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Transliteration Table: Consonants

Arabic	Roman		Arabic	Roman
ب	b		ط	ṭ
ت	t		ظ	ẓ
ث	th		ع	‘
ج	j		غ	gh
ح	ḥ		ف	f
خ	kh		ق	q
د	d		ك	k
ذ	dh		ل	l
ر	r		م	m
ز	z		ن	n
س	s		ه	h
ش	sh		و	w
ص	ṣ		ء	’
ض	ḍ		ي	y

Transliteration Table: Vowels and Diphthongs

Arabic	Roman		Arabic	Roman
اَ، اِ، اُ	a		آ، عَ، يَ	an
وُ	u		وْ	un
يَ	i		يْ	in
آ، اَ، اِ، عَ، يَ	ā		وْ	aw
وُ	ū		يْ	ay
يْ	ī		وْ	uww, ū (in final position)
			يْ	iyy, ī (in final position)

Source: ROTAS Transliteration Kit: <http://rotas.iium.edu.my>

Critical Thinking as a Mechanism for Situation Handling and Problem Solving: Examples from Ḥadīth Literature

Bachar Bakour*

Homam Altabaa**

Abstract: In an era marked by complex social challenges, the need for effective critical thinking methodologies has become increasingly vital. While contemporary approaches to critical thinking and problem-solving are well documented, the rich repository of Islamic intellectual tradition, particularly the prophetic teachings, remains largely unexplored in this context. This study addresses this gap by examining the critical thinking patterns embedded in ḥadīth literature, specifically investigating how Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and his companions approached complex social situations and problems. Through systematic analysis of selected narratives from the two authoritative ḥadīth collections of al-Bukhārī and Muslim, the study employs both inductive and analytical approaches to identify and categorise critical thinking skills. From examining twenty carefully selected ḥadīths, eight distinct critical thinking skills were identified and subsequently organised into a novel three-stage model for situation handling and problem-solving. The findings reveal a framework that bridges classical Islamic wisdom with contemporary cognitive theories, demonstrating how traditional approaches to critical thinking can inform modern problem-solving methodologies. The study concludes that while ‘wisdom’ and ‘critical thinking’ share fundamental tools and strategies,

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the Islamic conception of wisdom offers a more comprehensive approach that integrates ethical considerations with analytical thinking. This research contributes to both theoretical understanding of critical thinking and practical application of classical Islamic problem-solving methods in contemporary contexts.

Keywords: critical thinking, Ḥadīth, problem solving, situation, skill

Abstrak: Dalam era cabaran sosial yang kompleks, keperluan untuk metodologi pemikiran kritis yang berkesan adalah penting. Walaupun pendekatan moden terhadap pemikiran kritis dan penyelesaian masalah telah didokumentasikan dengan baik, khazanah tradisi intelektual Islam masih belum banyak diterokai, khususnya dalam konteks ajaran Rasul. Kajian ini menangani jurang tersebut dengan meneliti pola pemikiran kritis yang terkandung dalam literatur Ḥadīth, khususnya bagaimana Nabi Muhammad (SAW) dan para sahabat baginda menangani situasi sosial yang kompleks dan menyelesaikan masalah. Melalui analisis sistematik terhadap naratif terpilih daripada koleksi Ḥadīth al-Bukhārī dan Muslim, kajian ini menggunakan pendekatan induktif dan analitikal untuk mengenal pasti serta mengkategorikan kemahiran pemikiran kritis. Daripada meneliti dua puluh Ḥadīth yang dipilih dengan teliti, lapan kemahiran pemikiran kritis yang berbeza telah dikenalpasti dan seterusnya disusun ke dalam model tiga peringkat untuk pengendalian situasi dan penyelesaian masalah. Hasil kajian mendedahkan kerangka kerja yang menghubungkan kebijaksanaan Islam klasik dengan teori kognitif moden, menunjukkan bagaimana pendekatan tradisional terhadap pemikiran kritis boleh memaklumkan metodologi penyelesaian masalah moden. Kajian ini menyimpulkan bahawa walaupun ‘kebijaksanaan’ dan ‘pemikiran kritis’ berkongsi alat dan strategi asas, konsep kebijaksanaan Islam menawarkan pendekatan yang lebih menyeluruh yang mengintegrasikan pertimbangan etika dengan pemikiran analitikal. Penyelidikan ini menyumbang kepada pemahaman teori pemikiran kritis serta aplikasi praktikal kaedah penyelesaian masalah Islam klasik dalam konteks kontemporari.

Kata kunci: pemikiran kritis, Ḥadīth, penyelesaian masalah, situasi, kemahiran

Introduction

The capacity for thought stands as a fundamental distinguishing characteristic of human existence. This uniquely human attribute is so essential that Stuart Maclure (1991, p. ix) draws a parallel between thinking and the vital process of breathing. Descartes elevates this

concept further in his philosophical proposition ‘Cogito, ergo sum’ (I think, therefore I am) (Karam, 1949, p. 64), while the eminent medieval scholar al-Ghazālī (2005, p. 1789) characterises thinking as “the key to light, the basis of seeking insight and the nexus of sciences.”

The Qur’ān repeatedly calls upon humanity to engage in intellectual contemplation of natural phenomena—from celestial bodies to terrestrial features, from cosmic cycles to human creation (Zayn, 1995; ‘Abd al-Bāqī 1364 AH). This emphasis on cognitive engagement is evident in the frequent occurrence of thought-related terms such as *yatafakkarūn*, *ya‘qilūn*, *yafqahūn*, *yatadabbarūn*, and *yatadhakkarūn* throughout the Qur’ānic text (Zayn, 1995; ‘Abd al-Bāqī, 1364 AH).

The correlation between cognitive processes and life outcomes underscores the imperative for individuals to fully utilise their intellectual capabilities in addressing daily challenges and situations. For adherents of Islam, which presents itself as a comprehensive life system, this intellectual engagement is integral to achieving both temporal and spiritual well-being, as articulated in the Qur’ānic verse: “whosoever follows My guidance shall not go astray, neither shall he be unprosperous” (20: 123).¹

The biographical accounts of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and his Companions provide numerous examples of critical approaches to social challenges and problems that merit contemporary examination. This study analyses selected cases from the authoritative collections of al-Bukhārī and Muslim, addressing three primary research questions: what critical methodologies did the Prophet and his Companions employ in addressing situations and problems? To what extent do the critical thinking skills evident in the Prophetic era correspond to contemporary critical thinking approaches? Can these historical examples yield a practical model for modern problem-solving?

Existing research in this field can be categorised into four distinct approaches. The first encompasses general works exploring the intersection of critical thinking and Islamic thought. Notable among these is Mohammad M. Malik’s work (2019), which examines Islamic perspectives on informal logical fallacies, providing a foundational

¹ Qur’ānic translations are sourced from Arberry (1955) unless otherwise specified.

introduction to critical thinking within Islamic discourse. Malik's subsequent article (2021) further develops this theme by establishing a basic framework for critical thinking based on Islamic principles relevant to knowledge acquisition and research methodology. The second category comprises studies that analyse social problem-solving examples from classical ḥadīth collections, though these studies often lack systematic methodological approaches (Farag and Walā', 2014). The third category focuses on critical thinking within Islamic education, particularly emphasising pedagogical applications. This includes Al-Rāshidī's (1427 AH) work on developing critical thinking skills for school students, and Hülya Kosar Altinyelken's (2021) empirical research examining critical thinking pedagogy in non-formal Islamic education, based on interviews with 27 young adult alumni from four Muslim communities in the Netherlands. The fourth category encompasses scholarly works examining the Prophet's role as an educator and teacher, offering insights into his pedagogical methods and teaching approaches (Abū Ghuddah 1996; al-Munajjid 1417 AH; al-Asmar 1421 AH; al-Naḥlāwī 2010, 2011). This study builds upon these works by specifically focusing on critical thinking as a mechanism for dealing with situations and problems, taking the two Ṣaḥīḥs as a research field. It then formulates a practical framework drawn from the selected sample, contributing to both theoretical understanding and practical application of Islamic critical thinking methodologies.

Key Concepts

In contemporary discourse on modes of thought, the Arabic terminology for thinking (*fakkara*, *fikr*; *tafkīr*) encompasses intellectual processes of consideration and mental examination (Lane, 1968, vol. 6, p. 215). Al-Fayyūmī (1977, p. 479) defines *al-fikr* as "the systematic arrangement of mental constructs to achieve a specific objective." Al-Jurjānī (2004, p. 142) further elaborates this concept as the "cognitive process of organising known elements to facilitate the acquisition of unknown knowledge," emphasising how human cognition builds upon existing knowledge frameworks to discover new understanding. Al-Rāghib al-Aṣfahānī (2009, p. 643) distinguishes between *al-fikrah*, the latent cognitive capacity, and *al-tafakkur*, its active manifestation through rational deliberation. In contemporary psychological terms, thinking is conceptualised as "a higher mental process facilitating information manipulation and analysis" (Kutty, 2019, p. 156). Within a broader

context, thinking encompasses “all cognitive products, including judgments, attitudes, knowledge, opinions, and beliefs” (Matsumoto, 2009, p. 543).

Critical thinking, specifically, is defined as “the mental processes, strategies, and representations people use to solve problems, make decisions, and learn new concepts” (Sternberg, 1986, p. 3). Alternative definitions emphasise it as the capacity for rigorous situational analysis through distinction-making, interpretation, evaluation, and conclusion-drawing, while maintaining objectivity and impartiality (Al-Sharqī, 2005). The practical application of critical thinking transcends theoretical definitions, encompassing various cognitive processes: error detection, analytical contemplation, problem-solving, higher-order thinking skills as delineated in Bloom’s Taxonomy, and the identification of biases and logical inconsistencies (Jerwan, 2007, p. 61).

Significant parallels exist between the Arabic concept of *ḥikmah* and contemporary understanding of critical thinking. *Ḥikmah*, traditionally translated as ‘wisdom’ or ‘maxim,’ encompasses multifaceted meanings throughout Arabic intellectual history (Gutas, 1981). It is conceptualised as the optimal selection and timing of actions (Ibn al-Qayyim, 1973, vol. 2, p. 479) and “the comprehension of fundamental truths coupled with corresponding action, encompassing both theoretical and practical dimensions” (Lane, 1968, vol. 2, p. 617). Both critical thinking and *ḥikmah* share foundational objectives in analysing situations, formulating judgments, and resolving complex problems. However, *ḥikmah* represents a more comprehensive paradigm, integrating intellectual capabilities with practical application, ethical considerations, and spiritual insight. This holistic approach distinguishes it from the more specifically cognitive orientation of critical thinking.

The essential skills comprising critical thinking include inference, induction, reflection, evaluation, analysis, and synthesis (Al-Rāshidī, 1427 AH; Jerwan, 2007). These skills manifest as mental activities that shape cognitive patterns, subsequently guiding responses to situational challenges. The domain of critical thinking remains dynamic, continuously incorporating novel approaches to addressing real-world situations and problems. In this context, a ‘situation’ denotes circumstances or incidents requiring specific responses or interventions. While ‘problems’ constitute a subset of situations, their distinct mention emphasises their particular significance in critical thinking applications.

Research indicates that exemplary critical thinkers exhibit specific characteristics: intellectual curiosity, comprehensive knowledge, rational trust, cognitive flexibility, evaluative fairness, and recognition of personal biases (cited in Levevre, 2017, p. 9). These attributes enable them to conceptualise issues, articulate perspectives, extract insights, and propose solutions to societal challenges (Bakkar, 2010, p. 21). The presence of critical thinkers is essential for societal development, as they possess the capability to formulate innovative concepts and frameworks for social reform. Their enhanced social consciousness facilitates comprehensive understanding and effective solution development for various societal challenges.

Methodology

The study adopts inductive and analytical approaches to examine critical thinking patterns in ḥadīth literature. The research methodology proceeded through several systematic stages:

1. Source Selection

The study focuses on the Ṣaḥīḥs of al-Bukhārī and Muslim for their widely recognised authenticity and wide coverage of early Muslim society. These collections provide rich documentation of the Prophet's and Companions' problem-solving approaches across various social, political, and personal situations.

2. Criteria Development Process

The derivation of critical thinking criteria followed a systematic content analysis approach:

- Initial screening of both Ṣaḥīḥs to identify narratives containing problem-solving scenarios or decision-making situations
- Close reading and analysis of identified texts to detect recurring patterns of reasoning and problem-handling approaches
- Categorisation of observed thinking patterns into distinct skills based on their core cognitive functions
- Cross-verification of identified categories across multiple narratives to ensure consistency and validity

3. Selection and Analysis

Through this process, 20 representative *ḥadīths* were selected: 15 related to the Prophet's problem-solving approaches, four depicting Companions' critical thinking methods, and one illustrating Heraclius's analytical approach. These texts were chosen based on their clear demonstration of identifiable critical thinking skills.

4. Skills Identification

The detailed analysis of these narratives revealed eight distinct critical thinking skills: analogy and examples, avoiding surmise and rumours, party conciliation policy, fairness, foreseeing consequences, motive-based judgment, posing questions, and report verification. The identified critical thinking skills align with several established theoretical frameworks in cognitive psychology and educational theory. The skills can be mapped to recognised models as follows: the skill of analogy and examples corresponds to Sternberg's Triarchic Theory of Intelligence (1985), which emphasises analogical reasoning as a key component of analytical thinking. Similarly, Gentner's Structure-Mapping Theory (1983) explains how analogical thinking facilitates problem-solving through comparative analysis. Report verification and avoiding surmise align with Paul and Elder's Critical Thinking Framework (2001), particularly their emphasis on intellectual standards of accuracy and clarity. They also reflect Ennis's (1987) critical thinking dispositions, specifically the emphasis on seeking reliable sources and avoiding hasty conclusions. Foreseeing consequences and motive-based judgment mirror elements of Bloom's Taxonomy (1956), particularly the higher-order thinking skills of analysis and evaluation. They also align with Facione's (2000) critical thinking framework, which emphasises inference and explanation as core critical thinking skills. The skill of posing questions corresponds to King's Inquiry Model (1995) and Socratic Questioning theory, both emphasising the role of strategic questioning in developing critical thinking. Meanwhile, fairness and party conciliation reflect elements of Paul's (1992) framework of fair-mindedness in critical thinking and Johnson's (1992) theory of argumentative dialogue, emphasising the importance of considering multiple perspectives. These theoretical connections demonstrate that the skills identified in the *ḥadīth* narratives align with contemporary understanding of critical thinking processes, while offering unique cultural and historical perspectives on their application.

5. Model Development:

The identified skills were then organised into a three-stage model based on their logical sequence in problem-solving scenarios. This model emerged from observing the chronological pattern of how these skills were typically applied in the analysed narratives.

Table 1: Skills Grouping on the Basis of the Study Model

No.	Stage	Skill/tool
1.	Pre-SHPS*	1. report verification 2. avoiding surmise and rumours
2.	In the middle of the process of SHPS	1. party conciliation policy 2. analogy and examples 3. fairness 4. motive-based judgment 5. posing questions
3.	Post-SHPS	1. foreseeing consequences

*SHPS: ‘situation handling, and problem solving’

The model presents a systematic three-stage approach to handling situations and problems. The first stage focuses on information integrity: when receiving information, one must verify the authenticity of news, events, or incidents before accepting them as factual. Similarly, when communicating information to others, one must ensure it is based on verified facts rather than speculation or rumours. In the second stage, five specific critical thinking skills are employed to analyse and address the situation or problem comprehensively or partially. The final stage requires careful consideration of how one’s actions or judgments might impact the situation, emphasising the importance of foreseeing potential consequences before implementing solutions.

Discussion

Stage one: Pre-SHPS

1. Report verification

“And pursue not that thou hast no knowledge of; the hearing, the sight, the heart - all of those shall be questioned of” (Qur’ān, 17:36).

This verse serves as a profound directive for humanity, emphasising the importance of critical thinking in distinguishing between true knowledge, conjecture, and illusion. It underscores the Islamic imperative for Muslims to ground their beliefs, arguments, and even faith in clear, conclusive evidence, rather than relying on speculation or hearsay.

The Qur'ān vehemently condemns *al-taqlīd al-'a'mā* (blind imitation), as seen in multiple verses (2:170; 5:104; 31:21; 43:23). Similarly, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) admonished Muslims to avoid being *imma'ah*—a term denoting those who uncritically follow the actions and opinions of others, whether good or bad, without engaging in thoughtful inquiry or discernment (Ibn al-Athīr, 1972, vol. 11, p. 699). These teachings collectively highlight the fundamental role of critical reflection in Islamic thought, guiding believers toward intellectual and spiritual integrity. This following statement encapsulates the guiding principle of scientific and research inquiry in Islam:

إِنْ كُنْتَ نَاقِلًا فَالصَّحَّةُ أَوْ مَدَّعِيًّا فَالدَّلِيلُ

If you are quoting, verify the source, yet if you are making a claim, give evidence (Al-Būṭī, 1997, p. 34).

Four ḥadīths

1. After residing in Madīnah, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) initiated a series of invitations to prominent rulers and monarchs, urging them to embrace the message of Islam. Among the recipients of these letters was Heraclius, the Emperor of the Roman Empire. Upon receiving the Prophet's message, Heraclius undertook an investigation into the character and claims of Muhammad. As part of this inquiry, a delegation of the Prophet's tribesmen was summoned to Heraclius' court for questioning. This critical engagement, meticulously recorded in various ḥadīth sources (Al-Bukhārī, 1993, vol. 1, pp. 7–8; Muslim, 1991, vol. 3, pp. 1393–1395; Ibn al-Athīr, 1972, vol. 11, p. 265), highlights Heraclius' methodical approach to verifying the truth about the Prophet. A summary of this verification process is presented in the following figure.

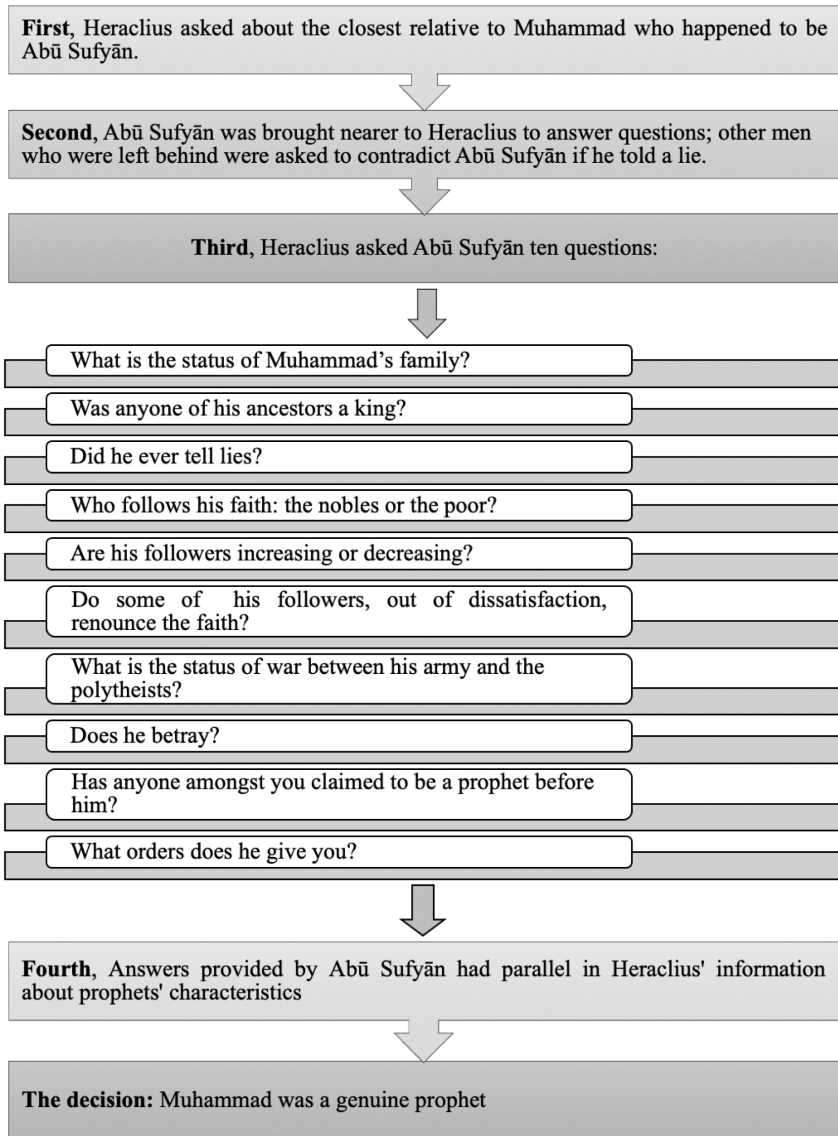


Figure 1: Heraclius critical treatment of Muhammad's claim of the prophethood

2. A significant incident of intellectual verification is recorded when ‘Abdullah Ibn Salām, a Jewish scholar of notable erudition, sought to authenticate the Prophet's divine mission through three specific inquiries. These questions, which Ibn

Salām believed could only be answered by a genuine prophet, concerned the initial signs of the Day of Judgment, the first sustenance provided to the inhabitants of Paradise, and the genetic principles determining a child's resemblance to either parent. The Prophet, receiving divine communication through Gabriel, provided immediate responses that satisfied Ibn Salām's intellectual criteria, leading to his subsequent declaration of faith (*shahādah*) (Al-Bukhārī, 1993, vol. 4, p. 1628; Muslim, 1991, vol. 1, p. 252).

3. A noteworthy incident regarding the limits of authority occurred during a military campaign when a commander, known for his wit, sought to test his soldiers' obedience. After instructing them to gather and ignite firewood, he commanded them to cast themselves into the flames, citing prophetic instructions regarding obedience to authority. The soldiers, after deliberation, chose to defer the command and seek prophetic guidance. The Prophet's subsequent ruling established a crucial principle: "Had you entered the fire, you would never have emerged from it, for obedience is mandatory only in matters that are legally valid and reasonable" (Al-Bukhārī, 1993, vol. 4, p. 1577; Muslim, 1991, vol. 3, p. 1469).
4. Muslim's introduction to his *Ṣaḥīḥ* (1991, vol. 1, p. 13) documents a significant methodological shift in hadith transmission through 'Abdullah Ibn 'Abbās's observation. Initially, during the Prophet's lifetime, the Companions eagerly received all prophetic narrations. However, following the emergence of internal conflicts and civil strife within the Muslim community, a more rigorous approach was adopted, whereby only well-established and authenticated prophetic traditions were accepted for transmission.

What is particularly interesting is Heraclius's approach - rather than dismissing the message outright, he conducted what appears to be a systematic investigation, including interviewing people who knew Muhammad personally. This suggests a critical approach to truth-verification even in that historical period. Ibn Salām's narrative represents a scholarly method of verification based on specialised knowledge. The questions he posed were strategically chosen to test

both prophetic knowledge and divine connection. The specific nature of these questions – covering eschatology, paradise, and genetics – suggests they were deliberately selected to be beyond ordinary human knowledge.

While the two previous accounts focus on external and intellectual assessments, the third narrative delves into the ethical and legal dimensions of verification within Islamic teachings. It establishes an essential principle in Islamic jurisprudence: the limits of authority and the significance of rational judgment in religious obedience. This account emphasises that blind obedience is not a virtue in Islam; instead, it highlights the integration of reason and ethical consideration in guiding actions, offering a profound framework for understanding authority and accountability.

As for Muslim's passage, it reveals a crucial development in Islamic historiography and ḥadīth sciences. It shows how political and social circumstances led to the development of more rigorous authentication methods. This shift from general acceptance to careful scrutiny represents an early example of historical criticism and source verification methodology. The collective narrative these passages present suggests that early Islamic society had developed sophisticated methods for verifying claims, whether they were diplomatic, intellectual, legal, or historical in nature. This challenges simplistic views of medieval religious societies and shows evidence of multifaceted epistemological frameworks.

2. Avoiding surmise and rumours

The Qur'ān emphasises the importance of verifying information and condemns the spread of unsubstantiated rumours and false information (Qur'ān, 49:6). It specifically warns against actions that harm others' dignity and reputation (Qur'ān, 24:23). Consequently, critical thinking requires that one's judgments and problem-solving approaches should not be based on unverified information, conjecture, or hearsay.

Four ḥadīths

1. The Prophet stated: "Avoid making assumptions (*al-ẓann*), for assumptions are the least reliable form of discourse" (Al-Bukhārī, 1993, vol. 5, p. 1950; Muslim, 1991, vol. 4, p. 1985).

2. The Prophet cautioned against prefacing statements with *za' amū* (meaning 'it is presumed' or 'they claim') (Ibn Ḥanbal, 1993-2001, vol. 38, p. 409). He discouraged both the dissemination of and reliance upon unverified accounts and information lacking credible sources (Ibn al-Athīr, 1972, vol. 11, p. 742).
3. The Prophet declared that habitually repeating unverified information is sufficient to label someone as untruthful (Muslim, 1991, vol. 1, p. 10).
4. Similarly, the Prophet prohibited the use of vague attributions such as *qīl wa qāl* ('it is said' or 'someone said') (Al-Bukhārī, 1993, vol. 5, p. 2375).

Stage two: In the middle of SHPS process

1. Party conciliation policy

In most disputes, there are typically winners and losers. A wise judge or mediator seeks to achieve a resolution that satisfies all parties whenever possible. However, when such an outcome cannot be attained, their focus shifts to easing the disappointment of those who feel wronged and mitigating their resentment.

One ḥadīth

At the end of the seventh year AH, the Prophet, accompanied by his Companions, performed 'Umrah al-Qaḍā' (the compensatory 'umrah) (Ibn Hishām, 1955, vol. 2, p. 371). Upon their return to Madīnah, an emotional situation arose when the daughter of the Prophet's uncle, Ḥamza, requested to accompany him. Upon arrival, a dispute emerged among three Companions—'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, Zayd ibn Ḥārithah, and Ja'far ibn Abī Ṭālib—over who had the rightful claim to care for the child.

Each presented his argument:

- 'Alī asserted, "I have the right to take her, for she is the daughter of my uncle."
- Ja'far countered, "She is also the daughter of my uncle, and her aunt is my wife."

- Zayd added, “She is the daughter of my brother.”²

In his wisdom, the Prophet decided to entrust the custody of Ḥamza’s daughter to her maternal aunt, Asmā’ bint ‘Umayy, recognising that a maternal aunt holds a status akin to that of a mother. To address the potential for lingering emotions and to ensure harmony, he consoled and praised each of the Companions with kind and affirming words:

- To ‘Alī, he said, “You are from me, and I am from you.”
- To Ja‘far, he remarked, “You bear a resemblance to me in both appearance and character.”
- To Zayd, he affirmed, “You are both our brother and our freed slave”

(Al-Bukhārī, 1993, vol. 2, p. 960; Ibn al-Athīr, 1972, vol. 8, p. 345).

This incident demonstrates the Prophet’s ability to resolve disputes through fairness, emotional intelligence, and thoughtful communication. Through addressing the feelings of each party, he not only resolved the conflict but also reinforced the bonds of brotherhood among his Companions.

2. *Analogy and examples*

The use of analogy and illustrative examples represents a fundamental pedagogical method in prophetic teaching. This approach establishes cognitive bridges between abstract concepts and concrete, familiar experiences, thereby facilitating deeper understanding and problem resolution. The following authenticated traditions demonstrate this methodology:

Five ḥadīths

1. A Bedouin approached the Prophet expressing doubt about his paternity due to his child’s unexpected skin colour. The Prophet responded with a masterful analogy: “Do you possess camels?” Upon confirmation, he inquired about their coloring.

2 Zayd referred to the fact that the Prophet created fraternisation between Ḥamza and Zayd for the sake of God. This is why he said ‘daughter of my brother’. Ibn Ḥajar (1379 AH, vol. 7, P. 505).

The Bedouin acknowledged having red camels with occasional grey offspring. When asked about the source of this variation, the Bedouin attributed it to heredity. The Prophet then drew the parallel: “Similarly, your child’s colouring may reflect ancestral traits” (Al-Bukhārī, 1993, vol. 6, pp. 2511-2512; Muslim, 1991, vol. 2, pp. 1137-1138).

2. An inquirer sought clarification from the Prophet regarding a specific Qur’ānic verse (25:34) that describes the gathering of disbelievers on the Day of Resurrection, specifically their mode of movement upon their faces. The questioner’s uncertainty centred on the feasibility of such locomotion. The Prophet’s response demonstrated logical reasoning through divine capability: “He who has granted the ability for bipedal movement in the present world possesses the power to enable facial locomotion in the hereafter” (Al-Bukhārī, 1993, vol. 5, p. 2390; Muslim, 1991, vol. 4, p. 2161). This explanation established a clear relationship between divine omnipotence in both worldly and eschatological contexts.
3. A woman from the tribe of Juhaynah approached the Prophet with a heartfelt concern. She said, “My mother had vowed to perform Hajj, but she passed away before fulfilling it. Should I perform Hajj on her behalf?” The Prophet responded with wisdom and clarity: “Yes, perform Hajj on her behalf. If your mother had an outstanding debt, wouldn’t you have paid it off for her? Likewise, fulfil Allah’s debt, for He has the greatest right to be repaid.” (Al-Bukhārī, 1993, vol. 2, pp. 656–657; Cf. Ibn al-Athīr, 1972, vol. 3, p. 417).
4. When questioned about marital intimacy’s spiritual status, the Prophet demonstrated inverse reasoning: “If illicit relations incur sin, surely licit relations merit reward” (Muslim, 1991, vol. 2, p. 698).
5. The Companion Abū Ṭalḥa al-Ansārī faced a deeply personal tragedy when his young son passed away while he was away from home. His wife, ‘Umm Sulaym, displayed remarkable composure and wisdom in handling the situation. She instructed the family members to withhold the devastating news until she could inform Abū Ṭalḥa herself. When Abū Ṭalḥa returned

home, he found dinner prepared, and ‘Umm Sulaym had made an extra effort to dress attractively, presenting herself in a way that would strengthen their bond and comfort him. They spent the night together as husband and wife. Afterward, she gently began to convey the news, asking him a thought-provoking question: “If someone lends something to another and later asks for it back, does the borrower have the right to refuse?” Abū Ṭalḥa replied, “No.” With great emotional intelligence, ‘Umm Sulaym then said, “Seek the reward from Allah (*iḥtasib*) for your son, as he has returned to Him.” Overwhelmed with grief, Abū Ṭalḥa expressed his dismay: “You kept me uninformed about my son’s death until we acted as we did.” Stricken with sorrow, Abū Ṭalḥa went to the Prophet and recounted what had transpired. The Prophet, recognising the patience and wisdom of ‘Umm Sulaym, offered a heartfelt prayer: “May Allah bless your night.” (Muslim, 1991, vol. 4, p. 1909).³

3. *Fairness*

The Qur’ān establishes a fundamental principle of justice: “O believers, be you securers of justice, witnesses for God. Let not detestation for a

³ A significant pedagogical example, documented outside the compilations of al-Bukhārī and Muslim, illustrates the Prophet’s methodological approach to moral instruction. The narrative describes an encounter where a youth approached the Prophet seeking permission for illicit relations (*zinā*). While this request provoked immediate censure from those present, the Prophet employed a distinctly methodical approach. Initially requesting the youth’s proximity, the Prophet initiated a series of introspective queries. He asked the young man to consider such behavior in relation to various female members of his family - beginning with his mother, then daughter, sister, and extending to both paternal and maternal aunts. Each inquiry elicited a decisive negative response from the youth. Through this sequential questioning, the Prophet established a framework of ethical reciprocity, demonstrating how personal aversion to such conduct regarding one’s own family members logically extends to society at large. The methodology employed transformed an abstract moral prohibition into concrete, personally relevant understanding. The encounter concluded with a prophetic supplication for the youth’s moral and spiritual welfare. The narrator records that this intervention proved definitively effective, as the young man maintained moral rectitude thereafter. (Ibn Hanbal, 1993-2001, vol. 36, p. 545).

people move you not to be equitable; be equitable – that is nearer to god-fearing. And fear God; surely God is aware of the things you do” (5:8). From a psychological perspective, antipathy can profoundly influence cognitive processes, potentially obscuring one’s ability to recognise merit in adversaries. This divine directive thus instructs adherents to transcend emotional bias and maintain equitable treatment toward both allies and opponents.

Two ḥadīths

1. In the aftermath of the Battle of Ḥunayn, the Prophet distributed the spoils of war among *al-mu’allaḥ al-qulūbuhum* (new converts whose hearts were to be reconciled), while the Anṣār (his devoted Medinan supporters) received nothing. This decision upset some members of the Anṣār. When the Prophet heard of their discontent, he convened a private gathering with the Anṣār in a tent to verify the reports. In response, the elders among the Anṣār clarified, saying, “O Allah’s Prophet, our leaders have said nothing; it was merely some of the younger ones among us.” The Prophet then delivered a heartfelt sermon, addressing them: “O assembly of the Anṣār! Did I not find you astray, and Allah guided you through me? You were divided, and Allah united you through me. You were impoverished, and Allah enriched you through me.” Each statement was met with the Anṣār affirming, “Indeed, O Prophet of Allah.”

The Prophet continued, “Why do you not respond to me? You could have said, ‘We believed in you when others disbelieved. We supported you when others abandoned you. We sheltered you when others expelled you. And we comforted you when others turned away.’” He then explained, “Are you upset with me over a small worldly matter that I gave to others to win their hearts, while I entrusted you to your strong faith in Islam? Would you not be pleased to see others leave with sheep and camels, while you return home with the Prophet of Allah? By Allah, were it not for migration, I would have counted myself among the Anṣār. If the people took one path through a valley or mountain pass, and the Anṣār took another, I would choose the path of the Anṣār. The Anṣār are my inner garment (*shi‘ār*), while others are my outer garment (*dithār*).” Finally, the Prophet supplicated, “O Allah, have mercy on the Anṣār, their children, and their descendants.” (Al-Bukhārī, 1993, vol.

4, p. 1574; Muslim, 1991, vol. 2, p. 738; Ibn al-Athīr, 1972, vol. 8, pp. 384-389; Ibn al-Qayyim, 1998, vol. 3, pp. 415-416).

The Prophet's Methodological Response:

1. Verification: He convened a private assembly with the Anṣār to authenticate the reported grievances.
2. Historical Context: He methodically recalled their shared journey, emphasising their transformation through divine guidance.
3. Dialectical Engagement: He invited their perspective, acknowledging their substantial contributions to the Islamic cause.
4. Strategic Rationale: He elucidated the underlying wisdom of his resource allocation.
5. Emotional Resonance: He affirmed their special status through the metaphor of inner garments (*shi'ār*), contrasting with outer garments (*dithār*).
6. Spiritual Elevation: He redirected their focus from material considerations to their privileged spiritual relationship.
7. Benediction: He concluded with a comprehensive supplication for their welfare.

This incident demonstrates the intricate interplay between cognitive and emotional faculties in human decision-making. Contemporary neuroscience corroborates this relationship, revealing that neural pathways from emotional centres to rational processing areas significantly outnumber those in the reverse direction. This neurological architecture suggests that emotional factors exert greater influence over human behaviour, learning, and judgment than purely rational considerations (Bakkār, 2010, p. 55). The Prophet's resolution exemplifies an approach that addresses both rational comprehension and emotional satisfaction, providing a model for effective conflict resolution and leadership.

2. The Prophet articulated a foundational principle regarding marital relations: "A believing man should not harbor complete aversion toward a believing woman; if he finds displeasure

in one of her characteristics, he will discover satisfaction in another.” (Muslim, 1991, vol. 3, p. 1091). The Prophet’s guidance on interpersonal relations demonstrates psychological insight while establishing fundamental principles for healthy relationships. The ḥadīth artfully combines psychological wisdom with practical guidance, emphasising the importance of comprehensive character evaluation rather than allowing singular traits to dominate one’s perception of others. This teaching introduces the concept of cognitive reframing, encouraging individuals to balance their assessment of others by recognising both positive and challenging attributes. The guidance proves particularly significant in addressing sex relations and marital dynamics, promoting mutual respect, and understanding between spouses.

4. *Motive-Based Judgment*

A critical thinker refrains from passing judgment without first understanding the underlying motivations behind people’s actions.

Two ḥadīths

1. Incident of Hatib ibn Abi Balta‘ah: in the sixth year after Hijrah, the Prophet entered into the Treaty of Hudaibiyah with the Quraysh. This agreement established a ten-year truce (Ibn Ishaq, 1990, pp. 499-507; Lings, 1984, pp. 252-256). Under its terms, the Khuzā‘ah tribe allied with the Prophet, while the Bakr tribe aligned with the Quraysh. However, the Bakr tribe, supported by the Quraysh, attacked the Khuzā‘ah, violating the treaty and reigniting hostilities. This breach ultimately led to the Conquest of Makkah (Lings, 1984, pp. 297-307; al-Qurtubi, 2006, vol. 10, pp. 99-100). While preparing for the conquest, Hatib ibn Abi Balta‘ah, a Companion, sent a letter to the Quraysh warning them of the Muslim army’s plans. The Angel Gabriel informed the Prophet about Hatib’s actions, which appeared as aiding disbelievers. Upon questioning, Hatib explained his motives: he had no tribal connections with the Quraysh, unlike other emigrants who had relatives in Mecca to safeguard their families and property. His letter was an attempt to secure protection for his dependents, not an act of disbelief or betrayal. Hatib further clarified that he was confident Allah would grant

victory to the Prophet regardless of his letter (Ibn Hanbal, 1993-2001, vol. 23, p. 191). Understanding his motivation was rooted in familial concern rather than disloyalty to Islam, the Prophet accepted his explanation without punishment. (Al-Bukhari, 1993, vol. 4, p. 1095; Muslim, 1991, vol. 4, p. 19415).

2. The incident with ‘Āishah and the broken dish: on one occasion, while the Prophet was at his wife ‘Āishah’s house, another wife sent a dish of food to him. In a moment of jealousy, ‘Āishah struck the dish, causing it to fall and break. The Prophet calmly picked up the broken pieces and the spilled food, remarking to those around, “Your mother⁴ has become jealous.” He replaced the broken dish with a new one and returned it to the other wife (Al-Bukhari, 1993, vol. 5, p. 2003; Ibn al-Athir, 1972, vol. 8, p. 436).

These narratives illustrate the Prophet’s approach to ethical judgment, emphasising the importance of understanding motives before passing judgment. In both cases, he demonstrated how apparent transgressions might stem from understandable human emotions or circumstances rather than malicious intent. The Prophet’s responses combined emotional intelligence with practical wisdom, showing how understanding motivations should inform our reactions to others’ actions.

5. Posing questions

Based on some of previously discussed hadith examples, the Prophet’s pedagogical methodology demonstrates the power of strategic questioning as a tool for deepening understanding and resolving complex situations. Rather than merely providing direct answers, he often employed carefully crafted questions to guide individuals toward deeper insights and more nuanced understanding of ethical principles. This approach served multiple purposes in the Prophet’s teaching: it encouraged active intellectual engagement, revealed underlying assumptions, and helped individuals discover solutions through their own reasoning processes. His questions were not merely rhetorical devices but were designed to illuminate overlooked aspects of situations and challenge superficial understanding of moral issues.

4 ⁴ The Prophet’s wives are recognised as mothers of the believers, as stated in the Qur’anic verse (33:6).

Stage three: Post-SHPS

Foreseeing consequences

A distinguishing characteristic of critical thinking is the ability to anticipate potential outcomes and adjust actions accordingly. This foresight becomes particularly crucial when decisions might lead to severe or catastrophic consequences, necessitating careful consideration and potential restraint.

Two ḥadīths

1. Jābir ibn ‘Abdullah al-Anṣārī narrated: “While accompanying the Prophet during a battle, a considerable number of the *Muhājirīn* (Emigrants) joined us. Among them was an individual known for his playful sense of humour, who, in jest, struck an Anṣārī man on the hip. The Anṣārī became enraged and called upon his fellow Anṣār for support, while the Muhājir also called for his companions. The Prophet, upon hearing the commotion, approached and asked, “What is the matter with people, invoking the slogans of the Age of Ignorance (*Jāhiliyyah*)?” After being informed of the incident, the Prophet admonished them, saying, “Cease this behavior, for such appeals are wicked and divisive.” Meanwhile, ‘Abdullah ibn Ubayy ibn Salūl, the leader of the hypocrites, remarked disdainfully, “the Emigrants have turned against us. When we return to Madīnah, the more honourable will surely expel the lowly,” intending to demean the believers. Upon hearing this, ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb said to the Prophet, ‘O Messenger of Allah, should we not eliminate this vile man?’ The Prophet replied, ‘No, lest people say that Muhammad kills his companions.’” (Al-Bukhārī, 1993, vol. 4, pp. 1861–1862; Ibn al-Athīr, 1972, vol. 2, p. 389).
2. In a conversation with ‘Āishah regarding the Kaʿba’s reconstruction, the Prophet revealed his desire to restore it to Ibrahim’s original foundation. However, he refrained, stating, «Were it not for the fact that your people are close to the Pre-Islamic Period of ignorance, I would have Kaʿba demolished...» (Al-Bukhārī, 1993, vol. 2, pp. 574-575; Muslim, 1991, vol. 2, pp. 968-967).

These prophetic examples illustrate a sophisticated approach to decision-making that considers both immediate actions and their long-term implications. The narratives demonstrate how effective leadership requires understanding the delicate balance between ideal objectives and practical realities. In the first instance, the Prophet prioritised community stability and his leadership's long-term credibility over immediate punitive action. In the second, he recognised that architectural reformation, despite its religious validity, could potentially undermine the community's spiritual stability during their transition to Islamic practices.

This approach teaches that social reform requires understanding deeply embedded societal structures, traditions, and psychological attachments. Rather than implementing immediate, dramatic changes, effective reform often requires a gradual, measured approach that considers people's readiness for change and the potential consequences of hastily implemented reforms, regardless of their inherent merit.

Conclusion

This study's examination of critical thinking through the lens of ḥadīth literature reveals a framework for situation handling and problem-solving that remains remarkably relevant in contemporary contexts. Through systematic analysis of narratives from al-Bukhārī and Muslim's collections, we have uncovered a structured approach that demonstrates how critical thinking skills were effectively employed in early Islamic society to address complex social challenges. The theoretical significance of these findings lies in their contribution to our understanding of critical thinking as both a timeless and culturally embedded practice. The study reveals that many modern cognitive theories and problem-solving frameworks find historical precedent in Islamic traditions, particularly in the Prophet's methodical approach to handling various situations. The overlap between 'wisdom' and 'critical thinking' discovered in this research suggests that traditional Islamic concepts of wisdom encompass and perhaps exceed contemporary understandings of critical thinking.

From a practical perspective, the three-stage model derived from this analysis offers a valuable tool for modern problem-solving. Its emphasis on information verification, systematic analysis, and consequence consideration provides a robust framework that can be applied across

various social and professional contexts. The model's strength lies in its foundation in real-world examples from ḥadīth literature, demonstrating its practical efficacy in addressing complex social situations.

However, this study represents only an initial exploration of a vast intellectual territory. Several promising directions for future research emerge. Firstly, the extension of this analytical framework to other classical Islamic sources, including additional ḥadīth collections and early Islamic literature, could reveal further dimensions of critical thinking methodologies. Secondly, comparative studies examining the relationship between Islamic approaches to critical thinking and contemporary cognitive theories could enrich both fields of study. Thirdly, empirical research testing the effectiveness of the proposed three-stage model in modern contexts could validate its practical applicability. And fourthly, investigation into how the identified critical thinking skills could be integrated into contemporary educational curricula, particularly in Islamic educational institutions.

This study demonstrates that classical Islamic sources contain sophisticated problem-solving methodologies that can enrich our current understanding of critical thinking. The framework presented here not only bridges historical wisdom with contemporary needs but also provides a practical model for addressing modern challenges while remaining grounded in traditional Islamic thought.

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The Qur'ān

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(i) direct quotation, write as 30:36

(ii) indirect quotation, write as Qur'ān, 30:36

Reference:

The glorious Qur'ān. Translation and commentary by A. Yusuf Ali (1977). US: American Trust Publications.

Ḥadīth

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(i) Al-Bukhārī, 88:204 (where 88 is the book number, 204 is the ḥadīth number)

(ii) Ibn Hanbal, vol. 1, p. 1

Reference:

(i) Al-Bukhārī, M. (1981). *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. Beirut: Dār al-Fikr.

(ii) Ibn Ḥanbal, A. (1982). *Musnad Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal*. Istanbul: Cagri Yayinlari.

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