



The Theology of Divine Laughter: A Superiority Theory Analysis of Ḍaḥik Allāh in Hadith and Its Theological Implications

Andi Mustopa¹

Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris, Malaysia¹

m20251003102@siswa.upsi.edu.my¹

Moh. Mahfud Ali Amari Sya'roni²

Ma'had Aly Hasyim Asy'ari, Indonesia²

amarisyaroni@gmail.com²

Muhammad Royyan Faqih Azhary³

Ma'had Aly Hasyim Asy'ari, Indonesia³

royyanfaqih7@gmail.com³

Ahmad Mukhlis Sirojuddin⁴

Ma'had Aly Hasyim Asy'ari, Indonesia⁴

ahmadmukhlis085@gmail.com⁴

Mohamad Farid Zaini⁵

Ma'had Aly Hasyim Asy'ari, Indonesia⁵

mohamad_faridzaini@yahoo.co.id⁵

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.54298/jk.v9i1.1068>

Abstract

This research examines the attribute of divine laughter (ḍaḥik Allāh) from the perspective of prophetic traditions (ḥadīth) through the lens of Superiority Theory. The study is motivated by the complexity of understanding anthropomorphic attributes (ṣifāt khabariyah), which are susceptible to both anthropomorphic interpretation (tashbīh) and complete negation of meaning (ta'ḥīl). This research aims to analyze the construction of meaning of divine laughter in ḥadīth narratives by employing the framework of superiority theory from the philosophy of comedy. The method employed is qualitative with a textual analysis approach to ḥadīth. The findings reveal two patterns of interpretation: first, through the strong claim mechanism in the ḥadīth of two men who killed each other, divine laughter affirms the supremacy of divine power over the limitations of human logic; second, through the weak claim mechanism in the ḥadīth of 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib's supplication, divine laughter represents divine acknowledgment of the servant's awareness of his own limitations. This study concludes that an interdisciplinary approach integrating ḥadīth sciences, Islamic theology, and modern comedy philosophy is effective in maintaining the principle of tanzīh (divine transcendence) while simultaneously understanding the profound meanings behind the attributes of God.

Keywords: Divine Attributes, Superiority Theory, Hadith, Islamic Theology, ḍaḥik Allāh

Introduction

In Islamic theology, the discussion of God's attributes (asmā' wa al-ṣifāt) has been a

The Theology of Divine Laughter: A Superiority Theory Analysis of Ḍaḥik Allāh in Hadith and Its Theological Implications - Andi Mustopa, Moh. Mahfud Ali Amari Sya'roni, Muhammad Royyan Faqih Azhary, Ahmad Mukhlis Sirojuddin, Mohamad Farid Zaini

significant and heavily debated topic from the classical period to the contemporary era, particularly regarding how these attributes are understood without likening God to His creation. One attribute that has rarely been examined in depth is ḍaḥik, or divine laughter, which appears in several ḥadīths of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). These ḥadīths portray Allah "laughing" in specific contexts, such as the story of two men who killed each other yet both ultimately entered Paradise, or when Allah expresses wonder at His servant's supplication. Understanding ḍaḥik presents a theological dilemma: whether this reflects a human-like attribute of joy (farah), or is better understood as an expression of God's power and superiority over His creation.¹

As human beings are unable to directly perceive Allah's ḍaḥik, God provided understanding of this through the Prophet Muhammad. In several ḥadīths, Allah's ḍaḥik is responded to by the Prophet with laughter, indicating a comedic orientation that can be understood and considered worthy of laughter. Examples can be seen in the premise-punchline structure both in this world, such as the Prophet's laughter when 'Alī supplicated or responded to companions' concerns about the future, and in the hereafter, such as when a person who previously killed a martyr ultimately entered Paradise. In the Qur'ān, the term "ḍaḥik" is not explicitly mentioned as it is not an Arabic term of divine speech; this attribute appears more as an action (fi'l) manifested on the face, indicating happiness or joy.

The theological discussion of ḍaḥik is inseparable from the risks of tajsīm (likening God to corporeal beings) and the attribution of joy (farah) to God. Al-Bayhaqī, referencing Abū Sulaymān, interpreted Allah's "ḍaḥik" in two ways: first, as "riḍā" or divine pleasure; second, as "Allah causes the angels to laugh," rather than Allah laughing directly. This is discussed in the context of the risk of tajsīm, and al-Bayhaqī agrees with Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ṭabarī who interpreted it as "bayān" or explanation. Al-Bayhaqī emphasized that the early scholars (salaf) understood that Allah's "ḍaḥik" cannot be equated with the laughter of corporeal beings.²

Several previous studies have addressed the themes of humor, laughter, and joking from the perspectives of ḥadīth, psychology, and Islamic theology. Jurin (2019) examined the concepts of joking and laughter through the maudhū'ī method and analysis of scholars' commentaries, connecting them with psychological, sociological, and communicative approaches. This research demonstrated that humor is an innate human trait as well as a social ethic of the Prophet, appearing in various contexts such as the Prophet's interactions with his family, companions, children, and even during the event of the Isra' and Mi'rāj.³ Another

¹ Abū Bakr Aḥmad ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Bayhaqī, *al-Asmā' wa al-Ṣifāt*, ed. 'Abdallāh ibn Muḥammad al-Ḥāshidī (Jeddah: Maktabat al-Sawādī, 1993), 2:234.

² al-Bayhaqī, *al-Asmā' wa al-Ṣifāt*, 2:235.

³ A. Jurin, "Konsep bercanda dan tertawa perspektif hadits: Kajian Hadis Maudhu'i" (Doctoral dissertation, UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, 2019).

study by Aziz and Junaidi (2024) highlighted the phenomenon of excessive laughter in society and compared it with the stipulations of ḥadīth. They found that Islam permits light laughter, merely a smile or showing one's molars, while loud laughter with a boisterous voice is categorized as prohibited. Using the maudhū'ī method, the study collected ḥadīths concerning the prohibition of excessive laughter and compared them with scholars' commentaries to map the positive and negative impacts of laughter in social life.⁴

Within the realm of theology, the issue of divine laughter as one of the al-ṣifāt al-khabariyah has also been discussed in studies concerning mushkil al-ḥadīth. Harun (2021) examined al-Bayhaqī's method in al-Asmā' wa al-Ṣifāt and demonstrated that al-Bayhaqī combined the approaches of ta'wīl and tafwīd to explain attributes that appear anthropomorphic. This study underscores the importance of a methodological framework in understanding ḥadīth texts that appear problematic in their literal reading, especially those related to divine attributes.⁵

Distinct from previous research that largely focused on the ethics of prophetic humor or scholarly methods in addressing khabarī attributes, this study specifically examines the divine attribute of laughter (al-ḍahik) in ḥadīth. This research integrates theological analysis with the theory of superiority in the psychology of humor to understand the patterns of scholarly interpretation—ranging from meanings of riḍā, bayān, to the concept of "Allah causing the angels to laugh." Potential theological issues such as the risk of tajsīm are analyzed through a cautious theological approach without displacing the principle of tanzīh. By utilizing superiority and incongruity theories, this study examines the humor structure in ḥadīths that depict divine wonder and dominance without anthropomorphism. Overall, this research fills the gap in studies that connect divine attributes in ḥadīth, classical theological interpretations, and modern interdisciplinary approaches in understanding the meaning of "divine laughter." Based on the comprehensive background outlined above, this study formulates two interconnected research problems that serve as the primary analytical focus of the investigation. The first research problem addresses the fundamental theological question of how the attribute of divine laughter (al-ḍahik) is to be properly understood within the ḥadīth tradition, particularly in light of the diverse and sometimes divergent interpretive frameworks advanced by classical and contemporary scholars. These interpretations encompass a spectrum of meanings, ranging from the concept of riḍā (divine pleasure) and bayān (explanation or manifestation) to the more nuanced understanding of "causing the angels to laugh" as articulated by al-Bayhaqī and other theologians. Furthermore, this problem necessitates a careful examination of how theological ambiguities, especially the perennial risk of tajsīm (anthropomorphism or corporeal interpretation of divine attributes), are methodologically addressed and resolved without compromising or displacing the

⁴ M. A. Aziz and J. Junaidi, "Tertawa Dalam Perspektif Hadis Nabi SAW," *SHAHIH (Jurnal Ilmu Kewahyuan)* 7, no. 1 (2024): 1-13.

⁵ Z. B. Harun, "Kemusykilan Hadis-Hadis Sifat Allah: Kajian Pendekatan al-Bayhaqī dalam Kitab al-Asmā' wa'l-Ṣifāt," *Al-Burhān: Journal of Qur'ān and Sunnah Studies* 5, no. 1 (2021): 121-137.

The Theology of Divine Laughter: A Superiority Theory Analysis of Ḍaḥik Allāh in Hadith and Its Theological Implications - Andi Mustopa, Moh. Mahfud Ali Amari Sya'roni, Muhammad Royyan Faqih Azhary, Ahmad Mukhlis Sirojuddin, Mohamad Farid Zaini

fundamental principles of Islamic creed (‘aqidah), particularly the principle of tanzih (divine transcendence and incomparability). The second research problem, which is methodologically and conceptually intertwined with the first, investigates how the theory of superiority—with its two distinct analytical mechanisms of strong claim and weak claim—can serve as an effective interdisciplinary framework for understanding both the theological meaning embedded in ḥadīth narratives concerning divine laughter and the structural humor that characterizes these narrations. This theoretical approach seeks to demonstrate how the strong claim mechanism, which emphasizes the affirmation of divine superiority and power over human logic and expectation, and the weak claim mechanism, which focuses on the acknowledgment of human limitation and vulnerability before divine majesty, can collectively illuminate the complex interplay between comedic structure and theological content while simultaneously preserving the principle of tanzih. Through the examination of these two interrelated problems, this study aims to contribute a nuanced and comprehensive understanding of ḍaḥik Allāh that bridges classical theological discourse with contemporary interdisciplinary approaches.

The theory of superiority is a key concept employed in this research to read the humor structure in ḥadīth. This theory is based on the idea that humor arises from a feeling of superiority over another party. Its strong version asserts that all forms of humor involve superiority, while its weak version states that this aspect is merely often present. The roots of this theory can be found in the views of Plato and Aristotle, who understood comedy as the ridicule of a figure considered inferior by the audience.⁶ Thomas Hobbes further reinforced this through his concept that laughter is a "sudden glory" over the weakness of others.⁷ Nevertheless, critiques such as those raised by Robert Solomon show that humor is not always demeaning, as it can arise from the acknowledgment of one's own weaknesses.⁸ Simple examples, such as the phenomenon of "finding a bowling ball in the refrigerator," demonstrate that humor can also arise from surprise or incongruity unrelated to superiority.⁹

The superiority theory in the psychology of humor serves as the primary interdisciplinary foundation in this research as it offers a framework for understanding the humor structure in ḥadīths concerning divine laughter (al-ḍaḥik). This theory is based on the notion that humor emerges when one feels a superior position compared to another party. This view can be traced to the ideas of Plato and Aristotle, who interpreted comedy as the ridicule of characters considered inferior, and was reinforced by Thomas Hobbes, who

⁶ Plato, *The Republic*, book 10 (London: Penguin Classics, modern edition, 2007), 250.

⁷ Muhammad Royyan Faqih Azhary et al., "Teori Hermeneutika Hans-Georg Gadamer Dan Relevansinya Terhadap Hadis Sujud Istri Kepada Suami: Penelitian," *Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat Dan Riset Pendidikan* 3, no. 4 (2025): 3348–54, <https://doi.org/10.31004/jerkin.v3i4.982>.

⁸ Thomas Hobbes, *Human Nature*, in *Human Nature and De Corpore Politico*, ed. J. C. A. Gaskin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), book 8.

⁹ Robert C. Solomon, *In Defense of Laughter* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2002), 45.

described laughter as a "sudden glory" over others' weaknesses.¹⁰ With this framework, several ḥadīths about divine laughter can be read as representations of divine wonder and dominance—for instance, when Allah "laughs" at a servant who repents or at two individuals who killed each other yet both ultimately entered Paradise—a form of manifestation of Allah's absolute superiority over His creatures' limitations.

However, the theory of superiority is not always able to explain all forms of humor, as not all laughter arises from hierarchical relations. Critiques such as those raised by Robert Solomon demonstrate that humor can emerge from acknowledging one's own weaknesses or from surprise unrelated to superiority. Therefore, this research complements it with the theory of incongruity, which emphasizes that humor often arises from the discrepancy between expectation and reality. This approach helps interpret ḥadīths whose humor structure relies more on aspects of wonder (ʿajab) and events that surpass human reason, without having to attribute human emotions to Allah. With this combination of theories, the study of "divine laughter" can be conducted more comprehensively while remaining within the theological framework that preserves the principle of *tanzīh*.¹¹

Research Method

This study employs a qualitative research approach to investigate the complex theological and textual dimensions of divine laughter (ḍaḥīk Allāh) in ḥadīth literature. The qualitative paradigm is particularly suited to this research as it enables in-depth, interpretive examination of religious texts and theological concepts, allowing for close textual analysis, thematic exploration, and theoretical interpretation essential for addressing the research problems. Unlike quantitative research that relies on statistical measurement, this study focuses on understanding the rich layers of meaning embedded within prophetic narratives concerning the divine attribute of laughter.¹²

Given the qualitative nature of this research, the dimensions of time and place are not emphasized as primary analytical variables.¹³ The ḥadīth texts examined are drawn from the classical Islamic tradition, and their theological implications transcend spatial and temporal boundaries. While the research acknowledges the historical context in which these ḥadīths were transmitted and compiled, its primary focus remains on theological interpretation and analytical understanding rather than historical or geographical situatedness.

The primary subjects or targets of this research are the ḥadīth texts that explicitly or implicitly mention the divine attribute of laughter (ḍaḥīk Allāh). These texts are selected through purposive sampling, a non-probability technique commonly employed in qualitative

¹⁰ John Morreall, *Comic Relief: A Comprehensive Philosophy of Humor* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 122.

¹¹ Muhammad Royyan Faqih Azhary et al., "UNDERSTANDING OF THE AYNA ALLAH HADITH: AN INTERDISCIPLINARY TAḤLĪLĪ STUDY," *Nabawi: Journal of Hadith Studies* 5, no. 2 (2025), <https://doi.org/10.55987/njhs.v5i2.156>.

¹² John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2013), 44-45.

¹³ Michael Quinn Patton, *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*, 4th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2015), 53-55.

The Theology of Divine Laughter: A Superiority Theory Analysis of Ḍahik Allāh in Hadith and Its Theological Implications - Andi Mustopa, Moh. Mahfud Ali Amari Sya'roni, Muhammad Royyan Faqih Azhary, Ahmad Mukhlis Sirojuddin, Mohamad Farid Zaini

research to identify information-rich cases most relevant to the research objectives.¹⁴ This technique involves the deliberate identification of ḥadīth narrations containing references to divine laughter, divine wonder (‘*ajab*), or related concepts, ensuring that selected texts are representative of the broader ḥadīth corpus while remaining manageable for detailed textual analysis. The researcher draws upon established canonical collections, particularly the Ṣaḥīḥ collections of al-Bukhārī and Muslim, as well as other authoritative compilations such as the Musnad of Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, to ensure authenticity and scholarly acceptance.¹⁵ Additionally, the research engages with classical commentaries (shurūḥ) and theological treatises that discuss these ḥadīths, thereby incorporating the rich tradition of scholarly interpretation developed over centuries.

The procedural framework of this research unfolds through several interconnected stages to facilitate systematic and rigorous analysis while remaining flexible enough to accommodate the interpretive nature of qualitative inquiry. The first stage involves the identification and collection of relevant ḥadīth texts from primary sources through a thorough survey of major ḥadīth collections and the use of thematic indices and digital databases to locate narrations containing the term ḍahik or its cognates, as well as narrations describing divine wonder (‘*ajab*) or similar concepts. The second stage consists of careful textual analysis of each selected ḥadīth, which includes examining the Arabic text (matn) in its original language to understand linguistic nuances, studying the chain of transmission (isnād) to assess authenticity and reliability, and engaging with classical commentaries (shurūḥ) to understand interpretive traditions.¹⁶ This stage also involves identifying the narrative structure of each ḥadīth, particularly the elements of premise, expectation, and resolution that contribute to the comedic or paradoxical quality of the narration, as these structural features are central to the application of superiority theory. The third stage involves theological analysis, situating the narrations within the broader context of Islamic theological discourse on divine attributes (asmā’ wa al-ṣifāt), examining how the concept of ḍahik Allāh has been understood and debated by scholars of different theological schools, and analyzing interpretive strategies employed to maintain the principle of tanzīh while affirming theological significance. The fourth stage consists of applying superiority theory to the selected ḥadīth texts, identifying strong claim and weak claim mechanisms within narrative structures, analyzing how these mechanisms function to convey theological meaning, and evaluating the effectiveness of this interdisciplinary approach in illuminating the relationship between

¹⁴ Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, eds., *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 5th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2018), 6-8.

¹⁵ Abū ‘Abdallāh Muḥammad ibn Ismā‘īl al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (Beirut: Dār Ṭawq al-Najāt, 2002); Abū al-Ḥusayn Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj al-Qushayrī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā’ al-Turāth al-‘Arabī, n.d.); Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad al-Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal*, ed. Shu‘ayb al-Arna’ūt (Beirut: Mu’assasat al-Risālah, 2001).

¹⁶ Abdul Mustaqim, “MODEL PENELITIAN TOKOH (Dalam Teori Dan Aplikasi),” *Jurnal Studi Ilmu-Ilmu Al-Qur’an Dan Hadis* 15, no. 2 (2014): 201–18, <https://doi.org/10.14421/qh.2014.1502-01>.

humor, comedy, and divine transcendence. The final stage involves synthesizing findings from textual, theological, and theoretical analyses to develop a comprehensive understanding of divine laughter addressing the two research problems.¹⁷

Regarding data, instruments, and data collection techniques, this study relies primarily on documentary or textual data derived from classical and contemporary sources. The primary data consist of ḥadīth texts mentioning or implying the divine attribute of laughter, drawn from authoritative collections such as Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, and Musnad Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal. These primary texts are supplemented by secondary sources, including classical commentaries (shurūḥ), theological treatises (rasā'il and kutub al-'aḳidah) discussing divine attributes, and contemporary scholarly studies addressing humor, laughter, and divine attributes from various disciplinary perspectives. The primary instrument for data collection is the researcher himself, who, as the primary instrument in qualitative research, brings linguistic competence, theological expertise, and theoretical sophistication to engage meaningfully with the texts. The technical process of data collection involves five specific steps: first, conducting a comprehensive literature review to identify all relevant primary and secondary sources; second, performing detailed textual analysis of selected ḥadīth texts, noting linguistic features, narrative structures, and theological implications; third, engaging with classical commentaries to understand interpretive traditions; fourth, consulting contemporary scholarly works to situate the analysis within current academic discourse; and fifth, systematically documenting all findings and observations in a structured manner to facilitate subsequent analysis and interpretation.¹⁸

The technique of data analysis employed is qualitative content analysis, a systematic and rigorous method for interpreting textual data by identifying patterns, themes, and meanings within the texts while remaining grounded in the theoretical framework of the study.¹⁹ This analytical technique involves four sequential steps aligned with the procedural stages outlined above. The first step is initial coding of the ḥadīth texts, identifying and labeling key concepts, themes, and narrative elements relevant to the research problems, including categories such as "divine laughter," "divine wonder," "paradox of destiny," "acknowledgment of weakness," "strong claim," "weak claim," "riḍā," "bayān," "tanẓīh," and "tajsīm." The second step consists of thematic analysis, grouping codes into broader themes that capture patterns and meanings emerging from the texts, including the understanding of ḍaḥik as riḍā and bayān, the risk and resolution of tajsīm, the narrative structure of paradoxical humor, and the functioning of strong and weak claim mechanisms. The third step involves interpreting identified themes in light of superiority theory, examining how themes relate to strong claim and weak claim concepts and how these relationships contribute to the

¹⁷ Robert C. Solomon, *In Defense of Laughter* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2002), 45; John Morreall, *Comic Relief: A Comprehensive Philosophy of Humor* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 122.

¹⁸ Sharan B. Merriam and Elizabeth J. Tisdell, *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*, 4th ed. (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2016), 160-162.

¹⁹ Klaus Krippendorff, *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology*, 4th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2019), 24-26.

The Theology of Divine Laughter: A Superiority Theory Analysis of Ḍahik Allāh in Hadith and Its Theological Implications - Andi Mustopa, Moh. Mahfud Ali Amari Sya'roni, Muhammad Royyan Faqih Azhary, Ahmad Mukhlis Sirojuddin, Mohamad Farid Zaini

theological understanding of divine laughter. The fourth step involves synthesizing and integrating findings from textual analysis, theological interpretation, and theoretical application to develop a coherent and comprehensive understanding of the research problems.²⁰ Throughout this analytical process, the researcher maintains a critical and reflexive stance, continuously examining assumptions and interpretations to ensure the analysis remains grounded in textual evidence and scholarly traditions. The findings are then presented in a narrative form weaving together textual evidence, theological insights, and theoretical interpretations into a coherent argument addressing the research problems and contributing to scholarly discourse on divine laughter in Islamic theology.

Results and Discussion

Results

Analysis of Ḥadīths Concerning the Attribute of Divine Laughter

Ḥadīth 1: About Two Men Who Killed Each Other

Ḥaddathanā Muḥammad ibn Abī 'Umar al-Makkī, ḥaddathanā Sufyān, 'an Abī al-Zinād, 'an al-A'raj, 'an Abī Hurayrah, anna Rasūlallāh ṣallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam qāla: "Yadḥakullāhu ilā rajulayni yaqtulu aḥaduhumā al-ākharā, kilāhumā yadkhulu al-jannah." Faqālū: "Kayfa yā Rasūlallāh?" Qāla: "Yuqātilu hādihā fī sabīlillāhi 'azza wa jalla fa-yustashhadu, thumma yatūbullāhu 'alā al-qātili fa-yuslimu, fa-yuqātilu fī sabīlillāhi 'azza wa jalla fa-yustashhadu." Wa ḥaddathanā Abū Bakr ibn Abī Shaybah wa Zuhayr ibn Ḥarb wa Abū Kurayb, qālū: ḥaddathanā Wakī', 'an Sufyān, 'an Abī al-Zinād bi-hādihā al-isnādi mithlahu.²¹ The ḥadīth narrated by Abū Hurayrah explains that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

"Allah laughs at two men who kill each other, and both enter Paradise." The companions asked how this could be, and he explained that one fought in the path of Allah and died as a martyr, while the one who killed him subsequently repented, embraced Islam, fought in the path of Allah, and also died as a martyr. This ḥadīth depicts a theological paradox in which both the victim and the killer receive a noble end, emphasizing that divine guidance and mercy can be granted to anyone, even to those who previously committed major sins.

The meaning of "divine laughter" in the context of this ḥadīth is not physical laughter like that of humans, but rather a manifestation of divine majesty, mercy, and power that can reverse circumstances beyond human expectation. This ḥadīth affirms that a person's ultimate worth is determined by the end of their life (ḥusn al-khātimah), not their past, and that Allah's guidance can come in unexpected ways. Thus, this ḥadīth emphasizes the vastness of Allah's mercy, the importance of repentance, and the principle that humans should not hastily judge

²⁰ Azhary et al., "UNDERSTANDING OF THE AYNA ALLAH HADITH."

²¹ Abū al-Ḥusayn Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj ibn Muslim al-Qushayrī al-Nīsābūrī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, no. 3504 (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, n.d.), 1890.

another's final destiny.

Ḥadīth 2: The Story of a Servant of Allah Who Is the Last to Exit Hellfire

Ḥaddathanā Abū Bakr ibn Abī Shaybah wa Abū Kurayb, wa al-lafzu li-Abī Kurayb, qāla: ḥaddathanā Abū Mu'āwiyah, 'an al-A'mash, 'an Ibrāhīm, 'an 'Abīdah, 'an 'Abdillāh, qāla: qāla Rasūlallāh ṣallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam: "Innī la-a'rifu ākhir ahl al-nār khurūjan min al-nār, rajulun yakhruju minhā zaḥfan, fa-yuqālu lahu: 'Inṭaliq fa-dkhul al-jannah.' Qāla: 'Fa-yadhhabu fa-yadkhulu al-jannah, fa-yajidu al-nāsa qad akhadhū al-manāzil, fa-yuqālu lahu: 'Atadhkuru al-zamāna alladhī kunta fihi?' Fa-yaqūlu: 'Na'am.' Fa-yuqālu lahu: 'Tamannā.' Fa-yatamannā, fa-yuqālu lahu: 'Laka alladhī tamannayta wa 'asharata aḍ'āfi al-dunyā.' Qāla: 'Fa-yaqūlu: 'Ataskharu bī wa anta al-Malik?'" Qāla: "Fa-la-qad ra'aytu Rasūlallāh ṣallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam ḍaḥika ḥattā badat nawājizuhu."²²

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said that he knew a man who would be the last to exit Hellfire. This man would crawl out of Hell, then be commanded: "Go and enter Paradise." When he arrived, he would find that people had already taken their places in Paradise. He would then be asked: "Do you remember the time when you were in Hell?" He would answer: "Yes." He would then be told to wish for something, and what he wished for would be granted to him along with ten times the world. The man would be astonished and say: "Are You mocking me, while You are the King?" Hearing this story, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ laughed until his molars were visible.

This narrative depicts Allah's extraordinary justice and mercy, while also showing human astonishment and joy when receiving Allah's unexpected bounty. The Prophet's laughter in this story emphasizes the joy over Allah's mercy and the teaching that Allah has full authority over all decisions and gifts to His servants.

Ḥadīth 3: The Servant's Submission and Glorification of Allah

Qāla al-Imām Aḥmad: ḥaddathanā Yazīd, ḥaddathanā Sharīk ibn 'Abdillāh, 'an Abī Ishāq, 'an 'Alī ibn Rabī'ah, qāla: Ra'aytu 'Aliyyan, raḍiyallāhu 'anhu, utiya bi-dābbah, fa-lammā waḍa'a rijlahu fī al-rikāb qāla: Bismillāh. Fa-lammā is'tawā 'alayhā qāla: Al-ḥamdu lillāh, {Subḥāna alladhī sakhkhara lanā hādhā wa mā kunnā lahu muqrinīn, wa innā ilā rabbinā la-munqalibūn}. Thumma ḥamida Allāha thalāthan, wa kabbara thalāthan, thumma qāla: Subḥānaka, lā ilāha illā anta, qad ḥalamtu nafsī fa-ghfir lī. Thumma ḍaḥika. Fa-qultu lahu: Min ayyi shay'in ḍaḥikta yā Amīr al-Mu'minīn? Fa-qāla: Ra'aytu Rasūlallāh ṣallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam ṣana'a kamā ṣana'tu, thumma ḍaḥika. Fa-qultu: Mimma ḍaḥikta yā Rasūlallāh? Fa-qāla: "Ya'jabu al-Rabb min 'abdihi idhā qāla: 'Rabbī ghfir lī.' Wa yaqūlu: 'Alima 'abdī annahu lā yaghfiru al-dhunūba ghayrī.'"²³

Imam Aḥmad narrated from Yazīd, from Sharīk ibn 'Abdillāh, from Abū Ishāq, from

²² Abū al-Ḥusayn Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj ibn Muslim al-Qushayrī al-Nīsābūrī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, n.d.), 428.

²³ Abū al-Fidā' Ismā'īl ibn 'Umar ibn Kathīr al-Qurashī al-Dimashqī, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Aẓīm*, ed. Sāmī ibn Muḥammad al-Salāmah, vol. 7 (Riyadh: Dār Ṭaybah li al-Nashr wa al-Tawzī', n.d.), 220.

The Theology of Divine Laughter: A Superiority Theory Analysis of Ḍaḥik Allāh in Hadith and Its Theological Implications - Andi Mustopa, Moh. Mahfud Ali Amari Sya'roni, Muhammad Royyan Faqih Azhary, Ahmad Mukhlis Sirojuddin, Mohamad Farid Zaini

‘Alī ibn Rabī‘ah, who said: I saw ‘Alī, may Allah be pleased with him, being brought a mount. When he placed his foot in the stirrup, he said "Bismillāh" (In the name of Allah). When he was seated on it, he said: "All praise is due to Allah." Then he recited: "Glorified be He Who has subjected this to us, and we could never have done it by ourselves, and indeed to our Lord we shall return." (Sūrat al-Zukhruf, 43:13-14). Then he praised Allah three times and said "Allāhu Akbar" three times, then said: "Glory be to You, there is no deity worthy of worship but You, indeed I have wronged myself, so forgive me." Then he laughed. I said to him: "Why did you laugh, O Commander of the Faithful?" He replied: "I saw the Messenger of Allah ﷺ do as I did, then he laughed." So I asked: "Why did you laugh, O Messenger of Allah?" He said: "Allah wonders at His servant when he says: 'My Lord, forgive me.' And He says: 'My servant knows that none forgives sins except Me.'"

This ḥadīth depicts a unique relationship between Allah's power and a servant's awareness. ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (may Allah be pleased with him) engaged in remembrance (dhikr), praise, and supplication seeking forgiveness with full awareness that only Allah possesses absolute power to forgive sins, demonstrating his acknowledgment of human weakness and dependence upon the Creator. When ‘Alī performed this dhikr, the Prophet Muhammad smiled, indicating that his laughter was not for entertainment, but rather as a symbol of acknowledgment of Allah's mercy and power. Furthermore, Allah Himself is "wondered" or amazed by His servant who recognizes that only He can forgive sins—a manifestation of His majesty while also reminding of human limitations. Thus, this ḥadīth demonstrates the interaction between the servant's awareness of dependence on Allah and the manifestation of divine mercy and unlimited power, represented through the Prophet's laughter.

Discussion

Understanding the Attribute of Divine Laughter in Ḥadīth

The first research problem asks how the attribute of divine laughter (al-ḍaḥik) is understood in ḥadīth, considering the differing interpretations of scholars such as riḍā, bayān, and the concept of "causing the angels to laugh," as well as how theological ambiguities such as the risk of tajsīm are addressed without displacing the principles of creed.

The analysis of the three ḥadīths above reveals that scholars have developed multiple interpretive approaches to understand the meaning of ḍaḥik Allāh while maintaining the principle of divine transcendence (tanzīh). The first interpretive approach, as articulated by Abū Sulaymān and cited by al-Bayhaqī, understands ḍaḥik Allāh as riḍā (divine pleasure) or as Allah causing the angels to laugh rather than Allah laughing directly. This interpretation effectively avoids anthropomorphism by shifting the locus of laughter from Allah's essence to His actions or to other created beings. Al-Bayhaqī further emphasizes that the early scholars (salaf) understood that Allah's "ḍaḥik" cannot be equated with the laughter of corporeal

beings, thereby maintaining the principle of *tanzīh* while acknowledging the textual reality of these ḥadīth narrations.²⁴

The second interpretive approach understands ḍaḥīk Allāh as *bayān* (explanation or manifestation) of divine wisdom and power. This is particularly evident in Ḥadīth 1, where Allah's laughter occurs in the context of a paradoxical event: two men who killed each other both enter Paradise. In this narrative, divine laughter functions as a theological statement about the nature of divine mercy and guidance, demonstrating that Allah's decisions transcend human logic and expectations. The paradox itself—that a murderer and his victim can both attain Paradise—serves as a powerful "punchline" that challenges conventional human understanding of justice and divine judgment. The risk of *tajsīm* is addressed here by understanding the laughter not as a physical action but as a metaphor for divine wonder and the manifestation of divine wisdom that surpasses human comprehension.

The third interpretive approach emerges from Ḥadīth 3, where divine laughter (or more precisely, divine wonder, *‘ajab*) is associated with the servant's acknowledgment of his own limitations and dependence on Allah. In this context, ‘Alī's recitation of *dhikr* and his supplication for forgiveness, followed by his laughter, represents a moment of spiritual awareness where human weakness is acknowledged before divine majesty. Allah's response—"My servant knows that none forgives sins except Me"—affirms that the servant's recognition of divine exclusivity in forgiveness is itself a form of spiritual insight worthy of divine acknowledgment. The risk of *tajsīm* is mitigated here by understanding the divine response not as a physical reaction but as a theological affirmation of the proper relationship between Creator and creature.

Regarding the risk of *tajsīm*, the ḥadīth themselves provide safeguards against anthropomorphic interpretation. The fact that no physical description of Allah's laughter is provided, coupled with the presence of interpretive traditions from early scholars, demonstrates that the proper understanding of these narrations requires moving beyond literal reading. The laughter of Allah is not a physical action performed with a corporeal body, but rather a metaphorical expression that conveys theological truths about divine power, mercy, and wisdom. The principle of *tanzīh* is preserved by understanding that Allah's attributes, including ḍaḥīk, are incomparable to human attributes, as affirmed in the Qur’ānic verse: "There is nothing like unto Him" (Sūrat al-Shūrā, 42:11).

Thus, the attribute of divine laughter in ḥadīth can be understood through multiple interpretive lenses: as *riḍā* (divine pleasure), as *bayān* (explanation/manifestation), as *‘ajab* (divine wonder), and as a theological statement about divine mercy and power. These interpretations collectively address the risk of *tajsīm* while affirming the richness of theological meaning contained in these ḥadīth narrations.

²⁴ al-Bayhaqī, *al-Asmā’ wa al-Ṣifāt*, 2:236.

Analyzing Divine Laughter through the Theory of Superiority

The second research problem asks how the theory of superiority—through both strong claim and weak claim mechanisms—can provide an analytical framework for understanding the theological meaning and humor structure in ḥadīths concerning divine laughter, while maintaining the principle of *tanzīh*.

A. Strong Claim Mechanism

Ḥaddathanā Muḥammad ibn Abī 'Umar al-Makkī, ḥaddathanā Sufyān, 'an Abī al-Zinād, 'an al-A'raj, 'an Abī Hurayrah, anna Rasūlallāh ṣallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam qāla: "Yaḍḥakullāhu ilā rajulayni yaqtulu aḥaduhumā al-ākḥara, kilāhumā yadkhulu al-jannah." Fa-qālū: "Kayfa yā Rasūlallāh?" Qāla: "Yuqātilu hādhā fī sabīlillāhi 'azza wa jalla fa-yustashhadu, thumma yatūbullāhu 'alā al-qātili fa-yuslimu, fa-yuqātilu fī sabīlillāhi 'azza wa jalla fa-yustashhadu." Wa ḥaddathanā Abū Bakr ibn Abī Shaybah wa Zuhayr ibn Ḥarb wa Abū Kurayb, qālū: ḥaddathanā Wakī', 'an Sufyān, 'an Abī al-Zinād bi-hādhā al-isnādi mithlahu.²⁵

This ḥadīth depicts two men (*rajul*) in the context of warfare. The first man falls as a martyr fighting against the second man, and Allah ensures his entry into Paradise. From the perspective of human logic, this builds the expectation that his opponent, who was on the side of the belligerent disbelievers (*kuffār ḥarbī*), should end up in Hell. However, the reality established by Allah differs when the second man receives guidance and embraces Islam. In the subsequent battle, he also falls as a martyr and enters Paradise. This narrative challenges human logic by demonstrating that Allah's guidance and mercy do not always conform to narrow human expectations, and that divine decisions lie beyond human prediction.²⁶

The event itself forms the context for the concept of "divine laughter" (*ḍaḥika Allāh*). This laughter can be understood as a manifestation of mercy as well as an affirmation of Allah's power (*takabbur*). However, this laughter is not an expression of joy (*faraḥ*), as there is no reason for Allah to be emotionally influenced or "pleased" by the outcome of events. The entry of both men into Paradise does not add to or diminish Allah's essence; the happiness belongs to the humans who receive mercy and guidance. Thus, *ḍaḥika Allāh* demonstrates the paradoxical interaction between divine power and human expectation, while simultaneously affirming that Allah acts with wisdom and full authority over His creation.

From a theological perspective, *ḍaḥika Allāh* affirms Allah's power in granting guidance to whomever He wills. Unlike *riḍā* or *raḥmah*, which are oriented toward the consequences of human actions such as forgiveness of sins, entry into Paradise, or receiving mercy, *takabbur* affirms the fundamental difference between human weakness and divine majesty. Within the framework of the comedy theory of superiority, this ḥadīth can be understood through the

²⁵ Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, no. 3504, 1890.

²⁶ M. Rizki Syahrul Ramadhan, "METODE KRITIK HADIS ALI MUSTAFA YAQUB; ANTARA TEORI DAN APLIKASI," *Nabawi: Journal of Hadith Studies* 1, no. 1 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.55987/njhs.v1i1.5>.

strong claim approach, where the paradox of human logic becomes the "punchline" of the comedic narrative: human expectations collapse, but divine wisdom, mercy, and power still affirm their supremacy, simultaneously presenting a theological dimension that challenges the reader to understand divine secrets and wisdom behind the events.²⁷

B. The Limitations of Superiority Theory

In the study of ḥadīth concerning the Prophet's laughter, a frequently debated question arises: when the Prophet laughs, does Allah also laugh?

"Mā ḥajabanī Rasūlallāh (ṣallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam) mundhu aslamtu wa lā ra’ānī illā ḍaḥika"

This indicates that the Prophet smiled or laughed when he learned that a companion had embraced Islam. In the context of superiority theory, this phenomenon cannot be applied, as the theory emphasizes laughter aimed at discrediting the object. The Prophet Muhammad, who is protected from reprehensible traits (ma‘šūm), including arrogance (takabbur), does not laugh at others to mock or belittle them.²⁸

Ḥaddathanā Abū Bakr ibn Abī Shaybah wa Abū Kurayb, wa al-lafzu li-Abī Kurayb, qālā: ḥaddathanā Abū Mu‘āwiyah, ‘an al-A‘mash, ‘an Ibrāhīm, ‘an ‘Abīdah, ‘an ‘Abdillāh, qāla: qāla Rasūlallāh ṣallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam: "Innī la-a‘rifu ākhir ahl al-nār khurūjan min al-nār, rajulun yakhruju minhā zaḥfan, fa-yuqālu lahu: 'Inṭaliq fa-dkhul al-jannah.' Qāla: 'Fa-yadhhabu fa-yadkhulu al-jannah, fa-yajidu al-nāsa qad akhadhū al-manāzil, fa-yuqālu lahu: 'Atadhkuru al-zamāna alladhī kunta fihi?' Fa-yaqūlu: 'Na‘am.' Fa-yuqālu lahu: 'Tamannā.' Fa-yatamannā, fa-yuqālu lahu: 'Laka alladhī tamannayta wa ‘asharata aḍ‘āfi al-dunyā.' Qāla: 'Fa-yaqūlu: 'Ataskharu bī wa anta al-Malik?'" Qāla: "Fa-la-qad ra’aytu Rasūlallāh ṣallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam ḍaḥika ḥattā badat nawājizuhu."

Another ḥadīth related to the Hereafter presents a more complex situation. The Messenger of Allah spoke about a man who crawls out of Hell, then is given the opportunity to enter Paradise and receive a bounty exceeding that of the world. When the man asks: "Are You mocking me, while You are the King?", the Prophet Muhammad smiled until his molars were visible. This narrative shows that the Prophet responded to a paradoxical situation between creature and Creator with a smile or laughter, but there is no ḍaḥika Allāh (divine laughter) in this context. The Prophet's laughter is more of a human reaction to a situation full of wisdom and paradox, not an indication of divine emotion.²⁹

From this, it can be concluded that what provokes the Prophet's laughter is not always accompanied by ḍaḥika Allāh, even though the premise and "punchline" of the story are constructed by Allah Himself. In other words, the Prophet's laughter is a form of human

²⁷ Azhary et al., "UNDERSTANDING OF THE AYNA ALLAH HADITH."

²⁸ Kholishuddin Kholishuddin, "PENGUNAAN PENDEKATAN MAQASID SHARI'AH SEBAGAI INSTRUMEN KONTEKSTUALISASI MAKNA HADIS," *Nabawi: Journal of Hadith Studies* 1, no. 1 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.55987/njhs.v1i1.4>.

²⁹ Muhammad Alfin Ghazali, "The Transformation of Hadith Referencing from Chains of Transmission to Hadith Compilations and the Risk of Taḥrīf in Contemporary Religious Citation Practices," *International Journal of Sunnah Studies* 1, no. 1 (2026): 41–55.

The Theology of Divine Laughter: A Superiority Theory Analysis of Ḍaḥik Allāh in Hadith and Its Theological Implications - Andi Mustopa, Moh. Mahfud Ali Amari Sya'roni, Muhammad Royyan Faqih Azhary, Ahmad Mukhlis Sirojuddin, Mohamad Farid Zaini

expression aware of the secrets of the Hereafter and divine wisdom, while Ḍaḥika Allāh, which affirms power, wisdom, and takabbur, is not always concurrently present. This phenomenon affirms the difference between human expression and the manifestation of divine power in ḥadīth narratives.

C. Weak Claim Mechanism

The theory of superiority in comedy does not only function in one direction. One of its variants that is often overlooked is the weak claim—a form of laughter that arises precisely from the awareness of one's own limitations and weaknesses, rather than from an attempt to demean others. In this context, laughter emerges when one honestly recognizes their imperfection in the face of a greater reality.

In human life, such awareness is often hidden or neglected. However, when it surfaces, the moment can present a subtle yet profound comedic nuance. Interestingly, from a theological perspective, such a moment contains significant spiritual meaning. As articulated in the analysis of ḥadīth about divine laughter, the divine response to the servant's acknowledgment of weakness can be understood as a form of recognition and affirmation, not mockery. Here, laughter no longer functions as a tool of superiority, but as a bridge that brings together awareness of human limitations with the vastness of divine mercy.³⁰

Qāla al-Imām Aḥmad: ḥaddathanā Yazīd, ḥaddathanā Sharīk ibn 'Abdillāh, 'an Abī Ishāq, 'an 'Alī ibn Rabī'ah, qāla: Ra'aytu 'Aliyyan, raḍiyallāhu 'anhu, utiya bi-dābbah, fa-lammā waḍa'a rijlahu fī al-rikāb qāla: Bismillāh. Fa-lammā is'tawā 'alayhā qāla: Al-ḥamdu lillāh, {Subḥāna alladhī sakhkhara lanā hādhā wa mā kunnā lahu muqrinīn, wa innā ilā rabbinā la-munqalibūn}. Thumma ḥamida Allāha thalāthan, wa kabbara thalāthan, thumma qāla: Subḥānaka, lā ilāha illā anta, qad ḡalamtu nafsī fa-ḡfir lī. Thumma ḍaḥika. Fa-qultu lahu: Min ayyi shay'in ḍaḥikta yā Amīr al-Mu'minīn? Fa-qāla: Ra'aytu Rasūlallāh ṡallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam ṡana'a kamā ṡana'tu, thumma ḍaḥika. Fa-qultu: Mimma ḍaḥikta yā Rasūlallāh? Fa-qāla: "Ya'jabu al-Rabb min 'abdihi idhā qāla: 'Rabbī ḡfir lī.' Wa yaqūlu: 'Alima 'abdī annahu lā yaghfiru al-dhunūba ḡhayrī.'" ³¹

A classic example is found in the ḥadīth narrated by Imam Aḥmad regarding 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (may Allah be pleased with him). When mounting a camel, 'Alī recited the Basmalah, dhikr, praise (ḥamdalah), and a supplication seeking forgiveness for his sins. After that, he laughed. When asked about the reason for his laughter, 'Alī explained that he was imitating the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, who also laughed after performing the same actions. In this ḥadīth,

³⁰ Muhid et al., "Bridging Maqāṣid Al-Sunnah in Contextual Hadith Commentaries: A Case Analysis of the Hadith on Humanity in the Divine Image," *Jurnal Studi Ilmu-Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Hadis* 27, no. 1 (2026): 95–126, <https://doi.org/10.14421/qh.v27i1.6952>.

³¹ Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad al-Imām Aḥmad*, ed. Shu'ayb al-Arna'ūṭ and 'Ādil Murshid, vol. 1 (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risālah, 2001), 134.

Allah declares His wonder at His servant who recognizes that only He is able to forgive sins. 'Alī's laughter emerges from his awareness of his own limitations in the presence of the Almighty—a clear example of the weak claim.

The ḥadīth about 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib's supplication presents a unique narrative structure in understanding the concept of divine laughter (ḍaḥīk). In this narration, 'Alī performs a series of dhikr and praises to Allah, concluding with a sincere acknowledgment of his weakness and sins. This pattern of "glorification-self-abasement" creates a spiritual dynamic where the acknowledgment of powerlessness triggers a distinct divine response. Interestingly, at the moment of this supplication, only the Prophet and Allah fully comprehend the spiritual dimension occurring, while 'Alī himself only comes to understand the deeper meaning of this interaction when he repeats the same supplication later as the Commander of the Faithful. This gap in understanding forms the comedic element in the narrative, where the punchline lies in the servant's honest acknowledgment of his limitations before Divine Omnipotence.

At this point, only Allah and the Prophet fully understand the meaning of the laughter. 'Alī only realizes the context when he becomes the Commander of the Faithful. Dhikr and the repetition of praise (tasbīḥ) form the premise, while the acknowledgment of personal weakness becomes the punchline. This theological comedy emerges from the paradox between Allah's power (takabbur) and human weakness. Ḍaḥīka Allāh affirms His power, while simultaneously affirming that He alone has the right to grant forgiveness. While the Prophet's laughter represents a human response to divine wisdom, 'Alī's laughter demonstrates self-awareness as a weak creature. Thus, 'Alī's weak claim differs from the Prophet's laughter; it arises from the position of a servant who understands his powerlessness before the Creator, so the comedy in this ḥadīth is not only entertaining but also laden with theological meaning.³² From the perspective of the superiority theory of comedy, this situation is a perfect example of the weak claim mechanism. Unlike the general form of superiority comedy that stems from a feeling of superiority over others' weaknesses, in this case, it is precisely the acknowledgment of one's own weakness that creates comedic value. 'Alī, with his sincere awareness as a weak and sinful servant, unconsciously creates a situation where his spiritual honesty itself becomes a source of laughter. However, the laughter in question is not a form of mockery or ridicule, but rather an affirmative response to the truth expressed. Ḍaḥīka Allāh in this context can be understood as a form of divine acknowledgment of the truth spoken by His servant—a kind of "reciprocal acknowledgment" that indeed He alone is the one upon whom to depend and from whom to seek forgiveness.³³

The theological implications of this narrative are profound. The difference in levels of understanding between the Prophet, who immediately grasped the spiritual meaning of the interaction, and 'Alī, who required time to comprehend it, represents the human experience

³² Syahidil Mubarik Mh and Ekatul Hilwatis Sakinah, "THE VERNACULARIZATION OF SUNNAH: HADITH RECEPTION AND LOCAL IDENTITY IN THE RASULAN TRADITION OF NGALANG VILLAGE," *Nabawi: Journal of Hadith Studies* 7, no. 1 (2026), <https://doi.org/10.55987/njhs.v6i2.240>.

³³ Muhammad Istiqamah, "Perspektif Hadis Tentang Sifat Ketawa Allah: Hadith Perspective on the Nature of Allah's Laughter," *JAWAMI'UL KALIM: Jurnal Kajian Hadis* 3, no. 2 (2025): 107–23, <https://doi.org/10.36701/5gd8kw54>.

The Theology of Divine Laughter: A Superiority Theory Analysis of Ḍaḥik Allāh in Hadith and Its Theological Implications - Andi Mustopa, Moh. Mahfud Ali Amari Sya'roni, Muhammad Royyan Faqih Azhary, Ahmad Mukhlis Sirojuddin, Mohamad Farid Zaini

in navigating the relationship with the Divine. This spiritual comedy functions as a medium of enlightenment that not only produces laughter but, more importantly, makes humans aware of the nature of their relationship with the Creator. Through the weak claim mechanism, humans are invited to understand that it is precisely in the acknowledgment of their own weakness and powerlessness that they find the path to the most fundamental spiritual truth. In this framework, divine laughter is not a form of arrogance, but rather an expression of acknowledgment of the transcendental truth expressed by His servant.³⁴

Thus, the analysis of divine laughter through the theory of superiority—both through the strong claim mechanism in the paradoxical destiny narrative and the weak claim mechanism in the servant's acknowledgment of weakness—successfully opens new dimensions in understanding the relationship between divine transcendence and human experience.³⁵

Conclusion

Based on the research conducted, the following conclusions can be drawn in response to the two research problems:

Regarding the first research problem on how the attribute of divine laughter (al-ḍaḥik) is understood in ḥadīth, this study finds that scholars have developed multiple interpretive approaches to understand ḍaḥik Allāh while maintaining the principle of tanzīh. These include: (1) understanding ḍaḥik as riḍā (divine pleasure) or as Allah causing the angels to laugh, as articulated by Abū Sulaymān and cited by al-Bayhaqī, which avoids anthropomorphism by shifting the locus of laughter from Allah's essence to His actions or created beings; (2) understanding ḍaḥik as bayān (explanation/manifestation) of divine wisdom and power, where divine laughter functions as a theological statement about the nature of divine mercy and guidance that transcends human logic, as evident in Ḥadīth 1; and (3) understanding ḍaḥik as 'ajab (divine wonder) at the servant's acknowledgment of his own limitations, as evident in Ḥadīth 3. The risk of tajsīm is addressed by moving beyond literal reading and understanding Allah's laughter not as a physical action but as a metaphorical expression conveying theological truths about divine power, mercy, and wisdom, in accordance with the principle of tanzīh affirmed in the Qur'ānic verse: "There is nothing like unto Him" (Sūrat al-Shūrā, 42:11).

Regarding the second research problem on how the theory of superiority provides an analytical framework for understanding divine laughter in ḥadīth, this study reveals two primary mechanisms. First, through the strong claim mechanism, as exemplified in Ḥadīth 1,

³⁴ Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad al-Imām Ahmad*, 1:135.

³⁵ Zumrotus Sholikatur Nurjanah et al., "Downstreaming of Natural Resources in the Perspective of Islamic Jurisprudence (Fiqh): Weighing Its Maslahah and Mafsadah for the Ecosystem, Environment, and Humanity," *Al Wajiz: Journal of Sharia and Economics Studies* 1, no. 2 (2026): 65–73, <https://doi.org/10.65887/alwajiz.v1i2.14>.

divine laughter affirms the supremacy of divine power over human logic. The paradox of destiny that brings both men to Paradise serves as a theological "punchline" affirming that Allah's guidance and mercy transcend all limits of human rationality. This demonstrates that the strong claim mechanism effectively explains how humor in ḥadīth functions as an affirmation of divine superiority. Second, through the weak claim mechanism, as exemplified in Ḥadīth 3, divine laughter represents a form of divine acknowledgment of the servant's awareness of his own limitations. This spiritual comedy arises precisely from the acknowledgment of personal weakness, not from superiority that discredits others. The weak claim mechanism thus provides a framework for understanding how humor can emerge from self-awareness rather than from hierarchical relations.

A crucial finding of this research shows that the Prophet's laughter and divine laughter have different theological characteristics. The Prophet's laughter is human and pedagogical in nature, serving as a means of teaching and spiritual enlightenment, while divine laughter is transcendent and metaphorical, affirming divine majesty and wisdom. Nevertheless, both function as media of spiritual enlightenment that make humans aware of the nature of their relationship with the Creator. The theological implication of this research strengthens the principle of *tanzīh* (transcendence) in understanding *khbarī* attributes, while simultaneously offering a fresh perspective that spiritual humor and comedy can serve as bridges to understanding divine mysteries without diminishing divine majesty. The interdisciplinary approach integrating ḥadīth sciences, Islamic theology, and modern comedy philosophy proves effective in opening new dimensions of understanding God's attributes.

References

- al-Bayhaqī, Abū Bakr Aḥmad ibn al-Ḥusayn. *al-Asmā' wa al-Ṣifāt*. Edited by 'Abdallāh ibn Muḥammad al-Ḥāshidī. Jeddah: Maktabat al-Sawādī, 1993.
- al-Bukhārī, Abū 'Abdallāh Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl. *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. Beirut: Dār Ṭawq al-Najāt, 2002.
- al-Bukhārī, Abū 'Abdallāh Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl. *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. Beirut: Dār Ṭawq al-Najāt, 2002.
- Azhary, Muhammad Royyan Faqih, et al. "Teori Hermeneutika Hans-Georg Gadamer Dan Relevansinya Terhadap Hadis Sujud Istri Kepada Suami: Penelitian." *Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat Dan Riset Pendidikan* 3, no. 4 (2025): 3348-54. <https://doi.org/10.31004/jerkin.v3i4.982>.
- Azhary, Muhammad Royyan Faqih, et al. "UNDERSTANDING OF THE AYNĀ ALLĀH HADITH: AN INTERDISCIPLINARY TAḤLĪLĪ STUDY." *Nabawi: Journal of Hadith Studies* 5, no. 2 (2025). <https://doi.org/10.55987/njhs.v5i2.156>.
- Aziz, M. A., and J. Junaidi. "Tertawa Dalam Perspektif Hadis Nabi SAW." *SHAHIH (Jurnal Ilmu Kewahyuan)* 7, no. 1 (2024): 1-13.
- Creswell, John W. *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*. 3rd

The Theology of Divine Laughter: A Superiority Theory Analysis of Ḍahik Allāh in Hadith and Its Theological Implications - Andi Mustopa, Moh. Mahfud Ali Amari Sya'roni, Muhammad Royyan Faqih Azhary, Ahmad Mukhlis Sirojuddin, Mohamad Farid Zaini

ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2013.

Denzin, Norman K., and Yvonna S. Lincoln, eds. *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*. 5th ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2018.

Ghozali, Muhammad Alfin. "The Transformation of Hadith Referencing from Chains of Transmission to Hadith Compilations and the Risk of Tahṛīf in Contemporary Religious Citation Practices." *International Journal of Sunnah Studies* 1, no. 1 (2026): 41-55.

Harun, Z. B. "Kemusykilan Hadis-Hadis Sifat Allah: Kajian Pendekatan al-Bayḥaqī dalam Kitab al-Asmā' wa'l-Ṣifāt." *Al-Burhān: Journal of Qur'ān and Sunnah Studies* 5, no. 1 (2021): 121-137.

Hobbes, Thomas. *Human Nature*. In *Human Nature and De Corpore Politico*, edited by J. C. A. Gaskin. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994.

Hobbes, Thomas. *Leviathan*. Edited by Richard Tuck. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

Ibn Ḥanbal, Aḥmad. *Musnad al-Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal*. Edited by Shu'ayb al-Arna'ūṭ. Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risālah, 2001.

Ibn Ḥanbal, Aḥmad. *Musnad al-Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal*. Edited by Shu'ayb al-Arna'ūṭ. Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risālah, 2001.

Ibn Ḥanbal, Aḥmad. *Musnad al-Imām Aḥmad*. Edited by Shu'ayb al-Arna'ūṭ and 'Ādil Murshid. Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risālah, 2001.

Ibn Kathīr, Abū al-Fidā' Ismā'īl ibn 'Umar al-Qurashī al-Dimashqī. *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm*. Edited by Sāmī ibn Muḥammad al-Salāmah. Riyadh: Dār Ṭaybah li al-Nashr wa al-Tawzī', n.d.

Ibn Kathīr, Abū al-Fidā' Ismā'īl ibn 'Umar al-Qurashī al-Dimashqī. *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm*. Edited by Sāmī ibn Muḥammad al-Salāmah. Riyadh: Dār Ṭaybah li al-Nashr wa al-Tawzī', n.d.

Istiqamah, Muhammad. "Perspektif Hadis Tentang Sifat Ketawa Allah: Hadith Perspective on the Nature of Allah's Laughter." *JAWAMI'UL KALIM: Jurnal Kajian Hadis* 3, no. 2 (2025): 107-23. <https://doi.org/10.36701/5gd8kw54>.

Jurin, A. "Konsep bercanda dan tertawa perspektif hadits: Kajian Hadis Maudhu'i." Doctoral dissertation, UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, 2019.

Kholishuddin, Kholishuddin. "PENGUNAAN PENDEKATAN MAQASID SHARI'AH SEBAGAI INSTRUMEN KONTEKSTUALISASI MAKNA HADIS." *Nabawi: Journal of Hadith Studies* 1, no. 1 (2020). <https://doi.org/10.55987/njhs.v1i1.4>.

- Krippendorff, Klaus. *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology*. 4th ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2019.
- Merriam, Sharan B., and Elizabeth J. Tisdell. *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*. 4th ed. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2016.
- Mh, Syahidil Mubarik, and Ekatul Hilwatis Sakinah. "THE VERNACULARIZATION OF SUNNAH: HADITH RECEPTION AND LOCAL IDENTITY IN THE RASULAN TRADITION OF NGALANG VILLAGE." *Nabawi: Journal of Hadith Studies* 7, no. 1 (2026). <https://doi.org/10.55987/njhs.v6i2.240>.
- Morreall, John. *Comic Relief: A Comprehensive Philosophy of Humor*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009.
- Muhid, Abdul, et al. "Bridging Maqāsid Al-Sunnah in Contextual Hadith Commentaries: A Case Analysis of the Hadith on Humanity in the Divine Image." *Jurnal Studi Ilmu-Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Hadis* 27, no. 1 (2026): 95-126. <https://doi.org/10.14421/qh.v27i1.6952>. Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj, Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Qushayrī al-Nīsābūrī. *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, n.d.
- Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj, Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Qushayrī al-Nīsābūrī. *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, n.d.
- Mustaqim, Abdul. "MODEL PENELITIAN TOKOH (Dalam Teori Dan Aplikasi)." *Jurnal Studi Ilmu-Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Hadis* 15, no. 2 (2014): 201-18. <https://doi.org/10.14421/qh.2014.1502-01>.
- Nurjanah, Zumrotus Sholikatur, et al. "Downstreaming of Natural Resources in the Perspective of Islamic Jurisprudence (Fiqh): Weighing Its Maslahah and Mafsadah for the Ecosystem, Environment, and Humanity." *Al Wajiz: Journal of Sharia and Economics Studies* 1, no. 2 (2026): 65-73. <https://doi.org/10.65887/alwajiz.v1i2.14>.
- Patton, Michael Quinn. *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*. 4th ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2015.
- Plato. *The Republic*. Book 10. London: Penguin Classics, modern edition, 2007.
- Ramadhan, M. Rizki Syahrul. "METODE KRITIK HADIS ALI MUSTAFA YAQUB; ANTARA TEORI DAN APLIKASI." *Nabawi: Journal of Hadith Studies* 1, no. 1 (2020). <https://doi.org/10.55987/njhs.v1i1.5>.
- Solomon, Robert C. *In Defense of Laughter*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2002.