




## Types of Weak Hadiths and Their Importance

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### Abstract

This article provides a scientific and theoretical analysis of the nature of weak hadiths, their terminological definition, and their main types. The study examines the distinctive features of such categories of weak hadiths as mu'allaq, mursal, mu'zal, munqati', mudallas, mawdu', matruk, munkar, mudraj, maqlub, muztarib, musahhaf, muharraf, shadh, and mu'allal, as well as their relation to defects in the isnad (chain of transmission) and the matn (text).

**Keywords:** weak hadith, munqati', mudallas, mu'zal, mursal, muharraf, shadh, musahhaf, muztarib, mu'allal, matruk, munkar.

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## Introduction

Muslim scholars developed a highly precise and systematic methodology for collecting hadiths and classifying them according to their level of authenticity, a method unparalleled in the history of humanity. Within this framework, narrations were categorized into *ṣaḥīḥ* (authentic), *ḥasan* (good), and *ḍa'if* (weak). The issue of weak hadiths is considered one of the most complex and multi-dimensional topics in this field, having been the subject of extensive scholarly debate among Islamic scholars for centuries. A weak hadith is a narration in which one or more conditions required for a *ṣaḥīḥ* or *ḥasan* hadith are missing in either its chain of transmission (*isnad*) or its text (*matn*), while it does not reach the level of fabrication (*mawḍū'*). Although this definition may appear simple, the internal structure of weak hadiths, their classifications, and distinctions require numerous subtle scholarly criteria[1].

## Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative and analytical research design grounded in classical hadith sciences and modern academic approaches. The methodological framework is based on the principles of *muṣṭalaḥ al-ḥadīth*, particularly focusing on classification, evaluation, and interpretation of weak hadiths[2].

The primary method used in this research is textual analysis of classical and contemporary scholarly works on hadith sciences. Key sources include foundational texts such as *Muqaddimah Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ*, *Tadrib al-Rawī*, and *Nuzhat al-Nazar*, as well as modern studies addressing hadith methodology. These sources were systematically analyzed to identify definitions, classifications, and criteria for weak hadiths[3].

A comparative method was employed to examine differences in classification among scholars, particularly regarding categories such as *mu'allaq*, *mursal*, *mu'dal*, and *munqaṭi'*. This approach allows for identifying both commonalities and divergences in scholarly perspectives[4].

Additionally, a descriptive-analytical method was applied to classify weak hadiths based on defects in the *isnad* and *matn*. Each type was examined in terms of its linguistic meaning, technical definition, and practical implications in hadith evaluation.

The study also incorporates elements of historical analysis to trace the development of hadith classification systems and their role in preserving the authenticity of Islamic teachings.

The validity of the research is ensured through reliance on authoritative classical sources and cross-verification of definitions and classifications across multiple scholarly works[5].

## Result and Discussion

The scientific classification of weak hadiths forms a well-developed system that identifies various defects occurring in the chain of transmission, such as breaks in the *isnad*, issues related to the reliability and memory of narrators, as well as hidden defects in the text or the insertion of foreign words. These are expressed through well-defined technical terms. Weak hadiths include types such as *mu'allaq*, *mursal*, *mu'dal*, *munqaṭi'*, *mudallas*, *mawḍū'*, *matruk*, *munkar*, *mudraj*, *maqlub*, *muḍṭarib*, *muṣaḥḥaf*, *muḥarrarf*, *shadh*, and *mu'allal*.

1). The term "*mu'allaq*" linguistically derives from the verb '*allaqa*', meaning "to suspend or hang something onto another thing." It is called *mu'allaq* because its chain of narration is "suspended" from the beginning, with one or more narrators omitted from the start. It is similar to an object hanging from the ceiling without touching the ground, hence the term "*mu'allaq*."

In technical terminology, a *mu'allaq hadith* is a narration in which one or more narrators are omitted from the beginning of the chain of transmission. Whether one narrator or several are omitted, it is still referred to as *mu'allaq*[6].

Ibn Ṣalāḥ, in his work *Muqaddimah fi 'Ulum al-Ḥadīth*, defines *mu'allaq* as follows: "A hadith is called *mu'allaq* when one or more narrators are consecutively omitted from the beginning of its chain of transmission." He also mentions several forms of it: a) The entire chain of transmission is omitted, and then it is stated: "The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said..." b) Only the Companion (*sahabi*), or both the Companion

and the Successor (*tabi'i*), are omitted from the chain. c) A scholar omits his direct teacher (*shaykh*) and attributes the hadith to someone higher in the chain. If that higher authority happens to be the author's own teacher, scholars have differed regarding whether this should still be considered *ta'liq* (*mu'allaq*) or not.

2). The term "*mursal*" linguistically derives from the verb *arsala*, meaning "to release" or "to send forth." A *mursal* hadith is so named because its transmitter "releases" the chain of narration without connecting it to a specific narrator[7].

In technical terminology, a *mursal hadith* is one in which the chain of transmission is broken at the end after the Successor (*tabi'i*), with a narrator omitted. According to another definition, it is a hadith in which a *tabi'i* directly attributes the narration to the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) without mentioning the Companion.

Among jurists and scholars of legal theory (*uṣūl al-fiqh*), all such cases are generally referred to as *mursal*. This view is also adopted by Abu Bakr al-Khaṭīb and others. According to common usage, a *mursal* narration is usually one in which a *tabi'i* reports directly from the Prophet (peace be upon him), whereas a narration where a *tabi'i* reports from another *tabi'i* is called *mu'dal*.

In such narrations, whether the *tabi'i* is senior or junior, the report appears in forms such as: "The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said...", "He did...", or "This was done in his presence." This is the common form of *mursal* hadith according to hadith scholars.

3) The term "*mu'dal*" linguistically derives from the verb *a'dala*, meaning "to make difficult" or "to burden." In technical usage, a hadith is called *mu'dal* when two or more consecutive narrators are omitted from its chain of transmission.

*Mu'dal* is considered a specific type of *munqaṭi'* (*disconnected hadith*). Thus, every *mu'dal* is *munqaṭi'*, but not every *munqaṭi'* is *mu'dal*. Some scholars also classify it as a form of *mursal*[8].

Although *mu'dal* and *mu'allaq* narrations appear similar, there is a difference between them. Ibn Ḥajar al-Asqalani explains this distinction as follows, "If two consecutive narrators are omitted from the beginning of the chain of transmission (*isnad*), the hadith is simultaneously considered both *mu'dal* and *mu'allaq*. However, if two consecutive narrators are omitted from the middle of the *isnad*, the hadith is only *mu'dal* and not *mu'allaq*. If only one narrator is omitted from the beginning of the *isnad*, the hadith is *mu'allaq* but not *mu'dal*. The *mu'dal* hadith is a weak hadith, and due to the omission of two or more narrators in its chain, it is considered weaker in rank than both *mursal* and *munqaṭi'*."

4) The term "*munqaṭi'*" linguistically derives from the verb *inqaṭa'a*, meaning "cut off," which is the opposite of "connected."

In technical terminology, a hadith whose chain of transmission (*isnad*) is not continuous and contains a break is called *munqaṭi'*.

Wherever a break occurs in the chain, the hadith may be referred to as *munqaṭi'*. From this perspective, *mursal*, *mu'allaq*, and *mu'dal* hadiths can also be included under the general category of *munqaṭi' hadiths*. However, later scholars of *Muṣṭalah al-Ḥadith* specified that only those forms of *munqaṭi'* that do not fall under the definitions of *mursal*, *mu'allaq*, or *mu'dal* are referred to as *munqaṭi'* in a technical sense. Early scholars of hadith also supported this view[9].

Imam al-Nawawi stated, "A hadith is considered *munqaṭi'* when a narrator after the Companion and Successor is omitted from the chain of transmission." The break in the chain may occur at one point or at multiple points. For example, it may occur in two or three places within the same *isnad*. In a *munqaṭi'* hadith, some narrators are mentioned in vague or unspecified terms such as "a man (*rajul*)" or "a *shaykh*," or similar general expressions.

5) The term "*mudallas*" is derived from the verbal noun *tadlis*, which linguistically means "to conceal a defect of goods from the buyer" in trade. The word *tadlis* itself comes from *dalasa*, which denotes the mixing or blending of darkness or obscurity. This meaning is mentioned in al-Fayruzabadi's *Qamus al-Muḥiṭ*.

The term *mudallas hadith* refers to a narration in which the narrator "casts the hadith into ambiguity," meaning he conceals its defect and presents it in a seemingly sound form. In technical terminology, *mudallas* is a hadith in which a defect in the chain of transmission (*isnad*) is hidden, while its outward appearance is made to seem correct.

*Tadlis* is divided into two main categories. The first is *tadlis al-isnad* (*tadlis in the chain*), in which a narrator reports from someone he did not actually hear from directly, but gives the impression that he did. Similarly,

he may narrate from a contemporary whom he never actually met, while giving the impression of having met him. In such cases, one or more narrators may be omitted from the chain[10].

A common practice of a mudallis narrator is to use ambiguous expressions such as “*qala fulan*” (“so-and-so said”) or “*an fulan*” (“from so-and-so”), or other vague and general terms.

There is also a form known as *tadlis al-taswiyah*. The word *taswiyah* linguistically means “smoothing,” “straightening,” or “equalizing.” Technically, this type of *tadlis* involves a narrator omitting a weak transmitter between two reliable narrators who actually met each other.

In this case, a narrator reports a hadith from his trustworthy shaykh, who in turn had narrated it from a weak transmitter, and that weak transmitter had narrated it from another trustworthy narrator. Since the two reliable narrators had met each other, the mudallis narrator removes the weak intermediary and directly connects the chain between the two reliable narrators. He thereby presents the chain as consisting entirely of trustworthy narrators, giving the impression that only reliable transmitters are involved. This type of *tadlis* is considered the most serious form. Al-'Iraqi stated regarding it “Whoever deliberately commits it, his integrity is harmed.” The second type occurs when a narrator reports a hadith from his shaykh but refers to him using an uncommon kunyah, lineage, or an unusual description, so that the identity of the narrator becomes unclear. Among the types of *tadlis*, this is considered the least severe in terms of reprehensibility[11].

6). The term “*mawdu*” linguistically carries meanings such as “to place,” “to lower,” “to bring down,” and “to fabricate.” According to the scholars of *Muṣṭalah al-Ḥadith*, a *mawdu hadith* is defined as a fabricated lie that has been falsely attributed to the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him).

The *mawdu hadith* is considered the worst category among weak hadiths. Some scholars have even stated that *mawdu* is an independent category in itself and should not be included among weak hadiths[12].

7) The term “*matruk*” linguistically derives from the root *tark*, meaning “abandoned” or “left aside.” Arabs also use the term *al-tarikah* for the remaining part of an egg after the chick has hatched, meaning something left behind or discarded. Similarly, a *matruk hadith* is a narration that is discarded and not accepted. In the terminology of scholars, a *matruk hadith* is a narration in whose chain there is a narrator who is suspected of lying.

8) The term “*munkar*” linguistically derives from *inkar*, meaning the opposite of affirmation (*iqrar*), i.e., “rejected” or “denied.” Hadith scholars have provided several definitions of *munkar hadith*, among which two are the most well-known: The first definition: a hadith narrated by a transmitter who has severe mistakes, excessive negligence, or apparent immorality is called *munkar*. This definition is attributed to Ḥafiz Ibn Ḥajar al-Asqalani, who also noted that other scholars share this view. The second definition: a hadith narrated by a weak transmitter in contradiction to a trustworthy transmitter is called *munkar*. Ibn Ḥajar al-Asqalani also mentioned this definition and described it as the stronger view. In this definition, an additional condition is the contradiction of a weak narrator to a reliable one.

The *munkar hadith* is divided into two types: 1) A solitary narration that contradicts the narrations of trustworthy narrators (*al-mufrad al-mukhalif li-riwayat al-thiqat*). 2) A solitary narration (*fard hadith*) transmitted by a narrator whose reliability is not strong enough to support such isolated transmission.

9) The term “*mudraj*” linguistically derives from the verb *adrajtu*, meaning “to insert” or “to add within.” In technical terminology, it refers to a hadith in which the structure of the *isnad* has been altered, or into whose text something that does not belong to it has been inserted without clarification[13].

*Mudraj* is divided into two main categories: 1) *Mudraj al-isnad* (insertion in the chain of transmission) refers to a situation where the order of the *isnad* is altered. In this case, a narrator, while mentioning the chain, unintentionally adds some of his own words, and others assume that these words are part of the transmitted hadith and then narrate it in that form. This category itself has several forms: a) Combining the chains of two different hadiths narrated by one transmitter and reporting them as a single hadith, b) Inserting a *musnad* hadith into another narration, c) Collecting various differences in the chains of a single text and narrating them as one unified *isnad*, d) A *muhaddith* mentions the *isnad* but does not transmit the *matn*, instead adding his own statement, which some listeners mistakenly assume to be part of the hadith. 2) *Mudraj al-matn* (insertion in the text) refers to the inclusion of words into the hadith text that were not originally part of it. Some sources define it as the addition of a *mawquf* statement into a *marfu* narration without clarification. *Mudraj al-matn* is further divided into three types: a) insertion at the beginning of the hadith, b) insertion in the middle of the hadith, c) insertion at the end of the hadith text[14].

10) The term “*maqlub*” linguistically derives from *qalb*, meaning “changed” or “reversed.” In the terminology of hadith scholars, *maqlub hadith* refers to a narration in which a word in the chain of transmission or in the text is replaced with another, or its order is reversed whether by placing it earlier or later, or by similar alterations. *Maqlub* is divided into two types: 1) *Maqlub al-isnad* (reversal in the chain of transmission) In this type, the substitution occurs in the isnad. It also has two forms: A) The name of a narrator is replaced with the name of the next narrator in the chain, or with his father’s name. For example, instead of narrating “Ka’b ibn Murrah,” a narrator may reverse it and report “Murrah ibn Ka’b.” B) A narrator replaces one person with another, often for the purpose of making the hadith appear rare. For instance, substituting “Nafi” in place of “Salim.” A narrator who deliberately produces such a *maqlub* hadith is referred to as a “hadith thief” (*sariq al-hadith*). 2) *Maqlub al-matn* (reversal in the text). In this type, the alteration occurs in the text of the hadith. It also has two forms: A) A narrator reverses parts of the hadith text, placing what should come later before what should come earlier. For example, the authentic narration reported by Imam Muslim states: “The right hand does not know what the left hand gives in charity.” It is altered to: “The left hand does not know what the right hand gives in charity.” B) A narrator replaces the isnad of one hadith with the matn of another, and places the original matn under a different chain. This method is often used to test the knowledge of hadith scholars. An example of this is the examination of Imam al-Bukhari in Baghdad.

11) The term “*muḍṭarib*” linguistically derives from *iḍṭirab*, meaning “restlessness,” “instability,” “unease,” or “disorder.” In technical terminology, a hadith transmitted through different routes with equal strength such that no version can be preferred over another is called a *muḍṭarib hadith*. *Muḍṭarib* hadith is divided, according to the place of inconsistency, into two types: 1) *Muḍṭarib al-isnad* (instability in the chain): a hadith transmitted through various chains that cannot be reconciled or preferred over one another in strength, making them equally strong or weak. 2) *Muḍṭarib al-matn* (instability in the text): a hadith whose text has been transmitted in contradictory forms that cannot be reconciled, and it is impossible to determine which version is correct [15].

12) The term “*muṣaḥḥaf*” is derived from *taṣḥif*, meaning “a scribal or textual error in a manuscript.” In technical terminology, it refers to altering the wording or meaning of a hadith due to misreading or miswriting what reliable narrators transmitted. Hafiz Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani stated: “In this case, the alteration occurs in the dots of the letters.” In contrast, *muḥarraf* refers to a case where the shape of the letters remains the same, but the vowel markings (*ḥarakat*) are changed, resulting in a different pronunciation and meaning.

13) The term “*shadh*” linguistically derives from the verb *shazza*, meaning “to be isolated” or “to become solitary.” In technical terminology, a *shadh hadith* is defined as a narration reported by an otherwise acceptable (reliable) narrator, who contradicts a more reliable narrator.

14) The term “*mu’allal*” linguistically means “to render something defective due to a certain cause.” In technical terminology, a *mu’allal hadith* is a narration that appears sound on the surface, but contains a hidden defect that affects its authenticity.

## Conclusion

The study of weak hadiths holds significant scholarly and practical importance in several respects. The very process of identifying weak narrations demonstrates the depth and precision of hadith sciences. In order to classify a narration as weak, scholars must thoroughly examine the lives, memory, character, and reliability of narrators, as well as carefully scrutinize every link in the chain of transmission. This necessity led to the development of the discipline of *‘ilm al-jarḥ wa al-ta’dil* (the science of narrator criticism and validation). Understanding the types of weak hadith also enables scholars to distinguish fabricated (*mawḍu‘*) hadith from weak ones. This distinction is crucial, as fabricated hadiths are completely rejected as false reports, whereas weak hadiths may, under certain conditions, be used cautiously in matters of virtuous deeds (*faḍa’il al-a’mal*). The majority of scholars have stipulated conditions for using weak hadiths: they must not be completely fabricated, their meanings must have supporting evidence from authentic sources, and they must not be used as a basis for deriving legal rulings (*aḥkam fiqhiyyah*). In conclusion, the study of weak hadiths is not merely the identification of defective narrations. Rather, it reflects the breadth of Islamic scholarly thought and the remarkable precision of hadith methodology.

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