revelation. This hadith did not appear in a vacuum; it was born in the context of a society with a specific structure of values, norms, and gender relations that need to be understood sociologically and historically. Within the framework of Hans-Georg Gadamer's hermeneutics, understanding a text does not stop at its literal meaning, but is the result of a dialogical process between two horizons: the horizon of the past (the horizon of the text) and the horizon of the present (the horizon of the reader) (Mahbub Ghozali dkk., 2022). The historical horizon refers to the historical and social context that gave rise to the text, including the cultural dynamics, value systems, and power relations that prevailed at the time (Sahiron Syamsuddin, 2017). By understanding this horizon, today's readers can not only avoid ahistorical interpretations, but also grasp substantive messages that are more meaningful than mere textual references.

In a number of historical literature, it is clear how women in the Jahiliyyah period experienced inhumane and unequal treatment in various aspects of social life. One of the most striking forms of injustice was in the system of marriage and divorce. A husband at that time had full authority to divorce his wife whenever he wanted, whether for a clear reason or for no reason at all. Even more tragically, the husband could take his wife back at any time without regard for the woman's consent or willingness. This reflects how marital relationships at that time were built on unequal and unilateral power relations that were entirely in favor of men. Furthermore, divorced women were not guaranteed basic rights such as alimony, housing, or social protection, which should have been the responsibility of the husband. In the structure of Jahiliyyah society, divorce became a tool of male domination over women, without any mechanism to ensure justice and welfare for the wife (Engineer, 2000). This phenomenon not only highlights the weak bargaining position of women, but also reinforces how the patriarchal system at that time systematically marginalized women.

In the book *Syarah Shahih Muslim*, Imam Nawawi provides a very important explanation in understanding the substantive meaning of the hadith regarding preferences in choosing a life partner. The wording of this hadith is not intended as an absolute normative command, but rather as a description of the general tendencies of society at that time. Prophet Muhammad ﷺ observed that the majority of people, when choosing a life partner, tended to consider three main aspects: beauty, wealth, and lineage. These three aspects were the dominant social standards in pre-Islamic Arab culture, and were still strongly embedded in the traditions of the society during the time of the Prophet. However, amidst these social constructs, the Prophet intervened morally and spiritually by encouraging his followers to make religion the top priority in choosing a life partner. This recommendation is evident in the wording: *فَاطْفَرُ: بِدَاتِ الدِّينِ تَرَبَّتْ يَدَاكَ*. The expression “*taribat yadak*” is a typical Arabic idiom commonly used in the form of sarcasm, warning, or recommendation that is assertive in nature. Thus, the context of this hadith shows that the Prophet was speaking in the reality of Arab society at that time, observing existing cultural trends, but at the same time correcting and guiding people towards more noble

values. In the framework of Gadamer's hermeneutics, this understanding can be understood as a process of fusion horizon, in which today's readers do not only see the text as a representation.

Imam Nawawi's explanation in *Syarah Shahih Muslim* regarding the hadith on the criteria for choosing a life partner shows a direction of understanding that is not merely textual, but rather laden with criticism of the dominant culture of his time. He emphasized that the mention of four criteria wealth, lineage, beauty, and religion in the hadith was not a hierarchy of values established by Sharia law, but rather a description of the social reality that was common in Arab society at that time. In that context, the Prophet directed that religion be used as the main foundation in determining life choices. The recommendation to choose a partner who has good religious qualities is an effort to build a household that is not only based on physical attraction, but also on strong spiritual and moral values (Maulana & Saepullah, 2024). This understanding is in line with the views of several other scholars. Ibn Ruslan in *Syarah Sunan al-Nasa'i*, Nashiruddin al-Baidhawi in *Tuhfah al-Abrar Syarah Mashabih al-Sunnah*, and Jalaluddin al-Suyuthi in *Hasyiyah al -Suyuthi 'ala Sunan al-Nasa'i* explain that the wording of this hadith shows a contrast between the materialistic tendencies of society and Islamic teachings, which base choices on piety. They also emphasize that the choice of a life partner should not be controlled by worldly orientations alone, because aspects such as wealth and beauty are temporary and do not guarantee long-term happiness.

The social background and historical conditions of pre-Islamic Arab society provide a very strong picture of how women were structurally marginalized in various aspects of life. The deeply rooted patriarchal culture at that time made women subordinate entities, whose existence was often not fully recognized as independent and dignified social subjects (Adinugraha, Maulana, & Sartika, 2018).

In the value system of jahiliyyah society, women are often placed in a passive position, with no control over their bodies, rights, or their own futures, including in matters of marriage. Their existence is more often reduced to

objects that satisfy men's needs, symbols of social status, or even economic commodities (Adinugraha et al., 2018).

The intersection between this social reality and the dominant culture that prioritizes lineage, family honor, and material wealth contributes to the formation of an unequal gender relations paradigm. It is therefore not surprising that hadiths discussing women often reflect the reality of objectification of women, especially in physical aspects such as beauty or lineage. However, it is important to understand that this tendency is not a normative reflection of Islamic teachings, but rather a representation of the social context in which these hadiths originated (Najwah, 2018). Within the framework of Gadamer's hermeneutics, such conditions become part of the horizon of the past that must be read critically and reflectively by today's readers. These hadiths need to be understood not merely as normative texts, but also as the Prophet's response to the conditions of society at that time, bringing with them a gradual and contextual transformative vision. Therefore, the emphasis on religious aspects in the hadiths about preferences in choosing a spouse becomes an important entry point for reading the direction of change in values brought about by Islam in elevating the dignity of women as subjects who are spiritually and socially sovereign.

3. Hermeneutic Reading of Hadith

One of Hans-Georg Gadamer's important contributions to hermeneutics is his view that humans are never completely free from history. In Gadamer's framework, every understanding that arises from the process of interpretation is always influenced by historical effects (*Wirkungsgeschichtliches Bewusstsein*), namely the awareness that a person's thoughts and judgments are historically shaped (Gadamer, 1976).

In other words, whether consciously or not, individuals are products of the history in which they live. History, in this case, is not only understood as past events, but also as a horizon of experiences, traditions, and values that have shaped a person's perspective in reading and interpreting a text. Gadamer states that effective history works silently but profoundly in influencing the

reader's horizon. He writes that understanding is not a neutral process, but is always historical and dialogical (Ihsanuddin, 2017). Therefore, when reading a text, a person does not stand outside of time or reality, but rather brings their own historical horizon with them. Consequently, the process of understanding a text, including a hadith text, is an encounter between the horizon of the past (the text) and the horizon of the present (the reader).

In his monumental work *Truth and Method*, Hans-Georg Gadamer asserts that human understanding never arises from a vacuum, but is always influenced by pre-understanding that has been formed beforehand. He rejects the idea that an interpreter can be completely neutral or objective in the process of understanding a text. Instead, according to Gadamer, it is precisely pre-understanding—that is, the collection of knowledge, experience, beliefs, and historical horizons that readers possess before interacting with a text—that forms the foundation of understanding itself (Gadamer, 2004). From this perspective, individuals are not free agents who spontaneously create meaning, but rather historical beings who have been shaped by their traditions and socio-cultural backgrounds. This concept is closely related to the reader's situation or hermeneutical situation, which is the concrete conditions that include the reader's background, social position, and historical perspective when encountering a text. This situation is given—it is simply provided by history and cannot be eliminated or negated in the process of interpretation. Thus, every understanding of a text is always holistic and contextual.

These two horizons are the two main variables which, according to Gadamer, must be brought together and fused in a process he calls the fusion of horizons. The horizon of the text reflects the historical, cultural, and semantic context in which the text was created, while the horizon of the reader represents the social background, values, and contemporary experiences brought by the interpreter (Mughtar, 2016). The meeting of these two horizons is not a process of erasing one of them, but rather a form of dialogue between the subjectivity of the reader and the objectivity of the text. In this dialogue, readers do not merely impose meaning from outside the text, but also open themselves up to the messages contained within the text. Conversely, the text is not understood as a static or frozen entity, but as something that is alive and

continues to give new meaning through interaction with the context of the times. From this dialogical process, an understanding is born that is not merely subjective, but also contains objectivity that is explored reflectively and historically. Thus, the fusion of horizons becomes the heart of Gadamer's hermeneutic methodology, which enables a dynamic, contextual, and transformative reading of the text. Understanding is not the end result of logical deduction, but rather an existential experience in which meaning emerges from the reciprocal relationship between the reader and the text.

After the dialogical process between the horizon of the text and the horizon of the reader produces a more complete and objective understanding, the next stage in Gadamer's hermeneutic approach is to implement that meaning into the current context. In this case, Gadamer emphasizes that the meaning produced from the interpretation process is not merely an intellectual result, but must have real relevance in the reader's life. He calls this meaningful sense—meaning that does not merely rely on the literal wording of the text, but rather meaning that is coherent, alive, and significant to the reality and existential experience of the interpreter. Gadamer firmly rejects an understanding that freezes the text in its historical meaning alone. Instead, he encourages the meaning found in a text, including religious texts such as hadith, to be transformed into values that are applicable and impactful in contemporary life. Thus, the resulting understanding does not stop at the theoretical level but becomes a practical orientation that guides the moral and social actions of the reader.

In the context of hadith studies, this approach directs that the prophetic messages contained in the words of the Prophet should not be read rigidly and ahistorically, but should be explored deeply and actualized within a framework of social welfare and justice that is relevant to the conditions of today's community. This process is a concrete manifestation of Gadamer's hermeneutical goal: to bridge the legacy of past meanings with the needs and values of the present, without losing the authentic spirit of the text itself. Hadiths about preferences in choosing a life partner, when read through the hermeneutical perspective of Hans-Georg Gadamer, open up a broader, more contextual, and relevant interpretation of the dynamics of modern life. Through

the fusion of horizons approach, the meaning of the hadith is not limited to the cultural horizon of 7th-century Arab society, but is re-read in dialogue with today's social reality.

In this framework, the criteria for choosing a life partner are no longer understood rigidly and hierarchically based solely on physical aspects such as beauty, wealth, and lineage, but are examined as representations of the social constructs that prevailed at that time. By adjusting the historical and cultural context, this hadith can be applied in a more holistic understanding—that in choosing a life partner, both men and women need to consider two main aspects: physical and non-physical. Physical aspects such as appearance and social background remain important, but they are not the only factors to consider in Surah Al-Rum verse 21 :

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ أَنْ خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا لِتَسْكُنُوا إِلَيْهَا وَجَعَلَ بَيْنَكُمْ مَوَدَّةً وَرَحْمَةً إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ

“Among His signs is that He created mates for you from among yourselves so that you may find tranquility in them. He placed between you affection and mercy. Indeed, in that are signs for a people who reflect.”

Non-physical aspects within the scope of religion, as referred to in the hadith about preferences in choosing a life partner, should not be understood superficially or limited to formal religious indicators alone. A religious understanding that focuses only on the ability to read the Qur'an, a pesantren educational background, or the ability to access classical texts such as the yellow book, is essentially a form of religious expression that is symbolic and superficial (Nelli & Jaafar, 2023). Although this is important, it does not fully reflect the depth and quality of a person's religiousness, especially in the context of family life.

In practical reality, what is more needed in building a family that is *sakinah*, *mawaddah*, and *rahmah* is the practice of religious values in the form of character and ethics. Values such as honesty, responsibility, independence, hard work, patience, and respect for one's spouse are concrete manifestations

of substantive religiosity. This is a form of religiosity that does not stop at rituals and symbols, but is embodied in daily actions and behavior (Gaffar, Rusdi, & Akbar, 2021). These values will ultimately become a solid foundation for creating a healthy, fair, and balanced marital relationship. Furthermore, internalizing these values also contributes to transforming the structure of household relationships, which have often been based on patriarchal culture. By making religion an inclusive and transformative moral foundation, the relationship between husband and wife can be built on mutual respect and cooperation, rather than on the domination of one party over the other. In this context, the message of the hadith is not only a spiritual guide, but also an ethical framework for shaping a more egalitarian and humane family life.

CONCLUSION

Through Gadamer's hermeneutics, it can be analyzed that the hadith cannot be understood literally and hierarchically, as is often practiced in society, but rather needs to be interpreted as the Prophet Muhammad's response to the cultural and social structure of Arab society at that time. The patriarchal culture that objectified women and judged them based on their physical appearance and lineage was subtly criticized by the Prophet by encouraging the selection of spouses based on religious values. This was a progressive moral intervention at the time. Within the framework of Gadamer's hermeneutics, the process of understanding this hadith requires a fusion of horizons an encounter between the horizon of the text (the historical context of the hadith) and the horizon of the reader (the social conditions of the present). A complete understanding can only be achieved through a dialogue between the meaning contained in the text and the reader's life experiences and background. This understanding is dynamic and contextual, not stagnant in the textual dimension.

Furthermore, the reader's preconceptions are an integral part of the interpretation process. In this context, the normative message of the hadith namely, the importance of religious aspects in choosing a life partner is not only interpreted in a ritualistic manner (such as being able to read the Qur'an or being a graduate of an Islamic boarding school), but more deeply in terms

of practicing Islamic ethical values such as honesty, patience, responsibility, and mutual respect. Finally, the hermeneutic understanding of this hadith emphasizes that religious values, which form the basis for choosing a life partner, are not only a form of individual piety but also the foundation for a fair, harmonious, and equal marriage relationship. When read through Gadamer's hermeneutic perspective, the message of this hadith is not merely a textual statement, but becomes a living and relevant ethical and reflective guideline in modern society.

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