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Exploring the concept of khidmah in Hadith al-Bukhari No. 676 through Fatima Mernisi's double investigation approach

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Abstract : The division of domestic roles in Muslim families is often shaped by gender constructs, positioning women as household managers and men as primary breadwinners, which creates a dual burden for women. Islam emphasizes spousal relationships based on tranquility, compassion, and cooperation. The hadith narrated in al-Bukhārī No. 676, which describes Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) assisting his family with household chores, serves as an important reference. This study examines the meaning of *khidmah* in the hadith, analyzes its sanad and socio-historical context using Fatima Mernissi's *double investigation* approach, and assesses its relevance to the role of husbands in contemporary Muslim families. The research employs a qualitative library-based method. Primary sources include the hadith on *khidmah* in the *kutub al-tis'ah*, particularly Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī No. 676, and Fatima Mernissi's *The Veil and the Male Elite*. Secondary sources include classical hadith commentary (*sharḥ*), literature on *asbāb al-wurūd*, and scholarly works on family relations and gender issues in Islam. Analysis integrates the *ma'ānī al-ḥadīṣ* approach with the *double investigation* method to examine both the chain of transmission and the socio-historical context of the hadith. Findings indicate that *khidmah*, expressed in the phrase *kāna fī mihnati ahlihi*, reflects the Prophet's active participation, moral responsibility, and humility in domestic life. His engagement in household work transcended the patriarchal norms of his time. Therefore, the values of partnership, shared responsibility, and care for family members embodied in this hadith remain relevant for fostering more just and harmonious Muslim households.

Keywords: Double Investigation; Gender Justice; Husband-Wife Relations; Ma'ānī al-Ḥadīṣ; Prophet's Khidmat

Abstrak : Pembagian peran domestik dalam keluarga Muslim sering dipengaruhi oleh konstruksi gender, menempatkan perempuan sebagai pengelola rumah tangga dan laki-laki sebagai pencari nafkah, sehingga menimbulkan beban ganda bagi perempuan. Islam menekankan relasi suami istri yang dibangun atas ketenangan, kasih sayang, dan kerja sama. Hadis riwayat al-Bukhārī No. 676, yang menyebutkan Nabi Muhammad Saw membantu keluarganya dalam pekerjaan rumah tangga, menjadi rujukan penting. Penelitian ini mengkaji makna *khidmah* dalam hadis tersebut, menelaah sanad dan konteks sosial-historis melalui pendekatan *double investigation* Fatima Mernissi, serta menilai relevansinya bagi peran suami dalam keluarga Muslim kontemporer. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif melalui studi kepustakaan. Sumber primer penelitian meliputi hadis tentang *khidmah* dalam *kutub al-tis'ah*, khususnya Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī No. 676, serta karya Fatima Mernissi *The Veil and the Male Elite*. Sumber sekunder mencakup kitab syarah hadis klasik, literatur tentang *asbāb al-wurūd*, serta berbagai karya ilmiah yang berkaitan dengan relasi keluarga dan isu gender dalam Islam. Analisis dilakukan dengan mengintegrasikan pendekatan *ma'ānī al-ḥadīṣ* dan metode *double investigation* untuk menelaah sanad serta konteks sosial-historis hadis. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa *khidmah* dalam ungkapan *kāna fī mihnati ahlihi* mencerminkan keterlibatan aktif, tanggung jawab moral, dan kerendahan hati Nabi dalam kehidupan domestik. Keterlibatan Nabi dalam pekerjaan rumah tangga melampaui norma patriarkal pada masanya. Oleh karena itu, nilai kemitraan, tanggung jawab bersama, dan kepedulian dalam keluarga yang terkandung dalam hadis ini tetap relevan dalam membangun keluarga Muslim yang lebih adil dan harmonis.

Kata Kunci: Double Investigation; Khidmah Nabi; Ma'ānī al-Ḥadīṣ, Relasi Suami Istri, Keadilan Gender

INTRODUCTION

The division of roles within a household ideally occurs fairly between husband and wife. However, in social practice, this division remains strongly influenced by gender constructs that position women as primarily responsible for domestic work, while men are more often positioned as breadwinners (Alfani et al., 2025). This pattern is even reflected in regulations, such as the Marriage Law No. 1 of 1974, which in several of its articles associates the husband as the head of the family and the wife as the manager of the household. Consequently, many women experience a dual burden, having to manage domestic tasks while also participating in the public sector. This inequality often triggers tension in marital relationships and even contributes to an increase in domestic conflicts, as evidenced by various reports on the factors leading to divorce in Indonesia. This condition indicates the persistent strength of cultural and structural biases that shape the perception that domestic work is primarily the responsibility of women (Nurdin, 2024).

In the context of Islamic teachings, the husband-wife relationship is fundamentally built upon the principles of tranquility, compassion, and mutual cooperation in family life. However, societal understanding of the division of domestic roles often does not fully reflect these values. One noteworthy hadith to examine in this regard is *Ḥadīth* narrated by Bukhārī No. 676, which explains that the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) used to assist his family with household chores. This hadith illustrates the noble character of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) within his family life. Its essence conveys that the Prophet consistently assisted and served his family at home, demonstrating that generosity, cooperation, and partnership are fundamental principles in fostering a

harmonious household. This attitude in no way diminished his position as the leader of the Muslim community. Furthermore, the hadith underscores the Prophet's exemplary balance, as he would immediately proceed to perform prayers upon hearing the call, proving that assisting his family did not lead him to neglect his obligations to Allah. This tradition invites further scholarly inquiry into the significance of a husband's participation in domestic responsibilities and its relevance to marital relations within contemporary social contexts. Accordingly, this study seeks to re-examine this hadith to explore its ethical implications and to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the husband's role in family life.

Previous studies have examined husband-wife relationships and the division of domestic roles within Muslim families from various perspectives. Mohammed Sulthan Ismiya Begum emphasized the importance of a husband's involvement in household work as a manifestation of justice within the family, based on the values of the Qur'an and hadith (Begum et al., 2024). Rezki Kurniati demonstrated that, in social practice, there remains a tendency toward traditional role division, although some families have begun to adopt more egalitarian patterns of relationship (Kurniati et al., 2021). Meanwhile, Robiah Awaliyah highlighted the values of an ideal marriage from the perspective of hadith, emphasizing mutual respect and the preservation of family harmony (Awaliyah, 2022). In addition, Ade Vera Yantika affirmed the importance of moral and religious foundations in building a harmonious family through the selection of a compatible spouse (Yantika et al., 2024).

Other studies have been conducted by Muhammad Kasim and Muhammad Dhiyaul Haq, who examined the concept of a *sakinah* (tranquil) family within hadith as a foundation for building a harmonious household (Kasim & Haq, 2020). Zunly Nadia and Niswatin Faoziah highlighted egalitarian relationships within the family by analyzing hadiths narrated by the Prophet's wives. Meanwhile, Muhammad Afiqu Adib explored the idea of gender equality through the lens of Islamic feminism (Adib, 2024). Rizka Selvia Tarmulo also found a tendency toward more flexible role division among millennial families (Rizka Selvia Tarmulo, 2024), while Muhammad Nawir critiqued the understanding of hadith that is often interpreted through a patriarchal bias and emphasized the importance of contextual reading (Nawir, 2024). Koburtay and Abuhussein further examined the relationship between Islamic principles and gender practices, emphasizing the distinction between normative Islamic teachings and socio-cultural practices (Koburtay & Abuhussein, 2021). Similarly, Rofiqi discussed gender justice within Muslim contexts through the negotiation between Islamic feminism and religious authority (Rofiqi dkk., 2026). Taken together, these studies demonstrate a growing interest in egalitarian family relationships, gender equality, and contextual approaches to Islamic texts. However, these studies generally have not specifically focused on Ḥadīth narrated by Bukhārī No. 676 as the primary object of analysis by integrating the study of *ma'ānī al-ḥadīṣ* (thematic hadith interpretation) with Fatima Mernissi's double investigation approach to examine both the textual meaning and its

socio-historical context. Therefore, this research seeks to fill this gap through a more comprehensive analysis.

Based on an examination of social realities and a review of existing literature, this study aims to address a scholarly gap in hadith studies concerning husband-wife relationships, particularly regarding the husband's involvement in domestic work. Although numerous studies have discussed issues of gender equality and household relations from an Islamic perspective, research that specifically analyzes *ḥadīth* narrated by Bukhārī No. 676 through the integration of the *ma'ānī al-ḥadīṣ* approach and Fatima Mernissi's double investigation method remains relatively limited. Therefore, this research is positioned to explore the meaning of *khidmah* (domestic service) more deeply by examining its linguistic aspects, interpretations by classical scholars, and the historical and social context of the hadith. The scope of this study is limited to the hadith concerning the Prophet Muhammad's involvement in household work as narrated in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī No. 676, by tracing its chain of transmission and the socio-cultural context that surrounds it. The objective is not to verify the authenticity of its chain of narration through classical criticism, but rather to uncover potential social biases that may have influenced the understanding of the hadith.

Based on the research rationale outlined above, this study addresses three main questions. first, what is the meaning of *khidmah* in *ḥadīth* narrated by Bukhārī No. 676. Second, what are the findings from the investigation of its chain of transmission (*sanad*) and socio-historical context through Fatima Mernissi's double investigation approach. And third, what is the relevance of the meaning of *khidmah* to the role of husbands in the ideal contemporary family. This research aims to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the concept of *khidmah* within the hadith, while also elucidating its implications for the division of domestic roles in Muslim families. Theoretically, this study is expected to enrich the field of hadith studies, particularly those concerning household relations and issues of gender justice. Practically, this research is expected to offer a new perspective to society by demonstrating that a husband's involvement in domestic work has a basis in the exemplary conduct of the Prophet Muhammad. In doing so, it may encourage the creation of more equitable, harmonious, and mutually supportive family relationships.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach through library-based research (Bambang Husni Nugroho, 2022), aiming to examine the meaning of the hadith in depth by analyzing various relevant written sources. The research data were obtained from both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources consist of the hadith concerning the role of the Prophet Muhammad in domestic relations as found in the *kutub al-tis'ah* (the nine major hadith collections), specifically Ḥadīth al-Bukhārī No. 676, as well as Fatima Mernissi's work *The Veil and The Male Elite: A Feminist Interpretation of Women's Rights in Islam*, which is used to understand the double investigation approach (Mernissi, 2002, 9-

11). Secondary sources include classical hadith commentary books (*syarah*) such as *Fath al-Bārī* by Ibn Hajar al-‘Asqalānī, literature on the occasions and contexts of hadith (*asbāb al-wurūd*), and various books, journals, and scholarly articles relevant to the study of hadith, family relations, and issues of gender justice.

Data collection was carried out by selecting and classifying various literature related to the interpretation of the hadith and its socio-historical context. The initial analysis employed the *ma‘ānī al-ḥadīṣ* approach to examine the textual meaning of the hadith through linguistic study, tracing its *asbāb al-wurūd*, and exploring the interpretations of scholars in commentary works. Subsequently, this analysis was deepened using Fatima Mernissi's double investigation approach, which includes a historical analysis to trace the socio-cultural background and the chain of transmission (*sanad*) of the hadith, as well as a theological analysis to examine how the hadith has been understood within the Islamic scholarly tradition while also identifying potential social or gender biases in its interpretation. The final stage of this research examines the relevance of the *khidmah* hadith in contemporary Muslim family life, aiming to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of the meaning of *khidmah* and its implications for the husband's role in building a just and harmonious family.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Ma‘ānī al-Ḥadīṣ Analysis on the Concept of Khidmah

The Concept of Khidmah in Islam

Understanding the term *khidmah* constitutes an important initial step before examining the hadith that serves as the primary object of this study. In Arabic, *khidmah* does not merely refer to the act of helping or serving others, but also encompasses broader social, ethical, and cultural dimensions. Therefore, clarifying the meaning of *khidmah* is necessary to prevent the analysis of the hadith from being confined to a narrow interpretation (Taufik, 2019, 15-18). Linguistically, the word *khidmah* (خدمة) derives from the root kh-d-m (خ د م), which denotes acts of service, assistance, or work performed for others. Ibn Manẓūr, in *Lisān al-‘Arab* (Vol. 2, p. 375), notes that the meaning of *khidmah* also encompasses a moral dimension, including attitudes of humility, loyalty, and sincerity in serving others. Accordingly, within the tradition of Arabic language and culture, *khidmah* is not perceived as a degrading act, but rather as an expression of kindness, respect, and devotion toward others (Ibn Manẓūr, 2010, vol, 2). He explains that *khidmah* refers to activities of serving, managing, or taking care of certain affairs, while also reflecting an attitude of humility and willingness to assist others. Thus, *khidmah* is not limited to physical labor but also embodies moral dimensions such as devotion and social responsibility.

This meaning is further elaborated by al-Fayrūzābādī in *al-Qāmūs al-Muḥīṭ*, where *khidmah* is described as encompassing various forms of service, whether directed toward other individuals or manifested in the management of particular responsibilities (al-Fayrūzābādī, 2005). In the Indonesian context, the *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (KBBI)

translates the term as “devotion” or “service carried out with sincerity and dedication” (KBBI, 2016). This interpretation indicates that *khidmah* is not merely a practical activity but also entails values of commitment, responsibility, and respect toward those being served (Koetjaraningrat, 2009, 186). From a linguistic perspective, therefore, *khidmah* contains three essential elements: the act of service, an orientation toward benefiting others, and the management or maintenance of certain responsibilities (KBBI, 2016).

In the terminology of Islamic scholars, however, the meaning of *khidmah* expands beyond its linguistic definition. Scholars regard *khidmah* as a form of moral devotion that reflects humility and noble character. Ibn Hajar al-‘Asqalānī, in *Fath al-Bārī bi Syarḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, explains that the Prophet's service to his family represents an expression of *tawāḍu‘* (humility) and serves as an example for the Muslim community in fostering harmonious family relations (al-‘Asqalānī, 2018, vol 2, 162). Ibn Hajar al-‘Asqalānī, in his commentary on the hadith concerning the Prophet's conduct within his household, states:

النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ كَانَ يَتَوَاضَعُ فِي بَيْتِهِ وَيَخْدُمُ أَهْلَهُ تَوْقِيرًا لَهُمْ وَتَأْدِيبًا لِلْأُمَّةِ بِهِ التَّوَاضُّعُ وَحُسْنُ الْعِشْرَةِ
وَأَنَّ ذَلِكَ مِنْ خُلُقِ الْأَنْبِيَاءِ

Translation:

“The Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) displayed humility within his household and served his family as a form of respect toward them and as moral instruction for the community. This conduct reflects humility and refined manners, and it constitutes one of the distinctive characteristics of the Prophets.”

Similarly, Imam al-Nawawī, in *Syarḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, emphasizes that the Prophet's involvement in household tasks was part of the perfection of his moral character (al-Nawawī, 1972, vol 15, 181) He States:

وَفِعَلُهُ فِي خِدْمَةِ أَهْلِهِ مِنْ تَمَامِ تَوَاضُعِهِ وَكَمَالِ أَخْلَاقِهِ

Translation:

“The Prophet's act of serving his family constitutes part of the perfection of his humility (*tawāḍu‘*) and noble character.”

From the perspective of Islamic ethics, al-Ghazālī views *khidmah* as an expression of *iḥsān*: prioritizing the needs of others as a sign of moral excellence (al-Ghazālī, 1992, vol 2, 195). In the book *Iḥyā' ‘Ulūm al-Dīn*, it explains:

مِنْ مَكَارِمِ الْأَخْلَاقِ خِدْمَةُ النَّاسِ طَوْعًا، فَإِنَّهَا دَلِيلُ سَلَامَةِ الصَّدْرِ وَحُسْنِ السَّرِيرَةِ

Translation:

“Among the noble qualities of character is willingly serving others, for it reflects the purity of the soul and the goodness of one's inner disposition.”

Within the Sufi tradition, *khidmah* is even regarded as a means of spiritual cultivation. Al-Qushayrī explains that *khidmah* plays a significant role in the purification of the soul, as it trains individuals to cultivate sincerity and overcome selfish tendencies (al-Qusyairī, 2002, 223-224). Consequently, from an Islamic perspective, *khidmah*

encompasses a broad range of meanings, including physical service, moral values, and spiritual discipline that shapes personal character. This terminological understanding is crucial for interpreting the hadiths concerning the Prophet's *khidmah* not merely as descriptions of domestic activities, but as ethical principles that underpin social and familial relationships.

Parallel Narrations of the Khidmah Hadith

The concept of *khidmah* in the life of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is reflected in several hadith narrations describing his activities within the household. One of the most well-known expressions is the phrase “*kāna fī mihnati ahlihi*,” which indicates that the Prophet used to assist with his family's household tasks. A search through *al-Mu'jam al-Mufahras li Alfāz al-Hadīth* by A.J. Wensinck shows that this expression appears in several hadith compilations, including *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*, and *Musnad Aḥmad*.

These narrations generally share a similar textual structure and originate from a comparable chain of transmission, namely through al-Aswad from ‘Ā’ishah (may Allah be pleased with her). Collectively, the hadiths describe that the Prophet used to engage in household tasks while at home and would leave for prayer when its time arrived. One narration in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* even includes an explanatory phrase, “*ta’nī khidmata ahlihi*,” which clarifies that the term *mihnah* in this context refers to serving or assisting one's family.

To provide a more organized overview, Table 1 compares the wording of these hadiths. It helps highlight the differences, similarities, and semantic aspects that are the focus of the research before the *sanad* and *matan* are studied in the next section.

Table 1. Comparison of Parallel Narrations of the Khidmah Hadith

Hadith Source	Main Wording	Additional Explanation (if any)	Key Notes
Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Vol. 1 No. 676	كَانَ يَكُونُ فِي مِهْنَةِ أَهْلِهِ	تَعْنِي خِدْمَةَ أَهْلِهِ	The only narration that explicitly explains the meaning of <i>mihnah</i> as <i>khidmah</i> .
Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Vol. 3 No. 5363	كَانَ فِي مِهْنَةِ أَهْلِهِ	-	The meaning remains the same with no additional clarification.
Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Vol. 4 No. 6039	كَانَ فِي مِهْنَةِ أَهْلِهِ	-	Repetition of the narration with the same chain from Shu‘bah to ‘Ā’ishah, with differences only in the upper-level transmitters.
Sunan al-Tirmidhī No. 2489	كَانَ يَكُونُ فِي مِهْنَةِ أَهْلِهِ	-	The meaning remains consistent without additional explanation.
Musnad Aḥmad, Vol. 6 No. 49	كَانَ فِي مِهْنَةِ أَهْلِهِ	-	The wording is the same; the mention of prayer at the end is also identical.

Musnad Ahmad, Vol. 6 No. 126	كَانَ يَكُونُ فِي مَهْنَةٍ أَهْلِيهِ -	Repetition of the narration with a slight variation in the verb form.
Musnad Ahmad, Vol. 6 No. 206	كَانَ يَكُونُ فِي مَهْنَةٍ أَهْلِيهِ -	The narration is essentially identical; the difference lies only in the upper-level transmitters.

The consistency of wording across these narrations indicates that the Prophet's practice of *khidmah* in domestic life was widely recognized by the Companions and transmitted consistently by the narrators. This suggests that the Prophet's involvement in household activities was not merely incidental but rather a habitual practice reflecting humility and cooperation within the family. Nevertheless, the interpretation of this hadith cannot be separated from the social context of Arab society at that time, which was characterized by a patriarchal structure. Therefore, a more comprehensive understanding of the meaning of *khidmah* requires an analysis that goes beyond the textual dimension of the hadith and also considers the socio-historical context as well as the dynamics of its transmission, as proposed in Fatima Mernissi's double investigation approach.

Fatima Mernissi and the Double Investigation Approach

Fatima Mernissi, in her book *The Veil and the Male Elite*, emphasizes the importance of a critical reading of hadith, which not only assesses the authenticity of the sanad and the accuracy of the matan, but also considers the social, historical, and moral contexts underlying the narration (Mernissi, 1991). To achieve this, she developed the double investigation method, which combines two main approaches (historical and methodological). The historical approach traces the background of the narrators, the social conditions, and the circumstances in which the hadith was conveyed, while the methodological approach examines who narrated it, when and where it was transmitted, the reasons behind it, and the intended audience.

Unlike classical hadith criticism, which primarily focuses on the validity of the sanad and matan, double investigation reveals the social, political, and historical dimensions that underlie a narration. Mernissi stresses that religious texts do not emerge in a vacuum but are influenced by historical context and the potential subjectivity of narrators. Thus, this method not only ensures the authenticity of the hadith but also promotes a more proportional and just understanding, particularly regarding issues of gender and social roles (Mernissi, 2002, 11).

In the classical tradition, scholars evaluate hadith through *naqd al-sanad* (chain of transmission critique) and *naqd al-matan* (textual critique), which are essential for maintaining hadith authenticity (Muhammad Ajaj al-Khatib, 1989). However, according to Mernissi, the classical focus on the sanad often overlooks the social context and moral purpose of the narration (Mernissi, 1991). Consequently, a purely literal reading of hadith risks perpetuating gender inequality. The double investigation approach emphasizes principles of justice, reciprocity, and contextual understanding, making it highly relevant

for analyzing the hadith on the *khidmah* of the Prophet in household life and for supporting an ethical and proportional interpretation (Mernissi, 2002, 19-20)

Application of Double Investigation to the Hadith of Bukhārī No. 676

Initial Stage: Takhrij and Verification of the Khidmah Hadith

In the classical tradition of hadith scholarship, the authenticity of a hadith is generally examined through two primary forms of criticism: *sanad* criticism (the chain of transmission) and *matan* criticism (the textual content). *Sanad* criticism aims to ensure the reliability of the transmission chain by assessing the integrity (*‘adālah*) and precision (*dabt*) of narrators through the science of *al-jarḥ wa al-ta‘dīl*. Meanwhile, *matan* criticism evaluates the compatibility of the hadith’s content with the Qur’an, rational principles, and empirical realities (Muhammad Ajaj al-Khatib, 1989).

Fatima Mernissi acknowledges the importance of the classical system of hadith criticism in preserving the authenticity of prophetic traditions, yet she also highlights its methodological limitations. According to her, classical scholars tended to focus predominantly on the validity of the chain of transmission while often overlooking the socio-political contexts that may have influenced the emergence and circulation of certain hadiths (Mernissi, 1991). In *The Veil and the Male Elite*, she argues that hadith should be examined not only in terms of who transmitted them, but also why they were transmitted and within what historical context they emerged (Mernissi, 2002).

The concept of *double investigation* represents an expansion of the classical approach by introducing two additional investigative steps. First, historical investigation seeks to trace the social, political, and ideological conditions surrounding the emergence of a hadith. Second, transmission investigation re-examines the credibility of narrators by considering their social positions, potential gender biases, and political interests (Mernissi, 2002, 35-36). This approach does not aim to deconstruct the classical tradition of hadith scholarship but rather to reconstruct it by revitalizing its critical spirit, thereby making hadith studies more responsive to contemporary intellectual contexts.

In this study, historical criticism is applied through an investigation of the historical context of the Prophet’s household life, while the methodological aspect is addressed through an examination of the chain of transmission (Muniroh, 2016). Within hadith studies, historical investigation is closely related to the concept of *asbāb al-wurūd*, which involves identifying the contextual background of a hadith, analyzing the relevant social factors, and linking the historical setting to the meaning of the hadith (Alfani dkk., 2025a).

Historical Investigation of the Khidmah Hadith in the Social Context of the Prophet

1. Household Conditions in Pre-Islamic and Early Islamic Arab Society

After establishing the authenticity of the hadith narrated in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī No. 676 through *sanad* criticism, the analysis must turn to the historical dimension in order to understand the social context in which the narration emerged. This approach aims to

situate the hadith within the broader social reality of pre-Islamic and early Islamic Arab society.

Pre-Islamic Arab society was characterized by a patriarchal and hierarchical social structure in which men held authority within the family. Men dominated the public sphere, while women and slaves generally occupied more limited roles within the domestic domain (Ḥasan Ibrāhīm Ḥasan, 1964, 38-41). W. Montgomery Watt, in his book *Muhammad at Mecca*, explains that early Arab society viewed the division between domestic and public roles in hierarchical terms: household tasks were commonly associated with women and slaves, whereas men were primarily involved in public affairs such as trade, social leadership, and warfare (Montgomery Watt, 1953, 92-94).

Leila Ahmed, in her book *Women and Gender in Islam*, further emphasizes that Islam emerged within a society that already possessed strong social constructions regarding women's roles. Women were largely associated with the domestic sphere, while their mobility was restricted by prevailing social and cultural norms. The social structure that developed was strongly patriarchal, with family authority concentrated in the hands of men, while women were responsible for household management, childcare, and service to the family. This division of roles was not merely cultural but was also legitimized by entrenched customary practices (*ʿurf*) (Leila Ahmed, 1992, 41-43).

Domestic tasks such as cooking and cleaning were generally assigned to women and servants or enslaved individuals. Male involvement in such tasks was often considered inconsistent with prevailing ideals of masculinity and social status. As a result, domestic labor was frequently perceived as work lacking prestige within the normative framework of society (Montgomery Watt, 1953, 90-93).

In its early phase, Islam did not immediately abolish all existing social structures but instead introduced gradual transformations. Ibn Khaldūn explains that divisions of social roles do not arise naturally but develop through habitual practices, economic conditions, and relations of power. Social roles are therefore shaped by social conventions and power dynamics rather than purely by biological nature. Consequently, the association of women with primary responsibility for domestic tasks should be understood as a product of social construction rather than a fixed normative principle (Ibn Khaldūn, 1967, 89-91).

In conclusion, within pre-Islamic and early Islamic Arab society, domestic labor was largely positioned as the domain of women and subordinate groups, while men rarely engaged directly in such activities. This social context forms an important background for understanding the emergence of narrations describing the Prophet's involvement in household work.

2. The Context of the Emergence of ʿĀ'ishah's Narration on the Prophet's Domestic Activities

The narration of ʿĀ'ishah regarding the Prophet's involvement in household work did not emerge within a socially neutral setting. Rather, it originated from her direct domestic experience as the Prophet's wife. The hadith stating that the Prophet *"kāna fī*

mihnati ahlihi" (used to be engaged in the service of his family) was conveyed as a response to a question about what the Prophet used to do while at home. The very nature of this question indicates that the Prophet's activities in the domestic sphere attracted attention and were not entirely consistent with the prevailing social customs of Arab society at that time.

The position of 'Ā'ishah as a narrator holds significant historical importance. She was not only the Prophet's wife but also a direct witness to his domestic life. Hadith scholars widely acknowledge that 'Ā'ishah was among the Companions who transmitted the largest number of hadith, particularly those related to the Prophet's private life and household affairs. Her close relationship with the Prophet, combined with her intellectual sharpness and reliability, granted her narrations considerable authority (Yūsuf al-Mizzī, 1980, vol 35, 272).

Within the patriarchal structure of Arab society, the question concerning the Prophet's domestic activities suggests a prevailing assumption that men especially religious leaders were not expected to engage in household tasks. 'Ā'ishah's response, affirming that the Prophet assisted his family in household work, therefore carries significant historical meaning. The narration not only describes the Prophet's domestic practices but also implicitly responds to the social expectations of the time (Montgomery Watt, 1953, 168-170).

The wording of the hadith, which states that the Prophet remained engaged in *mihnat ahlihi* until the time for prayer arrived, indicates that his participation in household work was not an occasional occurrence but rather a recurring habit. This interpretation is further reinforced by the existence of several transmission chains with similar wording across different hadith collections (Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, 2018, vol 2, 163).

From the perspective of *asbāb al-wurūd*, this hadith is not associated with a particular conflict or extraordinary circumstance but emerged in the context of an informative dialogue concerning the Prophet's personal life. Narrations of this nature are often regarded as more representative of the authentic social reality of the Prophet's everyday life (Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, 2016, 12-14).

Furthermore, 'Ā'ishah's narration reflects the active role of women as subjects in the transmission of Islamic knowledge. By narrating the Prophet's domestic practices, 'Ā'ishah not only conveyed historical information but also contributed to shaping the Muslim community's understanding of ethical conduct within family life (Leila Ahmed, 1992, 41-45).

Thus, the context in which 'Ā'ishah's narration emerged reveals important historical and social dimensions of the hadith on *khidmah*. The hadith does not merely record the Prophet's personal activities but also conveys an ethical message concerning patterns of relational conduct within the family.

Investigation of the Chain of Transmission (Sanad) of the Khidmah Hadith

After outlining Fatima Mernissi's concept of *double investigation*, the next step is to apply this approach to the hadith that constitutes the object of this study. This research

focuses primarily on *sanad* criticism in order to verify the validity and authority of the hadith before proceeding to further analysis. The authenticity of the chain of transmission serves as the fundamental basis for employing the hadith as a reliable source of scholarly analysis.

1. Al-Aswad bin Yazīd bin Qays al-Nakha'ī

Al-Aswad was a *tābi'ī* from Kūfah who was widely recognized for his strong memorization and his central role in transmitting the hadiths of 'Ā'ishah. In the literature of *rijāl al-ḥadīth*, he is described as a trustworthy (*thiqah*) narrator known for his piety (*wara'*) and profound religious understanding.

His teachers included several prominent Companions such as 'Ā'ishah, 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd, 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, and Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī (Yūsuf al-Mizzī, 1980, vol 2, 233). Among his students were leading *tābi'īn* scholars such as Ibrāhīm al-Nakha'ī, al-Ḥakam ibn 'Uṭaybah, Abū Ishāq al-Sabī'ī, and Sulaymān al-A'mash (Yūsuf al-Mizzī, 1980, vol 2, 234).

Hadith critics consistently regarded him as reliable; Yaḥyā ibn Ma'īn, al-'Ijlī, and al-Nasā'ī classified him as *thiqah*, while Ibn Sa'd noted that he narrated numerous hadiths. No significant *jarḥ* criticism was recorded against him, indicating that his narrations are widely accepted (Yūsuf al-Mizzī, 1980, vol 2, 235-236).

2. Ibrāhīm bin Yazīd al-Nakha'ī

Ibrāhīm al-Nakha'ī was a prominent *tābi'ī* scholar and a central figure in the intellectual tradition of Kūfah. Known as both a jurist (*faqīh*) and a hadith transmitter, he played a major role in the development of legal and hadith scholarship in Iraq. As a leading student of al-Aswad, he served as an important link between the early generation of *tābi'īn* and later hadith authorities.

His teachers included al-Aswad ibn Yazīd, 'Alqamah ibn Qays, Masrūq ibn al-Ajda', 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Yazīd, and Shurayḥ al-Qāḍī (Yūsuf al-Mizzī, 1980, vol 2, 104). Among his students were notable scholars such as al-Ḥakam ibn 'Uṭaybah, Ḥammād ibn Abī Sulaymān, Sulaymān al-A'mash, Maṣṣūr ibn al-Mu'tamir, Shu'bah ibn al-Ḥajjāj, Sufyān al-Thawrī, and Abū Ḥanīfah (Yūsuf al-Mizzī, 1980, vol 2, 106).

Classical scholars evaluated him very positively. Ibn Ma'īn described him as *thiqah* and *thabat*, al-'Ijlī regarded him as both trustworthy and a jurist, Ibn Sa'd confirmed his reliability, and al-Dhahabī referred to him as an imam and jurist of Iraq. No criticism undermining his credibility has been recorded (Yūsuf al-Mizzī, 1980, vol 2, 107-108).

3. Al-Ḥakam bin 'Uṭaybah al-Kindī

Al-Ḥakam was a distinguished *tābi'ī* from Kūfah who occupied an important position within the network of hadith transmission. He was known for his strong memorization, precision, and high reputation among scholars. Within the chain examined in this study, he functions as a link between the major *tābi'īn* and later hadith authorities such as Shu'bah.

His teachers included Ibrāhīm al-Nakha'ī, al-Aswad ibn Yazīd, Sa'id ibn Jubayr, Mujāhid ibn Jabr, 'Ikrimah, and 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Abī Laylā (Yūsuf al-Mizzī, 1980, vol

7, 114). Among his students were Shu‘bah ibn al-Ḥajjāj, Sufyān al-Thawrī, Sufyān ibn ‘Uyaynah, Abū Ishāq al-Sabī‘ī, Manṣūr ibn al-Mu‘tamir, and al-A‘mash (Yūsuf al-Mizzī, 1980, vol 7, 115).

Hadith scholars consistently evaluated him positively: Yaḥyā ibn Ma‘īn and al-Nasā‘ī described him as *thiqah*, al-‘Ijlī considered him *thabat*, Ibn Sa‘d noted his reliability and extensive transmission of hadith, and al-Dhahabī referred to him as an imam, *ḥāfiẓ*, and jurist. No criticism weakening his credibility has been identified (Yūsuf al-Mizzī, 1980, vol 7, 116-117).

4. Syu‘bah bin al-Ḥajjāj bin al-Ward al-‘Atakī

Shu‘bah is regarded as one of the most influential figures in the history of hadith transmission from the generation of the *tābi‘ al-tābi‘īn*. He was widely recognized as an imam in hadith scholarship and narrator criticism, and he pioneered rigorous methods of evaluating chains of transmission. He was famously given the title *amīr al-mu‘minīn fī al-ḥadīth*, a distinction reserved for narrators of exceptional reliability and scholarly authority.

His teachers included al-Ḥakam ibn ‘Uṭaybah, Ibrāhīm al-Nakha‘ī, Qatādah, Abū Ishāq al-Sabī‘ī, Sulaymān al-A‘mash, and Manṣūr ibn al-Mu‘tamir (Yūsuf al-Mizzī, 1980, vol 12, 479). Among his students were prominent hadith scholars such as Sufyān al-Thawrī, ‘Abdullāh ibn al-Mubārak, Yaḥyā ibn Sa‘īd al-Qaṭṭān, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Mahdī, Wakī‘ ibn al-Jarrāḥ, and Ādam ibn Abī Iyās (Yūsuf al-Mizzī, 1980, vol 12, 481).

Classical scholars unanimously regarded him as highly reliable; Yaḥyā ibn Ma‘īn classified him as *thiqah*, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal described him as *amīr al-mu‘minīn fī al-ḥadīth*, al-Nasā‘ī affirmed his reliability, and Ibn Sa‘d characterized him as *thiqah*, *thabat*, and a *ḥujjah* (Yūsuf al-Mizzī, 1980, vol 12, 482-483).

5. Adam bin Abī Ilyās al-‘Asqalānī

Ādam was a hadith transmitter from the generation of the *atbā‘ al-tābi‘īn* who narrated extensively from prominent scholars. Within the chain examined in this study, he occupies the highest position before Imam al-Bukhārī. He was known for his strong memorization, wide transmission of hadith, and strong commitment to the discipline of hadith scholarship.

His teachers included Shu‘bah ibn al-Ḥajjāj, Sufyān al-Thawrī, Ḥammād ibn Zayd, Ḥammād ibn Salamah, and Isrā‘īl ibn Yūnus (Yūsuf al-Mizzī, 1980, vol 12, 302). His students included leading hadith authorities such as Muḥammad ibn Ismā‘īl al-Bukhārī, Muslim, Abū Dāwūd, al-Tirmidhī, al-Nasā‘ī, and Abū Zur‘ah al-Rāzī. The fact that Imam al-Bukhārī transmitted hadith from him demonstrates the high level of trust placed in his integrity (Yūsuf al-Mizzī, 1980, vol 12, 304).

Scholars consistently assessed him positively. Yaḥyā ibn Ma‘īn considered him *thiqah*, Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī described him as *thiqah* and *ṣadūq*, al-Nasā‘ī affirmed his reliability, and Ibn Ḥibbān included him among the *thiqah* narrators known for precision (*mutqin*). No serious *jarḥ* criticism has been recorded against him (Yūsuf al-Mizzī, 1980, vol 12, 305-307).

Based on the results of the *sanad* criticism conducted in this study, it can be affirmed that the hadith fulfills the criteria of authenticity and authority within the tradition of hadith scholarship. This determination establishes the *khidmah* hadith as a reliable narration worthy of further scholarly analysis. Accordingly, *sanad* criticism in this research does not end at a technical evaluation of transmission but functions as a methodological foundation for interpreting the hadith within its broader social and historical context. At the subsequent stage, these findings are integrated with the historical investigation phase within the framework of the *double investigation* approach, as summarized in the research table presented below.

Table 2. Stages of the Analysis of the Prophet's *Khidmah* Hadith

Stage of Double Investigation	Focus of Analysis	Object of Study	Result of Analysis
Historical Investigation	Social and cultural context of pre-Islamic and early Islamic Arab society	Household conditions, the division of domestic roles, and the context of the emergence of 'Ā'ishah's narration	Understanding the socio-historical background of the <i>khidmah</i> hadith
Sanad Investigation	Validity and transmission of the hadith	The chain of transmission of the <i>khidmah</i> hadith in the <i>Kutub al-Tis'ah</i>	Establishing the reliability of the sanad as the basis for further analysis

In this section, the researcher has applied the *double investigation* method to analyze the hadith concerning the Prophet's *khidmah*. The analysis was conducted through two primary stages: historical investigation and *sanad* investigation. The historical investigation was employed to reconstruct the social context surrounding the emergence of the hadith, while the *sanad* investigation was aimed at assessing the validity and authority of the transmission through the principles of *jarḥ wa ta'dīl*. The findings from these two stages serve as the initial foundation for the subsequent analysis developed in the following chapter.

Analysis of the *Khidmah* Hadith from the Perspective of Double Investigation

The hadith narrated by Imam al-Bukhārī No. 676 concerning the involvement of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) in household work has undergone rigorous *sanad* criticism and historical investigation. The findings demonstrate that this narration possesses a high degree of authenticity in terms of transmission and is supported by a credible socio-historical context. The reliability of the chain of transmission confirms that the narration can be traced back to the Prophet, while the historical analysis provides a broader understanding of the social circumstances and domestic relations that framed its emergence (Haitomi, 2021). On this basis, the hadith merits further analysis in order to

explore the meaning of *khidmah* in the life of the Prophet and its relevance within the ethical framework of contemporary Muslim family life.

The results of the *sanad* criticism indicate that the hadith was transmitted through a strong chain of narrators with high levels of credibility. The narration of ‘Ā’ishah, who directly witnessed the Prophet’s domestic life, carries a particularly high degree of authenticity due to her close relationship with the Prophet and her well-recognized intellectual precision and reliability as a narrator. Consequently, this hadith is not only authentic but also possesses significant epistemological authority as a source of information regarding the everyday practices of the Prophet.

Historical investigation reveals that this hadith is closely related to the social realities of Arab society during the Prophet’s time, which were characterized by patriarchal and hierarchical structures. Within this social framework, household tasks were generally associated with women, slaves, or other subordinate groups. Men, particularly those who possessed social or religious authority, rarely participated directly in domestic activities. Therefore, ‘Ā’ishah’s report describing the Prophet’s involvement in household work carries important social implications.

The Prophet’s participation in assisting his family does not indicate a unilateral obligation toward his wife, but rather reflects *tawāḍu’* (humility) and the ethical character of the Prophet within family relations. The wording of the hadith, which describes the Prophet assisting his family until the time for prayer arrived, suggests that this activity was part of his daily routine rather than an occasional action (Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, 2018). This indicates that the Prophet’s domestic *khidmah* was a conscious and voluntary practice, not an action driven by necessity or exceptional circumstances.

The synthesis between *sanad* criticism and historical investigation reveals that the hadith of the Prophet’s *khidmah* contains a strong normative message. The Prophet’s behavior within the household cannot be separated from his broader mission of shaping the moral character of the Muslim community. In a society that often associated domestic labor with low social status, the Prophet’s active participation functioned as a practical critique of such perceptions. The Prophet demonstrated that personal dignity is not determined by one’s distance from household tasks, but rather by moral character and responsibility within family relationships.

Interpretations from classical hadith scholars reinforce this understanding. Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī interprets the Prophet’s *khidmah* as an expression of humility and moral instruction for the Muslim community. According to him, the Prophet intentionally demonstrated such behavior to teach that leadership and honor are not incompatible with acts of service. Similarly, Badr al-Dīn al-‘Aynī emphasizes that the Prophet’s *khidmah* reflects the perfection of his character and the principle of *rahmah* (compassion) within family life. Thus, *khidmah* is understood as an ethical value rather than an indicator of subordination or diminished status.

From the perspective of *double investigation*, this hadith also illustrates how hadith texts can function as instruments of social transformation. A historical reading of the

khidmah narration shows that the practice is not limited to the prophetic period but contains universal principles applicable across time and place. The hadith affirms that the ideal family relationship in Islam is built upon cooperation, mutual respect, and flexible role distribution rather than rigid and oppressive hierarchies.

Furthermore, this approach helps prevent reductive or ahistorical interpretations of hadith. Understanding hadith concerning domestic roles cannot be separated from their social and historical contexts. Interpretations that rely solely on literal textual readings risk producing religious practices that diverge from the moral objectives of Islamic teachings (Syachrofi, 2019). Without an awareness of its social context, the *khidmah* hadith might be understood merely as a descriptive account of the Prophet's personal life. However, through *sanad* criticism and historical investigation, the narration can be interpreted as conveying a vision of ethical and equitable family relations. This represents an important contribution of the *double investigation* approach in hadith studies, as it opens the possibility for more critical and contextual readings without undermining the authority of classical scholarship.

The findings of this study indicate that the Prophet's *khidmah* within the household constituted an integral aspect of the prophetic model intended to shape the moral character of the Muslim community. This practice reflects values of humility, responsibility, and compassion, while simultaneously challenging social structures that place the burden of domestic work on one party alone. Consequently, the hadith not only records a historical reality of the Prophet's life but also conveys an ethical message relevant to the development of just and healthy family relations.

In conclusion, the analysis of the *khidmah* hadith through the perspective of *double investigation* provides a more comprehensive and profound understanding. The authenticity of the chain of transmission establishes the legitimacy of the narration, while historical investigation reveals its broader social and ethical meanings. The integration of these two approaches demonstrates that the Prophet's *khidmah* should not be viewed merely as a domestic activity but rather as a moral principle that forms part of Islam's vision for family life. This understanding provides an important foundation for examining the relevance of the *khidmah* hadith within the context of contemporary Muslim families.

The Relevance of the Khidmah Hadith in Contemporary Muslim Family Life

Contemporary social changes have significantly influenced how Muslim families organize themselves and construct relationships within the household. The relationship between husband and wife no longer operates solely within rigid traditional roles but is increasingly shaped by social conditions, economic realities, and the educational backgrounds of each partner (Purwaningsih, 2021). This situation necessitates a renewed interpretation of religious texts, including hadith concerning family responsibilities, so that their meanings remain relevant to present-day realities (Ahmad Mustaniruddin, 2022).

The hadith on *khidmah* has often been interpreted as a basis for assigning domestic responsibilities primarily to women. However, in the context of contemporary Muslim families, such an interpretation needs to be reconsidered within a broader framework of family values, such as shared responsibility, mutual kindness, and cooperation among family members (Sariroh dkk., 2023). The central aim of this discussion is therefore to examine how the *khidmah* hadith can be understood as an ethical guideline that encourages a just family life oriented toward collective well-being (Hilmi, 2023).

Changes in the structure of Muslim families in the modern era form an important backdrop for reexamining the relevance of the *khidmah* hadith. Family patterns today differ significantly from those of early Arab society, where extended family systems with relatively fixed domestic roles were common. In contrast, many contemporary Muslim families live within nuclear family structures while facing diverse economic and social pressures (Aulia dkk., 2025). Women's participation in the public sphere either as primary earners or contributors to household income has also transformed the dynamics of family life. Such circumstances require a more flexible and cooperative division of domestic responsibilities rather than rigid role assignments (Wadei dkk., 2026). Within this context, the Prophet's practice of *khidmah* may be understood as reflecting the values of shared responsibility and domestic relationships not structured upon rigid hierarchy (Rahmat & Nasrulloh, 2025). This interpretation aligns with the needs of contemporary Muslim families that emphasize cooperation, empathy, and fairness in the distribution of roles between husband and wife.

The relevance of the *khidmah* hadith is closely connected to the principles of family relations articulated in the QS. ar-Rūm [30]: 21.

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

Translation:

"And among His signs is that He created for you spouses from among yourselves so that you may find tranquility in them. He has placed between you affection (*mawaddah*) and mercy (*rahmah*). Indeed, in this are signs for people who reflect."

which emphasizes that the primary purpose of marriage is the creation of tranquility (*sakinah*) founded upon love (*mawaddah*) and mercy (*rahmah*). The relationship between husband and wife is therefore not intended to be one of domination but rather one of complementary emotional and ethical partnership. *Mawaddah* and *rahmah* constitute the foundation of marital stability, particularly when families face changing social and economic circumstances (Rismawati dkk., 2025). In this regard, the *khidmah* hadith may be interpreted as a practical manifestation of these Qur'anic values, where cooperation in domestic matters becomes a means of preserving harmony and tranquility within the family. Similarly, in the QS. an-Nisā' [4]: 19

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا يَجِلُّ لَكُمْ أَنْ تَرْتَبُوا النِّسَاءَ كَرَاهًا وَلَا تَعْضُلُوهُنَّ لِتَذْهَبُوا بِبَعْضِ مَا آتَيْنَهُنَّ إِلَّا أَنْ يَأْتِيَنَّ بِفَاحِشَةٍ مُبَيَّنَةٍ ۚ وَعَاشِرُوهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ ۚ فَإِنْ كَرِهْتُمُوهُنَّ فَعَسَى أَنْ تَكْرَهُوا شَيْئًا وَيجعل الله فيه خيرا كثيرا

Translation:

"O believers, it is not lawful for you to inherit women against their will. Nor should you treat them harshly in order to take back part of what you have given them, unless they commit a clear act of immorality. Live with them in kindness (mu'āsharah bi al-ma'rūf). If you dislike them, it may be that you dislike something in which Allah has placed abundant goodness."

Similarly, QS. an-Nisā' [4]: 19 instructs spouses to conduct their relationship according to the principle of *mu'āsharah bi al-ma'rūf*, meaning to treat one another with kindness, propriety, and dignity. This verse does not prescribe a rigid technical division of domestic labor but instead emphasizes relational ethics in marital life. Classical exegetes explain that *al-ma'rūf* encompasses gentleness, mutual respect, and moral responsibility. Within this framework, the *khidmah* hadith can be understood as a concrete example of the application of *mu'āsharah bi al-ma'rūf*, illustrating how household relationships are built upon ethical conduct and prophetic example rather than inflexible role distribution (Alfani dkk., 2025).

This interpretation is further supported by other narrations describing the Prophet's involvement in domestic activities, such as one recorded in *Musnad Ahmad* No. 24,176.

حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ الرَّزَّاقِ أَخْبَرَنَا مَعْمَرٌ عَنِ الزُّهْرِيِّ عَنْ عُرْوَةَ وَعَنْ هِشَامِ بْنِ عُرْوَةَ عَنْ أَبِيهِ قَالَ سَأَلَ رَجُلٌ عَائِشَةَ هَلْ كَانَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَعْمَلُ فِي بَيْتِهِ شَيْئًا قَالَتْ نَعَمْ كَانَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَخْصِفُ نَعْلَهُ وَيَخِيْطُ ثَوْبَهُ وَيَعْمَلُ فِي بَيْتِهِ كَمَا يَعْمَلُ أَحَدُكُمْ فِي بَيْتِهِ

Translation:

"Abd al-Razzāq narrated to us; he said: Ma'mar informed us, from al-Zuhri, from Urwah, and from Hishām ibn Urwah, from his father, who said: A man asked 'Ā'ishah, 'Did the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) also perform household tasks in his home?' 'Ā'ishah replied, 'Yes. The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) used to mend his sandals, sew his clothes, and perform household tasks just as any one of you would do in his own home.'"

Portrays the Prophet engaging in tasks such as sewing his own clothes and repairing his sandals. Such activities were often associated with servants or socially subordinate household members at the time. The fact that the Prophet performed these tasks himself demonstrates an attitude that transcended the prevailing social norms.

These narrations indicate that the Prophet did not regard domestic work as degrading to male dignity or incompatible with leadership within the family. On the contrary, such practices illustrate values of self-reliance, humility, and willingness to participate directly in daily household life. In a patriarchal Arab society, this attitude carried strong ethical significance, as it challenged the assumption that domestic labor was synonymous with social inferiority.

This understanding becomes even clearer in the Prophet's statement recorded by Ibn Mājah.

حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو بَشِيرٍ بَكْرُ بْنُ خَلْفٍ وَمُحَمَّدُ بْنُ يَحْيَى قَالَا حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو عَاصِمٍ عَنْ جَعْفَرِ بْنِ يَحْيَى بْنِ ثَوْبَانَ عَنْ عَمِّهِ
عُمَارَةَ بْنِ ثَوْبَانَ عَنْ عَطَاءٍ عَنْ ابْنِ عَبَّاسٍ عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ خَيْرُكُمْ خَيْرُكُمْ لِأَهْلِهِ وَأَنَا خَيْرُكُمْ
لِأَهْلِي

Translation:

"Abū Bishr Bakr ibn Khalaf and Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā narrated to us; both said: Abū 'Āṣim narrated to us, from Ja'far ibn Yaḥyā ibn Thawbān, from his uncle 'Umarah ibn Thawbān, from 'Aṭā', from Ibn 'Abbās, from the Prophet (peace be upon him), who said: 'The best among you are those who are best to their wives, and I am the best among you to my wife.'"

When these hadiths are considered together, it becomes evident that Islamic household ethics are not merely normative prescriptions but are embodied in the Prophet's lived practice (Abraham, 2026). Kindness toward one's family is expressed through acts of service, active participation, and willingness to share domestic responsibilities. These supporting narrations therefore reinforce the idea that a husband's *khidmah* within the household forms an integral part of the Prophet's moral example and provides an ethical foundation for building just, humane, and responsible family relationships.

The values of *khidmah* exemplified by the Prophet are not limited to the historical context of the prophetic era but remain highly relevant to contemporary Muslim family life. These values resonate with principles embedded within Islamic family law in Indonesia. The *Compilation of Islamic Law* (Kompilasi Hukum Islam/KHI), for instance, frames marital relationships as partnerships aimed at establishing a balanced and harmonious household. Husbands and wives are positioned as partners with respective rights and responsibilities rather than within a structure of unilateral domination (KHI Pasal 79 ayat 1 dan 2). Though functional role distinctions may exist, KHI does not define domestic work as an absolute obligation of the wife nor does it exclude the husband's involvement (Millah, 2017). This framework corresponds with the Prophet's practice of *khidmah*, which emphasizes cooperation, mutual participation, understanding, and *mu'āsharah bi al-ma'rūf*. In this sense, *khidmah* is not seen as diminishing a husband's authority but rather as a manifestation of moral responsibility that strengthens the primary objective of an Islamic family: the realization of *sakinah*, *mawaddah*, and *rahmah* (Cauldron Content, 2024).

A similar principle is reflected in Indonesia's Marriage Law No. 1 of 1974. This law emphasizes that the purpose of marriage is to establish a happy and enduring family characterized by balanced rights and obligations between husband and wife. Domestic role distribution is not rigidly regulated but is left to the agreement and circumstances of each couple (*UU Nomor 1 Tahun 1974*). Within this framework, the Prophet's example of participating in household work remains relevant as a model of flexible and justice-oriented family relations. When the *khidmah* hadith is read in light of KHI and the Marriage Law, it becomes evident that the ethical values taught by the Prophet remain contextually meaningful for contemporary Muslim families.

The Prophet's example in domestic life, consistent with both KHI and the Marriage Law, indicates that the division of roles within an Islamic family is inherently flexible and grounded in justice and shared responsibility. At this point, the perspectives of Muslim gender scholars become relevant not to negate the authority of religious texts, but to expand the understanding of the ethical message of the *khidmah* hadith so that it remains contextualized within the evolving dynamics of Muslim family life.

Within contemporary Islamic discourse, several Muslim scholars emphasize that the Prophet's involvement in domestic work demonstrates that family relations in Islam are not built upon domination but upon cooperation and shared responsibility. Amina Wadud, for instance, argues that the Qur'an does not prescribe rigid domestic roles based on gender. Rather, Qur'anic verses concerning marital relations emphasize justice, moral responsibility, and reciprocity. The Prophet's participation in household tasks can therefore be understood as an embodiment of Qur'anic ethical values rather than a personal exception. The Prophet's *khidmah* illustrates that leadership within the family does not entail withdrawal from domestic work but instead involves a willingness to share responsibilities proportionally (Amina Wadud, 1999).

Similarly, Asma Barlas emphasizes the need to distinguish between the teachings of Islam and patriarchal social practices that developed historically within Muslim societies. Many gender inequalities within Muslim families are the result of culturally shaped interpretations of religious texts rather than normative Islamic teachings themselves. In this perspective, the *khidmah* hadith may be read as a practical critique of patriarchal culture that marginalizes domestic labor as inferior work. The Prophet's participation in household tasks demonstrates that Islam does not legitimize gender-based hierarchies within the domestic sphere (Asma Barlas, 2022).

Nur Rofiah also offers a relevant interpretation of the Prophet's example in family life. She emphasizes that the ideal Islamic family is built upon the principle of *mubādalah*, meaning reciprocal relations between husband and wife. Domestic work should not be viewed as a unilateral burden placed upon women but rather as a shared domain of service. According to Nur Rofiah, the Prophet's example of assisting with household tasks reinforces the ultimate purpose of marriage in Islam: to create tranquility, compassion, and justice within marital relationships (Nur Rofiah, 2020).

Based on the analysis of Qur'anic evidence, hadith literature, Islamic legal frameworks, and Indonesian positive law, it can be concluded that the interpretation of the *khidmah* hadith must be understood in relation to Islam's broader ethical objective of establishing just and dignified family relationships. Hadiths that record the Prophet's domestic practices were not intended to legitimize rigid and hierarchical divisions of labor but rather to represent values of responsibility, care, and cooperation in family life. Interpretations based solely on literal readings risk obscuring the moral message of the hadith and transforming it into a restrictive norm that limits the role of one party.

Within the frameworks of the Compilation of Islamic Law and the Marriage Law, marital relations are directed toward balanced rights and obligations as well as the goal of

building a harmonious family. The absence of explicit provisions that define domestic work as the exclusive duty of the wife indicates the presence of interpretive flexibility for contextual and negotiated role distribution (Shiddieqy dkk., 2025). This aligns with the perspectives of contemporary Muslim scholars who emphasize the principles of *mu'āsharah bi al-ma'rūf*, reciprocity, and justice as the foundations of family relationships while rejecting unilateral gender-based domination.

Thus, the analysis presented in this chapter demonstrates that contextual approaches through *sanad* criticism, *matan* analysis, and socio-historical investigation are essential for maintaining the relevance of Islamic teachings within the realities of contemporary Muslim family life. The *khidmah* hadith can therefore be understood as an ethical message encouraging equitable relations between husband and wife rather than as a rigid normative rule defining domestic role distribution.

To facilitate readers' understanding of the findings presented in this chapter, the following table summarizes the differences between textual and contextual interpretations of the *khidmah* hadith in the context of husband–wife relations.

Table 3. Differences between Textual and Contextual Understandings of the Khidmah Hadith in Husband–Wife Relations

Aspect of Analysis	Textual Understanding	Contextual Understanding (Double Investigation)
Method of Reading the Hadith	Emphasizes a literal reading of the hadith text in isolation from its context	Interprets the hadith by considering its historical context, social setting, and the Prophet's actual practice
Meaning of <i>Khidmah</i>	Understood as the wife's domestic obligation	Understood as an ethical value of reciprocity within family life
Position of the Husband	Primary breadwinner	Participates in household affairs following the example of the Prophet
Position of the Wife	A subject burdened with household service	A partner with more balanced rights and responsibilities
Example of the Prophet Muhammad	Not emphasized as the primary focus	The Prophet serves as a role model for participatory and humble marital ethics
Impact of the Interpretation	Reinforces hierarchical and gender-biased relations	Encourages just, harmonious, and contextually relevant family relations
Contemporary Relevance	Less responsive to modern social realities	Highly relevant to contemporary Muslim family life

Based on the analysis of the *khidmah* hadith within the context of marital relations, particularly through the examination of *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* No. 676 using the double investigation approach, this study argues that the hadith should not be interpreted narrowly as a justification for a unilateral division of domestic roles. Instead, the Prophet Muhammad's involvement in household tasks reflects ethical values of mutuality, humility, and shared responsibility within family life (Barlas, 2022). Such practices demonstrate that domestic participation by the husband was part of the Prophet's exemplary conduct rather than an exception within the household sphere.

Accordingly, a contextual understanding of the *khidmah* hadith opens the possibility for a more equitable and relevant interpretation in relation to the realities of contemporary Muslim families. This perspective emphasizes that marital relations in Islam are fundamentally grounded in partnership rather than domination. These findings provide an important foundation for formulating the broader conclusions of this study, which will be discussed in the following section

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study on the hadith concerning the *khidmah* of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) as narrated in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*, and *Musnad Aḥmad*, it can be concluded that the concept of *khidmah* in Bukhārī No. 676, reflected in the phrase *kāna fī mihnati ahlihi*, does not merely refer to assisting with household chores. Rather, it signifies the Prophet's active participation, moral responsibility, and social sensitivity within domestic life, serving as an ethical model of cooperation and mutual support within the family. From the perspective of sanad analysis, this hadith is classified as *ṣaḥīḥ*, with a strong and consistent chain of transmission. However, through Fatima Mernissi's double investigation approach, the analysis is extended to the socio-historical context of the patriarchal Arab society in which the hadith emerged. Within this context, the Prophet's involvement in household tasks can be understood as an attitude that transcended the prevailing social norms of his time. Consequently, the relevance of the *khidmah* hadith for contemporary Muslim families lies in the ethical values it embodies, particularly the principles of partnership, shared responsibility, and the husband's emotional engagement in domestic life. These values provide a normative foundation for developing more equitable, harmonious, and proportional marital relations without negating the leadership role within the family.

Nevertheless, this study has several limitations. First, as a library-based study, the analysis relies primarily on textual sources and does not incorporate empirical data regarding the actual practices of marital relations in contemporary Muslim families. Second, the scope of this research is limited to the hadith on *khidmah*, particularly the narration of Bukhārī No. 676, and therefore does not encompass the broader corpus of hadith related to domestic relations within the family. Future studies are therefore encouraged to expand this discussion through broader and more interdisciplinary

approaches in order to produce a more comprehensive understanding of family relations in Islamic teachings.

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