



***Celana Cingkrang* and Hadith Isbal: A Ricoeurian Hermeneutic Study among Middle Eastern Students**

Muhammad Fadhil Hadziq¹, Muhammad Aqil Abror², Nasrulloh³

¹Maulana Malik Ibrahim State Islamic University, Malang, Indonesia

²Maulana Malik Ibrahim State Islamic University, Malang, Indonesia

³Maulana Malik Ibrahim State Islamic University, Malang, Indonesia

*Email correspondence: 250104320014@student.uin-malang.ac.id

Abstract

This study aims to analyse Indonesian students in the Middle East's understanding of the hadiths on *isbal* as well as the practice of wearing cropped trousers (*celana cingkrang*) through the lens of Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutics. This research examines how the meaning of these hadiths is internalized in religious practice and the formation of religious identity. The study is expected to contribute to academic discourse on contextual hadith studies and to promote a more nuanced understanding of diversity in religious expression within Muslim societies. This research employs a qualitative approach with a case study design. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation involving Indonesian students in several Middle Eastern countries. Data analysis follows the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, and is interpreted using Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutical framework. The findings show that understanding of the hadith on *isbal* is not uniform but varies from textual to contextual interpretations, with a shared emphasis on the moral value of prohibiting arrogance (*khuyalā'*). The practice of wearing cropped trousers is also diverse and shaped by interpretive processes, personal experiences, and social environments. Furthermore, *celana cingkrang* is understood as a polysemic symbol representing adherence to the Sunnah, religious caution, social identity, and even fashion trends. Religious practice is the result of a dynamic and contextual process of textual appropriation. Additionally, the hadith on *isbal* is not merely understood as a literal rule on clothing length, but as an ethical message emphasizing humility and the rejection of arrogance. The practice of wearing cropped trousers represents a transformation from text to action, reflecting a religious expression that is reflective, inclusive, and contextually grounded.

Keywords: cropped trousers (*celana cingkrang*), hadith on *isbal*, middle eastern students, Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutics.

Introduction

In Indonesia, the practice of wearing *celana cingkrang* that is, trousers whose length ends above the ankles has evolved from a mere clothing preference into a symbol of religious identity (Azzahra et al., 2026). This phenomenon can be observed in universities, mosques, da'wah communities, and social media, where certain styles of dress

are often associated with a commitment to following the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (Salehudin, 2022).

On the one hand, cropped trousers (*celana cingkrang*) are viewed as a representation of piety and religious caution in observing Islamic teachings (Redjosari, 2020). On the other hand, this practice also gives rise to various social stereotypes, as some members of society associate it with religious conservatism and even radicalism (Nurhayati and Nurhidayah, 2019). However, the view that associates cropped trousers with radicalism does not always have a strong scientific basis. Various studies have shown that radicalism is more closely related to ideological factors, intolerant attitudes, acceptance of violence, and social networks than to outward symbols such as clothing styles or religious appearance. Therefore, the use of cropped trousers cannot be regarded as a sole indicator for assessing an individual's tendency toward radicalism (Alfian, 2023). In line with this perspective, the National Counterterrorism Agency of Indonesia (BNPT) has emphasized in various publications that religious attributes cannot be used as the sole indicator for assessing a person's religious orientation and that the characteristics of radicalism and terrorism cannot be measured merely by one's style of dress (Sigit Pinardi, 2019). This phenomenon indicates that religious practice is always the result of an interaction between religious texts, personal experience, and the social constructions that surround them (Weriana et al., 2023).

The complexity of the meaning of cropped trousers (*celana cingkrang*) is increasingly evident among Indonesian students studying in various Middle Eastern countries. Based on interview findings, they demonstrate diverse understandings of the hadith on *isbal*, ranging from views that consider it absolutely prohibited, to those that limit the prohibition only to cases accompanied by arrogance (*khuyalā'*), and even those who regard it merely as an ethical (*adab*) issue. These differences are influenced by educational backgrounds, scholarly environments, and socio-religious experiences, indicating that a single hadith text can generate varied practices and interpretations among student (Bulqis et al., 2026).

This phenomenon is consistent with the complexity of the hadiths concerning *isbal* found in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* and *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, which are among the most frequently debated texts in Islamic legal discourse (Fatih, 2023). Some narrations contain a warning regarding garments that extend below the ankles (Akbar, 2018), while another narration such as that concerning Abu Bakr al-Ṣiddīq indicates that the prohibition does

not apply to those who do not do so out of arrogance (Armansyah, 2019). These differences in wording have produced a wide spectrum of interpretations among classical and contemporary scholars (Puspita and Musadad, 2025). Some interpret the texts literally, while others emphasize that the main message of the hadith is the prohibition of arrogance (*khuyalā'*) rather than the length of the garment itself. In social practice, these interpretive differences influence not only clothing choices but also shape claims of religious correctness and judgments toward others' religious practices (Arifin et al, 2025).

To understand these dynamics, this study employs Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutics. According to Ricoeur, textual understanding occurs through several stages: explanation and understanding, which interpret the meaning of the text; text to action, which observes the transformation of meaning into action; symbol, which reveals the hidden meanings behind practices; distanciation, which separates the text from its original context so that it becomes open to new interpretations; hermeneutics of suspicion, which uncovers the social motives behind actions; and appropriation, which explains how the meaning of the text is internalized into personal identity. From this perspective, cropped trousers are not merely a literal implementation of a hadith, but also a religious symbol containing moral, social, and personal dimensions (Jahnke, 2012).

Several previous studies have addressed issues related to this topic. Fajar Roni and colleagues argue that the essence of the hadith on *isbal* lies in the prohibition of arrogance (Roni et al., 2022). Miqdam Dinajan emphasizes the importance of a contextual approach in understanding hadith (Atmam, 2023). Suryani demonstrates the relevance of hermeneutics in hadith studies (Suryani, 2022). Muhammad Miftahun Najib elaborates on Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutical theory for understanding religious texts (Najib, 2023). M. Sastrapratedja highlights the concepts of distanciation and *appropriation* in Ricoeur's hermeneutics (Sastrapratedja, 2012). Nevertheless, no study has specifically examined the understanding of hadiths on *isbal* and the practice of wearing *celana cingkrang* among Indonesian students in the Middle East using Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutical perspective.

However, no previous study has specifically examined how Indonesian students in the Middle East understand the hadiths on *isbal* and actualize this understanding in their practice of wearing cropped trousers (*celana cingkrang*) through the framework of Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutics. Based on this review, the research gap of the present

study lies in the absence of empirical investigations that connect the hadith texts, the interpretive process, and the clothing practices of Indonesian students in the Middle East.

The novelty of this study resides in the application of Paul Ricoeur's concepts of *distanciation* and *appropriation* to explain how the meaning of the hadiths on *isbal* is transformed into a social practice represented by cropped trousers. Accordingly, this study does not merely discuss juristic differences regarding the legal status of *isbal*, but also explores how the hadith texts are understood, negotiated, and embodied in the students' religious identities. The objectives of this study are threefold: (1) to analyze how Indonesian students in the Middle East understand the hadiths on *isbal*; (2) to identify the factors that influence their practice of wearing cropped trousers; and (3) to explain the process by which the meaning of these hadiths is appropriated through the perspective of Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutics.

Research Methods

This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study design to examine the interpretation of the hadith on *isbal* and the practice of wearing cropped trousers among Indonesian students in the Middle East (Sugiyono, 2017). The participants consist of five Indonesian students studying in Yemen, Sudan, Egypt, and Jordan, and the research is also informed by the researcher's academic experience in Sudan and ongoing observations of Indonesian students' religious practices in Middle Eastern settings (Raharjo, 2017).

Primary data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation such as field notes, photographs, and social media posts, while secondary data were obtained from hadith literature on *isbal*, the works of Paul Ricoeur, academic journals, and relevant previous studies. Data were analysed using the interactive model of Matthew B. Miles, A. Michael Huberman, and Johnny Saldaña, which includes data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification, and were interpreted through Ricoeur's hermeneutical perspective to understand the relationship between textual meaning, symbolic interpretation, and social practice. The validity of the findings was ensured through source triangulation, methodological triangulation, and member checking to maintain the credibility and trustworthiness of the research results (Miles et al., 2014).

Theoretical Framework

This study employs the hermeneutical theory of Paul Ricoeur to analyse the relationship between the hadith on *isbal*, the symbolic meaning of cropped trousers, and the religious identity of Indonesian students in the Middle East. According to Ricoeur, textual understanding proceeds through the stages of explanation and understanding, text to action, symbol, distanciation, hermeneutics of suspicion, and appropriation. Through these stages, the hadith on *isbal* is understood not merely as a rule concerning the length of clothing, but as a text that conveys ethical messages about humility and the rejection of arrogance. These meanings are then interpreted, contextualized, and internalized, resulting in diverse practices, including the decision to wear or not to wear cropped trousers. Thus, the hadith text functions as the primary source of meaning, Ricoeur's hermeneutics serves as the interpretive mechanism, and the practice of wearing cropped trousers is understood as a symbolic expression of students' religious identity. This theoretical framework provides the analytical basis for explaining how religious texts are understood and embodied in social life in a reflective and contextual manner (Ricoeur, 1981).

Research Results

Understanding the Hadith on *Isbal* among Indonesian Students in the Middle East

The findings reveal that Indonesian students studying in the Middle East possess varying levels of understanding regarding the hadiths on *isbal* (wearing garments below the ankles). Although all informants were familiar with the prophetic traditions related to this issue, their interpretations ranged from simple recognition of the textual source to more nuanced and contextual understandings of the hadiths' moral significance.

At the most basic level, some informants demonstrated only an awareness of the textual authority of the hadith. R.S.F from Al-Rayan University stated succinctly: "*It is found in Sahih al-Bukhari, hadith no. 5787.*"

This response indicates that the informant recognizes the canonical source of the hadith and acknowledges its normative status. Other informants provided more elaborate explanations concerning the legal cause (*'illah*) and historical context of the hadith. R.A from International University of Africa explained: "*The prohibition of isbal applies when it is accompanied by arrogance and pride. If that cause is absent, then wearing garments below the ankles is not problematic.*"

Similarly, H.E.S from Al-Azhar University stated: “*The prohibition of isbal is related to arrogance, because in the past people who let their garments drag on the ground did so as an expression of pride and social superiority.*”

A.A.A from the University of Jordan also noted: “*Two conditions underlie the prohibition: the garment extending below the ankles and the presence of khuyalā’ (arrogance).*”

The findings indicate that the majority of informants interpret the hadith contextually rather than literally. Instead of focusing solely on the outward form of the garment, they emphasize the ethical rationale underlying the prophetic prohibition.

The findings also show that studying in the Middle East significantly broadens the students’ interpretive horizons. Several informants reported that prior to their studies abroad, they tended to adhere rigidly to a single legal opinion. Exposure to diverse scholarly traditions and discussions with teachers from different schools of thought encouraged them to appreciate legitimate differences of interpretation.

L.R from the University of Jordan remarked: “*Previously, I only believed in one opinion, but now I am more able to accept differing views.*”

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the students’ interpretations move from textual recognition to contextual reflection and moral internalization. They do not stop at identifying the textual source or reproducing literal meanings; rather, they seek to uncover the ethical intention behind the prophetic statement. The universal teaching of the hadith is understood not as a fixed dress code, but as a moral imperative to avoid arrogance and cultivate humility.

The Practice of *Celana Cingkrang* as a Transformation from Text to Action

The findings of this study reveal that Indonesian students in the Middle East do not translate their understanding of the hadiths on *isbal* into a uniform dress practice. Although most informants agree that the central message of the prophetic prohibition concerns arrogance (*khuyalā’*), the practical implementation of this understanding varies considerably.

Some participants consistently wear *celana cingkrang* (cropped trousers above the ankles) in their daily activities, others wear them only in specific situations such as prayer or teaching, while some do not

adopt the practice at all. This variation demonstrates that understanding a religious text does not automatically produce identical behaviour; rather, it involves a process of interpretation, contextual negotiation, and personal appropriation. R.S.F from Al-Rayan University stated that he wears *celana cingkrang*: “both during worship and in everyday activities.”

For him, cropped trousers constitute a practical embodiment of the Sunnah. However, he emphasized that the most important issue is not the physical form of the garment itself, but avoiding arrogance and maintaining modest and proper dress.

A similar but more situational approach is evident in the testimony of R.A from International University of Africa, who explained that he: “sometimes wears cropped trousers, both during worship and while teaching.” He noted that this decision is based on practical needs and on consideration of the legal cause (*‘illah*) underlying the prohibition of *isbal*.

In contrast, H.E.S from Al-Azhar University explicitly stated: “I do not wear cropped trousers.” He explained that his decision is influenced by prevailing social custom (*‘urf*) and by his observation that some wearers of cropped trousers may develop a sense of religious superiority.

A.A.A from the University of Jordan similarly stated that he does not intentionally choose cropped trousers, although he occasionally wears *sirwal* for practical reasons. He acknowledged that social surroundings can influence one’s comfort in dress.

Meanwhile, L.R, also from the University of Jordan, reported that he wears trousers: “slightly above the ankles” and views this as a moderate practice that does not create social tension.

Observational and documentary data further strengthen these findings. The researcher’s experience while pursuing undergraduate studies in Sudan revealed that Indonesian students display a wide range of dress styles. Some wear trousers above the ankles, others adopt local garments such as *jalabiyah* and *sirwal*, while many wear ordinary trousers without special concern for ankle length. Field notes and photographs showed that these differences rarely become sources of conflict. Instead, they are generally accepted as legitimate expressions of diverse *ijtihad* in understanding the Sunnah.

Figure 1.1 Indonesian students in Sudan wearing cropped trousers and *jalabiyah* above the ankles.



Source: [Syabab Markaz Official Instagram Post](#)

Overall, the findings indicate that the decision to wear, occasionally wear, or not wear *celana cingkrang* reflects different ways in which students embody their understanding of the hadith on *isbal*.

Cropped Trousers as Religious Symbols and Social Identity

One of the central findings of this study is that cropped trousers (*celana cingkrang*) are not understood merely as trousers worn above the ankles, but as symbols that simultaneously carry religious, social, and cultural meanings.

Literally, cropped trousers are simply garments whose length ends above the ankles. However, in the experiences of the informants, this symbol carries diverse meanings. Some interpret it as a form of *ittibā' al-sunnah* (following the Prophet's Sunnah), others see it as an expression of religious caution, some regard it as a marker of group identity, and still others view it as part of contemporary fashion trends.

R.S.F from Al-Rayan University Hadhramaut, Yemen, stated: "*It is part of the Sunnah that we should follow.*" This statement indicates that cropped trousers are understood as a symbol of personal commitment to emulate the Prophet Muhammad.

A similar view was expressed by R.A from the International University of Africa, who stated: "*To follow the Sunnah and to keep the clothing cleaner from dirt.*" This remark shows that cropped trousers are understood as a symbol that combines spiritual and practical values.

However, the symbolic meaning of cropped trousers is not exclusively religious. H.E.S from Al-Azhar University stated: "*In the present context, cropped trousers are often perceived by some people as a symbol of a particular group, such as those associated with*

Wahhabism.” This statement suggests that religious symbols may undergo shifts in meaning when they enter the social sphere.

A.A.A from the University of Jordan adopted a more moderate position. He argued that cropped trousers: “*cannot be regarded as the definitive identity or affiliation of any particular group.*” According to him, although this practice is often promoted by certain circles, its meaning cannot be reduced to a single social label.

Meanwhile, L.R from the University of Jordan remarked: “*To follow the Sunnah, and in addition, today cropped trousers have also become part of fashion trends.*” This statement indicates that religious symbols may also acquire broader meanings within popular culture.

The way informants perceive people who wear cropped trousers further highlights the multiple meanings attached to this symbol. Some regard it positively as a sign of sincere commitment to the Sunnah. Others maintain that one’s religiosity cannot be judged solely by clothing style. Still others warn that religious symbols may lose their spiritual significance when accompanied by feelings of moral superiority.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that cropped trousers are highly open symbols capable of conveying multiple meanings. They may be interpreted as expressions of piety, signs of religious caution, markers of group identity, elements of fashion, or instruments of self-presentation. Such meanings emerge from the interaction between hadith texts, personal experience, and social perception.

Distanciation and Contextualization of the Hadith on *Isbal* in Modern Life

The findings of this study indicate that Indonesian students studying in the Middle East tend to understand the hadith on *isbal* not merely on the basis of its literal wording, but by considering the historical context of its emergence (*asbāb al-wurūd*) and its relevance to modern life.

The informants recognize that hadith did not emerge in a social vacuum; rather, it was articulated within a specific socio-cultural setting rich with symbolic meanings. Consequently, their understanding of the hadith on *isbal* is directed toward uncovering the moral message underlying the text particularly the prohibition of arrogance (*khuyalā*) rather than focusing solely on the formal issue of garment length.

This interpretive process is reflected in the statement of R.S.F from Al-Rayan University Hadhramaut, Yemen, who stated: “*This hadith should be understood through its asbāb al-wurūd, because a legal ruling*

emerges due to a particular cause. In this case, the cause that must be avoided is arrogance.” This statement shows that R.S.F seeks to identify the moral rationale underlying the hadith rather than stopping at its textual wording.

A similar perspective was expressed by R.A from the International University of Africa, who remarked: *“It should be understood according to the context of the Prophet Muhammad’s hadith.”* Although brief, this statement demonstrates historical awareness that the hadith must be interpreted in relation to the social circumstances of the Prophet’s time.

H.E.S from Al-Azhar University also emphasized the importance of distinguishing between prohibitions that are *li dhātihī* (prohibited in themselves) and those linked to another underlying meaning. He stated: *“Sometimes we need to examine the asbāb al-wurūd and the meaning of the hadith to determine whether the prohibition is intrinsic or due to another reason, such as arrogance.”* This response reflects a critical interpretive approach that seeks to uncover the moral purpose of the text.

A.A.A from the University of Jordan added an ethical and social dimension to this contextualization process. He stated: *“In this matter, I try to be moderate (tawassut). If someone’s love for the Prophet Muhammad inspires him to imitate the Prophet’s style of dress, that is certainly commendable. However, the problem arises when a person wears cropped trousers and then feels that he is more faithful to the Sunnah and entitled to judge others.”* This statement underscores that the central issue lies not in the garment itself, but in the moral attitude accompanying it.

L.R from the University of Jordan highlighted the universal relevance of Islamic teachings. He stated: *“In my view, the hadith on isbal should still be understood according to the context of the Prophet Muhammad’s time, and there is essentially no difference in principle with today’s conditions, because Islamic teachings are relevant to every time and place.”* This statement reflects the belief that the moral values of the hadith remain universally applicable, even though their practical implementation may adapt to changing social conditions.

Overall, the findings indicate that the students understand the hadith on *isbal* as an ethical teaching that emphasizes humility, moderation, and the rejection of arrogance, rather than as a rigid technical rule concerning clothing length.

A Hermeneutics of Suspicion toward the Motives behind Wearing Cropped Trousers

One of the important findings of this study is that the practice of wearing cropped trousers (*celana cingkrang*) is not always motivated solely by the desire to follow the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad. Although all informants regard this practice as commendable when intended as an expression of *ittibā' al-sunnah*, they also recognize that the motives behind it may be diverse.

R.S.F responded to the question about motives for wearing cropped trousers by stating: "*Wallāhu a'lam, but it is best for us to follow the Sunnah.*" This statement reflects epistemological caution. He refrained from judging the intentions of others while emphasizing that the ideal orientation of the practice is to emulate the Sunnah.

A similar view was expressed by R.A, who stated: "*We cannot know what is in someone's heart. If the intention behind wearing such clothing is to follow the Sunnah, then that person will be rewarded.*" This response places intention at the centre of evaluating religious action.

A more critical reflection was offered by H.E.S, who explained: "*Some people wear them because they follow trends, while others truly intend to follow the Sunnah. However, due to an inadequate understanding of the hadith, some eventually fall into arrogance and feel that they are more correct than others.*" This statement suggests that religious symbols may become instruments of moral superiority.

Likewise, A.A.A noted that the motives for wearing cropped trousers can be highly varied: "*It may simply be due to habit from childhood, because someone owns only that type of trousers, or because of comfort. In addition, contemporary fashion trends also include trousers that end above the ankles.*" This explanation indicates that practices that appear religious may also be influenced by practical and cultural considerations.

L.R also acknowledged: "*Some people wear them simply because they are fashionable.*" This statement demonstrates that cropped trousers have, in some cases, become part of popular culture.

When the informants were asked about individuals who do not wear cropped trousers yet still consider themselves to be following Islamic teachings, nearly all responded inclusively. R.S.F emphasized that what matters most is avoiding arrogance and maintaining one's acts of worship. R.A and A.A.A likewise stated that there is no problem as long as arrogance is absent. H.E.S even argued that, in certain contexts, not wearing cropped trousers may be preferable if the symbol itself becomes a form of *libās al-shuhrah* (clothing worn to attract attention or distinction). L.R added that such a position may reflect adherence to

scholarly opinions that regard *isbal* as reprehensible (*makrūh*) rather than categorically forbidden (*ḥarām*).

Overall, the findings indicate that cropped trousers may indeed represent a sincere expression of devotion, but they may also be shaped by habit, group influence, comfort, and contemporary fashion. Therefore, the outward symbol alone cannot serve as a definitive indicator of personal religiosity.

Appropriation of the Meaning of Cropped Trousers in Students' Religious Identity

The findings of this study show that all informants acknowledge the religious value associated with wearing cropped trousers (*celana cingkrang*), although they differ in the degree to which they internalize this meaning. For some informants, cropped trousers are regarded as a Sunnah that is ideally followed. For others, they are merely one possible form of religious practice that does not determine the quality of one's faith.

This variation indicates that the process of internalizing the meaning of the hadith on *isbal* is strongly influenced by each individual's life experience, educational background, and religious orientation.

R.S.F interprets cropped trousers as part of the Sunnah that should be practiced solely with the intention of following the example of the Prophet Muhammad. He stated: "*Cropped trousers are part of the Sunnah. Therefore, they should be worn with the intention of following what Muhammad did, not for any other reason or merely as a trend. If one is not yet able to form such an intention, it is better to dress normally while avoiding arrogance and maintaining humility.*" This statement shows that R.S.F emphasizes sincerity and humility rather than the outward form of the garment itself.

A similar view was expressed by R.A, who stated: "*Trousers that do not cover the ankles can serve as an identity of religious caution, especially as a way to avoid arrogance.*" For R.A, cropped trousers symbolize *iḥtiyāt* (religious caution) in practicing Islam.

In contrast, H.E.S stated: "*Personally, I do not wear cropped trousers. The main point is that a Muslim should dress according to the prevailing 'urf (social custom) in his environment while still covering the 'awrah.*" Although he does not adopt the outward symbol, he still affirms the ethical message of the hadith.

A.A.A views cropped trousers as one possible textual implementation of the Sunnah, but not as an absolute obligation. He

stated: *“Cropped trousers may be understood as one form of practicing the Sunnah textually. However, there is nothing wrong with not wearing them as long as this is not accompanied by pride or arrogance.”* This statement reflects a moderate and inclusive perspective.

Meanwhile, L.R stated succinctly: *“For me, cropped trousers are a way of following the Prophet’s Sunnah.”* This response indicates that the symbol has become part of his personal religious identity.

When asked how they would like others to understand their practice, the informants consistently demonstrated an inclusive and nonjudgmental attitude. R.A emphasized that the hadith concerning *isbal* is authentic and should therefore be approached with caution. H.E.S stressed the importance of understanding the issue comprehensively. A.A.A argued that excessive debate over outward appearances is less productive than focusing on more fundamental issues facing the Muslim community. L.R maintained that individuals may adhere to a particular opinion for themselves, but should not impose it on others.

Overall, the findings indicate that the personal meaning of cropped trousers lies not merely in the style of dress itself, but in the values associated with it, such as sincerity of intention, religious caution, humility, and respect for differences of opinion.

Discussion

The Dialectic of Explanation and Understanding in Paul Ricoeur’s Hermeneutics

The research findings can be interpreted through the hermeneutical framework of Paul Ricoeur, particularly his dialectic between explanation and understanding. According to Ricoeur, explanation refers to the objective analysis of a text, while understanding involves the reader’s appropriation of the deeper meaning of the text in relation to lived experience (Geanellos, 2000).

At the level of explanation, the response of R.S.F illustrates the initial stage of interpretation, in which the hadith is treated as an objective linguistic entity that can be identified and referenced. The text functions as an authoritative statement whose meaning have not yet been fully unpacked.

The statements of R.A, H.E.S, and A.A.A reflect a more advanced interpretive stage. By identifying arrogance as the essential cause of the prohibition, these informants move beyond literalism and engage with the ethical rationale underlying the hadith. This pattern aligns with the

findings of (Roni et al., 2022), who argue that the substance of the hadith on *isbal* lies primarily in the condemnation of arrogance rather than in the mere physical length of clothing. Likewise, (Atmam, 2023) emphasizes the importance of contextual approaches in understanding hadith when textual expressions are closely tied to specific social circumstances.

From Ricoeur's perspective, such contextual interpretation marks the transition from explanation to understanding. Explanation discloses the semantic and historical structure of the text, whereas understanding enables the reader to grasp the "world of the text" and its existential significance. In the case of the hadith on *isbal*, the world disclosed by the text is not merely a rule about clothing, but an ethical horizon centred on humility, modesty, and the rejection of ostentation. The garment itself becomes secondary to the moral attitude embodied in one's conduct (Ghasemi et al., 2011).

This interpretive shift from literalism to substantive meaning is central to Ricoeur's hermeneutics. Ricoeur maintains that a text, once detached from its original author and context, acquires autonomy and can generate new meanings in different historical settings. This process of distancing allows readers to move beyond the immediate wording of the text and uncover its enduring significance. (Najib, 2023) explains that Ricoeur's theory is particularly relevant for religious texts because it enables interpreters to distinguish between the surface formulation of a text and its deeper symbolic meaning.

The transformative experiences of the students in the Middle East also illustrate Ricoeur's concept of horizon expansion. Their exposure to diverse scholarly traditions fostered intellectual humility and interpretive openness. Understanding, in this sense, is not simply the retrieval of an original meaning but a dialogical process through which readers encounter alternative perspectives and reinterpret their own assumptions.

These findings are consistent (Suryani, 2022), who highlights the relevance of hermeneutics for hadith studies, especially in addressing tensions between textual literalism and contextual interpretation. Similarly, (Sastrapratedja, 2012) notes that Ricoeur's concepts of distancing and appropriation explain how texts continue to shape ethical self-understanding in new contexts.

The implications of this study suggest that the understanding of hadith among Indonesian students in the Middle East has developed toward greater hermeneutical maturity. The hadith on *isbal* is no longer

viewed merely as a legal injunction concerning clothing length, but as an ethical call to embody modesty, tolerance, and spiritual maturity in everyday life. This demonstrates that exposure to diverse academic environments can deepen both interpretive competence and moral insight in the study of Islamic texts.

Text to Action in Paul Ricoeur's Hermeneutics

The diversity of dress practices among Indonesian students in the Middle East can be interpreted through the hermeneutical theory of Paul Ricoeur, particularly his concept of *text to action*. Ricoeur argues that a text is not merely a set of words but a discourse that opens up a “world of the text” (*le monde du texte*), inviting readers to actualize its meaning in their own lives (Ricoeur, 1981).

After passing through the stages of explanation and understanding, readers engage in appropriation, the process by which the meaning of the text becomes part of their self-understanding and shapes concrete action. Consequently, the same hadith can give rise to diverse practices because each reader interprets it through distinct educational backgrounds, lived experiences, and social environments.

The case of R.S.F illustrates a direct appropriation of the text into daily action. By consistently wearing *celana cingkrang*, he translates his understanding of the hadith into a visible embodiment of the Sunnah. Nevertheless, his emphasis on humility shows that the outward practice is meaningful only insofar as it reflects the deeper ethical value of modesty.

R.A's testimony demonstrates a contextual appropriation. His decision to wear cropped trousers only in certain situations indicates that what is preserved is the ethical intention of the hadith rather than its literal form.

In contrast, H.E.S and A.A.A represent another legitimate mode of appropriation. Their decision not to adopt *celana cingkrang* reflects an understanding that the substantive meaning of the hadith lies in humility, not in a specific clothing style. In this sense, not wearing cropped trousers can also be interpreted as a faithful realization of the hadith's moral message.

L.R's moderate practice further illustrates that religious action often emerges from a negotiation between conviction, social harmony, and personal comfort. This supports Ricoeur's proposition that human action can be interpreted as a “living text” (*action as text*) (Ricoeur, 1981).

These findings affirm that the practice of *celana cingkrang* should not be treated as a simple indicator of piety. Rather, it is one possible manifestation of the dynamic appropriation of religious meaning.

The results are consistent with (Roni et al., 2022), who argue that the essence of the hadith on *isbal* lies in the prohibition of arrogance rather than in the physical length of clothing. They also support (Atmam, 2023) emphasis on contextual approaches to hadith interpretation.

The implications of this study suggest that authentic religiosity does not lie in symbolic uniformity but in the individual's ability to internalize and translate the ethical world disclosed by the text into real life in a reflective, contextual, and wise manner. Whether students wear cropped trousers consistently, only in specific contexts, or not at all, each practice represents a legitimate actualization of the same prophetic teaching: humility, rejection of arrogance, and openness to the diversity of *ijtihad*.

The Polysemic Nature of Religious Symbols in Paul Ricoeur's Hermeneutics

The findings can be interpreted through the hermeneutical theory of Paul Ricoeur, particularly his understanding of symbols. Ricoeur argues that symbols possess a double meaning: a literal meaning that appears externally and a deeper meaning that emerges through interpretation. He famously states that “the symbol gives rise to thought” (*le symbole donne à penser*), meaning that a symbol does not end with its physical form but opens a broader horizon of reflection reflection (Ricoeur and Ricoeur, 1976).

In this study, cropped trousers function as a symbol whose literal meaning is straightforward: trousers worn above the ankles. Yet the deeper meanings assigned by the informants are diverse and context-dependent. For some students, the symbol represents commitment to the Sunnah; for others, it signifies practical cleanliness, religious caution, social identity, or contemporary fashion.

The testimony of R.S.F and R.A demonstrates how symbols become religiously meaningful through appropriation. Their practice of wearing cropped trousers reflects an internalization of the hadith's message and an intention to emulate the Prophet Muhammad. In Ricoeur's terms, the hadith text discloses a “world of meaning” that is actualized in concrete life.

The responses of H.E.S and A.A.A illustrate that symbols are also socially negotiated. Once religious practices enter public space, they

may be interpreted as markers of ideological affiliation. Ricoeur's concept of *distanciation* explains this process: after being detached from its original historical context, the text becomes open to new and sometimes contested meanings.

L.R's statement further confirms that symbols can acquire cultural and aesthetic meanings beyond their initial religious significance. A practice rooted in devotion may simultaneously function as a lifestyle choice and part of contemporary fashion.

These findings are consistent with (Roni et al., 2022), who argue that the essence of the hadith on *isbal* lies in the prohibition of arrogance rather than in the physical form of clothing. They also support (Atmam, 2023) emphasis on contextual approaches to hadith interpretation. In addition, (Najib, 2023) and (Sastrapratedja, 2012) demonstrate that through *distanciation* and appropriation, religious texts continue to generate new meanings in different historical and social contexts.

The implications of this study suggest that religious symbols should not be understood in a rigid or singular manner. Cropped trousers are polysemic symbols whose meanings remain open to reinterpretation. They may represent devotion, caution, identity, fashion, or ethical self-expression depending on the interpreter's horizon of understanding. Thus, from Ricoeur's hermeneutical perspective, the deepest meaning of cropped trousers lies not in their physical form, but in the world of meaning they disclose: a commitment to emulate the Prophet Muhammad, cultivate humility, avoid arrogance, and remain open to diverse interpretations in religious life.

Distanciation and the Renewal of Meaning in Paul Ricoeur's Hermeneutics

The findings can be interpreted through the hermeneutical theory of Paul Ricoeur, particularly his concept of *distanciation*. Ricoeur argues that once a text is articulated and transmitted, it becomes detached from its original context of utterance and acquires semantic autonomy. As a result, the meaning of the text is no longer entirely bound to the original intention of the speaker but remains open to reinterpretation by readers from different generations and social contexts (Ricoeur, 1973).

The responses of the informants demonstrate this process clearly. Rather than treating the hadith on *isbal* as a fixed legal formula, they separate its enduring ethical message from its historical expression. In doing so, they identify arrogance as the core issue

addressed by the Prophet Muhammad, while viewing clothing length as one contextual form through which that moral concern was expressed. R.S.F's explanation illustrates distancing in practice. By emphasizing *asbāb al-wurūd* and identifying arrogance as the operative cause, he distinguishes between the literal wording of the hadith and its universal moral significance.

R.A's brief statement also reflects historical consciousness. His insistence that the hadith must be understood according to the Prophet's context confirms that religious texts should be interpreted in relation to the circumstances in which they were first articulated.

H.E.S advances this approach by distinguishing between prohibitions that are intrinsic and those dependent on external reasons. This analytical distinction reflects Ricoeur's notion that understanding emerges through critical reflection rather than literal repetition.

A.A.A's emphasis on moderation demonstrates that the moral relevance of the hadith remains highly applicable in modern contexts. In contemporary life, arrogance may manifest not through clothing length itself, but through attitudes of religious superiority and judgment toward others.

L.R's perspective reinforces the universality of the hadith's ethical teaching. Islamic texts remain relevant across time and place because their deeper values can be appropriated in changing historical conditions.

These findings are consistent with (Atmam 2023), who emphasizes contextual approaches to hadith interpretation, and (Suryani, 2022), who highlights the usefulness of hermeneutics in connecting classical texts with contemporary realities. Likewise, (Najib, 2023) and (Sastrapratedja, 2012) explain that Ricoeur's concept of distancing enables religious texts to remain productive and meaningful across diverse cultural settings.

The implications of this study suggest that modern contexts should not be viewed as threats to the authority of hadith. On the contrary, they provide new spaces in which prophetic teachings continue to speak and generate relevant meanings. Authentic actualization of the hadith lies not in mechanically reproducing its outward form, but in grasping its ethical message and applying it thoughtfully in real life. Thus, from Ricoeur's hermeneutical perspective, the understanding of the hadith on *isbal* among Indonesian students in the Middle East reflects a mature process of distancing and contextualization. The hadith is understood as an ethical discourse that

opens a world of meaning concerning humility, moderation, and the rejection of arrogance, enabling the text to remain living, relevant, and transformative in contemporary Muslim life.

The Hermeneutics of Suspicion and the Hidden Motives of Religious Practice

The findings can be interpreted through the hermeneutical theory of Paul Ricoeur, particularly his concept of the *hermeneutics of suspicion* (Itao, 2010). Ricoeur developed this approach by drawing on the insights of Karl Marx, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Sigmund Freud. The purpose of this interpretive method is to uncover hidden meanings and motivations behind actions and symbols that may appear self-evident on the surface (Ricoeur, 2008).

Applied to this study, the hermeneutics of suspicion reveals that wearing cropped trousers cannot be interpreted automatically as proof of piety or commitment to the Sunnah. Although the practice may be motivated by sincere religious devotion, it may also reflect social identity, comfort, habit, conformity to group norms, or fashion trends. The statements of R.S.F and R.A highlight the centrality of intention in assessing religious action. Both informants acknowledged that the true motives of individuals remain hidden and known only to God. This perspective aligns with Ricoeur's view that human actions always contain layers of meaning that are not fully transparent.

H.E.S offers a more critical perspective by noting that outward religious practices can become vehicles for arrogance and moral superiority. This observation reflects Ricoeur's concern that symbols may mask interests or attitudes contrary to the ethical values they are supposed to represent.

A.A.A and L.R further demonstrate that religious symbols may intersect with practical and cultural motivations. Cropped trousers can be worn out of habit, convenience, or aesthetic preference, illustrating the polysemic nature of symbolic action.

The inclusive responses toward individuals who do not wear cropped trousers show that the informants do not equate religiosity with a specific outward appearance. Their emphasis on humility and sincerity confirms that the ethical substance of the hadith is more important than the visible symbol.

These findings are consistent with (Roni et al., 2022), who argue that the essence of the hadith on *isbal* lies in the prohibition of arrogance. They also support (Atmam, 2023) contextual approach to

hadith interpretation and (Suryani, 2022) demonstration of the relevance of hermeneutics in hadith studies. (Najib, 2023) and (Sastrapratedja, 2012) likewise show that religious texts continue to generate new meanings through distanciation and appropriation.

The implications of this study suggest that religious practices should be approached with interpretive humility. Visible symbols of devotion do not necessarily reveal the full meaning of an action. Authentic religiosity lies in the sincerity with which individuals internalize and embody the moral values conveyed by religious texts. Thus, from Ricoeur's hermeneutical perspective, the practice of wearing cropped trousers cannot be understood simplistically as a single indicator of personal piety. Through the hermeneutics of suspicion, this study demonstrates that actions that appear religious are always open to multiple motivations. The deepest meaning of the hadith on *isbal* lies not in external appearance, but in the ethical values it discloses: humility, sincerity, and the rejection of arrogance in everyday life.

Appropriation and the Formation of Religious Identity in Paul Ricoeur's Hermeneutics

The findings of this study can be interpreted through Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutical theory, particularly his concept of appropriation. Appropriation is the final stage of interpretation, in which a text that has been explained, understood, and critically examined becomes internalized as part of the reader's self-understanding (Scott-Baumann, 2009). At this stage, the text is no longer understood merely as an external authority but becomes a source of reflection that shapes personal identity and guides action. In the context of this study, the hadith on *isbal* is appropriated differently by each student according to his educational experience, social environment, and religious orientation.

R.S.F's statement reflects a profound appropriation of the ethical message of the hadith. His emphasis on intention, sincerity, and humility demonstrates that the text has become part of his spiritual self-understanding rather than merely a rule concerning dress. R.A.'s perspective shows that the hadith functions as a moral compass. By interpreting cropped trousers as a form of religious caution, he integrates the text into his everyday religious identity. H.E.S. illustrates that appropriation does not necessarily require the reproduction of the same outward symbol. Although he does not wear cropped trousers, he internalizes the values of modesty and humility promoted by the hadith.

A.A.A. represents a moderate form of appropriation by appreciating cropped trousers as one possible manifestation of the Sunnah without considering them an absolute criterion for judging others. Meanwhile, L.R. confirms that a religious symbol may become part of one's identity while remaining compatible with openness to scholarly disagreement and legal diversity within Islam.

These findings indicate that Indonesian students in the Middle East no longer understand the hadith on *isbal* merely as a regulation concerning the length of clothing, but rather as an ethical teaching that emphasizes humility and the rejection of arrogance. This result is consistent with the study of (Roni et al., 2022), who argue that the essence of the hadith on *isbal* lies in the prohibition of arrogance, and it supports the contextual approach to hadith interpretation proposed by (Atmam, 2023). The findings also reinforce (Suryani, 2022) argument regarding the relevance of hermeneutics in hadith studies, particularly in bridging the tension between textual and contextual understandings. Within Ricoeur's hermeneutical framework, this process reflects appropriation, whereby a text is no longer understood merely as an external rule but becomes integrated into the reader's consciousness and lived experience. As explained by (Najib, 2023) and (Sastrapratedja, 2012), appropriation enables religious texts to be understood in an existential and transformative manner.

Furthermore, the experience of studying in the Middle East appears to have broadened the informants' horizons of understanding through engagement with diverse intellectual traditions. This finding is in line with (Simonotti, 2024), who emphasizes that understanding develops through dialogue with different perspectives and leads to greater interpretive openness. Similarly, (Fazakas, 2024) argues that interpretation involves not only textual comprehension but also the formation of personal identity and lived experience. In this regard, (Qiu, 2025) demonstrates that texts acquire semantic autonomy once detached from their original contexts, allowing them to generate new meanings across different social and cultural settings. Meanwhile, (Jani, 2025) and (Busacchi, 2026) highlight the ethical dimension and multilayered nature of religious symbols. Consequently, symbols such as *celana cingkrang* should not be reduced to their physical form alone but should be understood through the values they disclose.

From Ricoeur's perspective, authentic appropriation is always accompanied by self-transformation. A properly understood text expands the reader's horizon so that he not only grasps the meaning of

a teaching but also learns to position himself more wisely in relation to others. Therefore, cropped trousers may be understood as one expression of piety for some individuals, but they cannot be regarded as the sole measure of Islamic identity. What matters more is the individual's ability to internalize the ethical message of the hadith and translate it into a way of life characterized by sincerity, humility, tolerance, and proportionality in everyday religious practice.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that Indonesian students in the Middle East interpret the hadiths on *isbal* through Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutical framework, which includes explanation, understanding, distanciation, the hermeneutics of suspicion, appropriation, and text to action. The findings show that the students do not confine their interpretation to the literal prohibition of lowering garments below the ankles, but seek to uncover the ethical message underlying the hadith, namely the prohibition of arrogance (*khuyalā'*). As a result, cropped trousers (*celana cingkrang*) are understood in diverse ways, including as an expression of following the Sunnah, a form of religious caution, a social symbol, and a contemporary fashion style.

The study also reveals that these differing interpretations lead to varied practices: some students consistently wear cropped trousers, some wear them only in certain contexts, and others do not wear them at all. This diversity indicates that authentic religiosity lies not in symbolic uniformity, but in the internalization of ethical values such as sincerity, humility, moderation, and openness to legitimate differences of interpretation. Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of hadith studies by demonstrating the relevance of Ricoeur's hermeneutics in understanding the dynamic relationship between text, interpretation, and religious practice in contemporary Muslim life.

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