

Shepherding the Islamic Secular: Hadith-Based Principles for Evaluating Muslim Chaplains

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Abstract

This paper explores the potential for integrating hadith sciences (*'ulūm al-ḥadīth*) with contemporary practices of certifying and endorsing Muslim chaplains. Drawing upon the rich history of hadith criticism and authentication, which seeks to preserve the integrity of the Prophet's legacy, this study proposes an innovative framework for evaluating Muslim chaplains' credibility and communal endorsement.

The research employs a comparative analysis methodology, examining case studies from classical hadith scholarship and contemporary chaplaincy practices. By bridging these two domains, the study identifies five critical principles for Muslim chaplaincy institutions and endorsing agencies to adopt: (1) academic and clinical integration, (2) critique and validation of professional competence, (3) avoidance of fabrication and distortion, (4) Islamic secular understanding and application of hadith sciences, and (5) adherence to scholarly consensus of secular professional norms.

This interdisciplinary approach, situated at the intersection of Islamic Studies and Chaplaincy Studies, aims to enhance the theoretical understanding of Islamic chaplaincy while providing practical guidelines for improving evaluation processes. The study builds upon previous research asserting that authentic Islamic spiritual care must be grounded in traditional sciences and the Prophetic legacy.

By integrating rigorous principles from hadith sciences into the education, training, and endorsement processes for Muslim chaplains, this research argues that the field of Islamic chaplaincy can ensure the preservation of authentic Islamic knowledge while meeting the demands of diverse secular contexts. The paper discusses the potential benefits and challenges of implementing this framework, considering theological, institutional, and practical implications.

This study contributes to the emerging field of Muslim Chaplaincy Studies by offering a novel approach to chaplaincy evaluation rooted in Islamic tradition. It aims to spark further research and dialogue on integrating classical Islamic methodologies with contemporary professional practices in spiritual care.

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