

---

## Assessment of human dignity of the elderly in the nursing homes

---

Masoumeh Otaghi<sup>1</sup>, SeyedRahmatollah Mousavi Moghadam<sup>2</sup>, Arman Azadi<sup>1</sup>,  
Yousef Veisani<sup>4</sup>, Farangis Akbari Tahami<sup>3\*</sup>

1. Associate Professor, Department of Nursing, School of Nursing and Midwifery, Ilam University of Medical Sciences, Ilam, Iran
  2. Associate Professor of Philosophy, Department of Islamic Education, School of Medicine, Ilam University of Medical Sciences, Ilam, Iran
  3. Assistant Professor, Department of Epidemiology, School of Health, Ilam University of Medical Sciences, Ilam, Iran
  4. Master of Nursing Nursing Student, School of Nursing and Midwifery, Ilam University of Medical Sciences, Ilam, Iran (Corresponding Author)
- 

### Abstract

**Background and Aim:** Dignity is one of the basic elements of care for the elderly and is affected by factors such as independence, privacy, patient protection and confidentiality of information. The overall purpose of this study was to determine the level of respect for human dignity of the elderly living in nursing homes in Ilam province in 2020.

**Materials and Methods:** In a descriptive-analytical study, the views of 113 people including 54 elderly and 32 staff from two nursing homes in Ilam province and 117 graduate nursing students of Ilam University of Medical Sciences with Intrinsic Dignity Questionnaire (Shamsizadeh et al, 2018) Checked out. Data were analyzed in SPSSv-22 software by chi-square, one-way analysis of variance and univariate and multivariate linear regression. Significance level was less than 0.05.

**Results:** The elderly were  $73 \pm 10$  years old, mostly female, single, illiterate, urban, poor economic status and living in a nursing home for more than 6 months. The employees were  $33 \pm 8$  years old, mostly female, single, of average economic status, university education and more than one month of work experience. Students were  $34 \pm 5$  years old, mostly female, married and had at least one month of internship in each dormitory. The mean of human dignity was  $157.32 \pm 24.9$  which was  $168.9 \pm 13.7$  from the perspective of the elderly,  $166.9 \pm 12.9$  from the staff and  $122.74 \pm 18.07$  from the students ( $p < 0.001$ ). The average level of human dignity increased by 10.6 per person and by 22.8 per person with a longer stay ( $p < 0.001$ ).

**Conclusion:** The level of respect for human dignity from the perspective of the elderly and staff was above average and from the perspective of students was below average. The most important predictors of human dignity were male gender and length of stay in the nursing home.

**Keywords:** Dignity, Elderly, Nursing Home

---

## Introduction

Aging is a global issue and Iran, as an ancient country with a history of 2500 years, is no exception to this rule (1,2). The phenomenon of aging is the last period of the life cycle and according to the theory of the World Health Organization, the age of 60 is the starting point of aging (3). According to the United Nations, the number of elderly people in 2050 will reach 1 billion 968 million 153 thousand people. In Iran, due to changes in family structure, the elderly population has increased by 10% between 1997 and 2017(4,5).

Aging is a sensitive period with different needs (6,7). One of the most basic topics of this course is the concept of dignity. Dignity is one of the five ethical principles of the United Nations. The meaning and concept of dignity include privacy, respect, independence, protection and communication (7,8,9). Dignity is the English equivalent of the word dignity and is derived from the Latin word dignity meaning merit and *dingus* meaning value and value (10). Dignity has various meanings, including value, dignity, honor and dignity, and the first declaration adopted in the Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 emphasized the recognition of dignity and equal human rights (11,12).

Dignity in the elderly can be affected by factors such as other people's behavior with the individual or physical and mental changes due to aging (13). Dignity is a very important concept, especially in the elderly; Because older people have more physical and mental problems and with age they suffer from negative attitudes, identity disorders and vulnerabilities and need more attention and respect than younger people (14) despite the fact that in many articles Concepts such as respect, independence, privacy, dignity and self-esteem have been addressed, but this issue has received less attention in relation to the elderly (1). In a 2007 study by Hall and Hui on the preservation of human dignity from the perspective of nurses' experience, it was noted that dignity is a dignity that preserves the independence, respect and worthiness of individuals, and this is what the elderly is at risk (15). The study of Shamsizadeh et al. In 1397 in relation to the views of nurses and patients regarding the inherent dignity of the patient examined patients in the age range of 30-65 years. These people were mostly not elderly, which requires more examination of the dignity of this age group (16).

The use of nursing homes is increasing in Iran. Staying in a nursing home and being away from family and relatives make them more vulnerable. For hundreds of years, the care of the elderly was the responsibility of their families. However, with the increase of the elderly population and the increase of human life expectancy, the society's attitude towards this issue has changed and formal institutions for the care of the elderly have been established (17). The elderly expressed their frustration at their own social, economic, and physical perspectives, citing a decline in the dignity of religious and cultural values, and a small number of them valued themselves, and the majority believed that They are not respected. From this point of view, it is important to study the observance of dignity from the perspective of this age group and caregivers of the elderly (18). Staff at the nursing home provide direct or indirect care for the elderly. Graduate nursing students as a group educated in the field of geriatrics have a creative thinking and high understanding of the elderly and their views on maintaining the dignity of the elderly can reduce the problems of the elderly, both real and legal and other

problems. Respect for human dignity is one of the altruistic and moral values and it is necessary to study this issue from the perspective of effective groups. The purpose of this study was to determine the level of human dignity in the elderly living in nursing homes in Ilam province from the perspective of the elderly and nursing home staff and nursing nursing students.

### **Materials and Methods**

The study was cross-sectional and descriptive-analytical. The study population was all the elderly and the staff of the Ilam Nursing Home and the master's degree nursing students of Ilam University of Medical Sciences according to the inclusion criteria in 2020. The census method was used for all samples. Ilam province has two-day care centers for the elderly called "Asayesh" in Ilam city and "Aramesh" in Ivan city. By referring to these two centers, a list of all the elderly and staff was prepared. At the comfort center, the number of elderly people was 36 and the number of staff was 16. The number of elderly people in the relaxation center was 26 and the number of staff was 14. The number of students who completed their internships in these two centers was 27. Inclusion criteria for the elderly aged 60 years and older were rejection of mental and cognitive disorders with MMSE scale and informed consent to participate in the study. Inclusion criteria for staff were having informed consent to participate in the research and at least three months of work experience in one of the two centers. Inclusion criteria for students were: studying for a master's degree in geriatric nursing, passing at least one internship in each center, and having an informed consent to participate in the research.

Data collection tools include three sections: demographic characteristics of the elderly (age, sex, marriage, education, occupation, number of children, living status, activity level, length of stay, insurance, economic status), demographic characteristics of staff and students (age, sex, Marriage, work experience, education, living status, economic status) and inherent dignity questionnaire (Shamsizadeh et al., 1397). The questionnaire contained 31 questions related to the nursing home environment. Scoring was done on a six-point Likert scale (strongly agree, agree, relatively agree, relatively disagree, disagree, strongly disagree) on a scale of 1 to 6. Score 1 for strongly disagree and score 6 for strongly agree option. The total score was the mean score of the questionnaire expressions. In the study of Shamsizadeh et al., The face validity and content of the questionnaire were confirmed by 10 faculty members and the reliability of the questionnaire for patients and nurses using Cronbach's alpha coefficient of  $\alpha = 0.86$  and  $\alpha = 0.93$ , respectively, using It was obtained by halving the method  $r = 0.72$  and  $r = 0.81$  (13). In this study, the reliability of the questionnaire with Cronbach's alpha in the elderly group was 0.88, staff 0.87 and students 0.89. Finally, 54 seniors, 32 staff members and 27 students completed the questionnaire.

Data were analyzed in SPSSv-24 software by chi-square, one-way analysis of variance and univariate and multivariate linear regression. The error rate was considered less than 0.05.

### **Findings**

The elderly was 73 10 10 years old, mostly female, single, illiterate, urban, poor economic status and staying in a nursing home for more than 6 months. The employees were 33 8 8

years old, mostly female, single, of average economic status, university education and more than one month of work experience. Students were 34 5 5 years old, mostly female, married and had at least one month of internship in each dormitory.

Table 1 shows the level of respect for human dignity from the perspective of the elderly and staff was above average and from the perspective of students was below average. From the perspective of 77.8% of the elderly and 69% of the staff, the dignity of the elderly was higher than average. In contrast, from the perspective of 100% of students, human dignity in the nursing home was lower than average. In general, the level of human dignity of the elderly from the perspective of all research samples was 43.3% lower than the average and 56.7% higher than the average.

**Table 1. Frequency and percentage in the three groups studied in terms of average respect for human dignity**

Human dignity	Total (%)	N (%)		
		Students	Staff	Elderly
Dignity below average	49(43.3)	27(100)	10(31)	12(22.2)
Dignity above average	64(56.7)	0(0)	22(69)	42(77.8)
Total	113(100)	27(100)	32(100)	54(100)

Table 2 shows a comparison of human dignity from the perspective of the three groups. The mean of human dignity was  $157.32 \pm 24.29$ . According to ANOVA statistical test, the mean of respect for human dignity from the perspective of the elderly was 168.9 13 13.7, staff was 166.9 12 12.9 and students were 122.74 18 18.07 ( $p = 0.001$ ).

**Table 2. Comparison of human dignity from the perspective of the three groups**

Variable	P-value	maximum	minimum	Standard deviation	Average	Groups
Dignity	0.001	185	137	13.7	168.9	Elderly
		182	139	12.9	166.9	Caregivers
		151	84	18.07	122.74	Students
		185	84	24.29	157.32	Total

Table 3, based on the statistical test of univariate and multivariate regression, shows that the most important variables predicting human dignity in the elderly are gender and length of stay in the nursing home. The average dignity score is added. ( $P = 0.001$ ) and for each person who stayed longer in a nursing home, the average dignity score increased by 22.8 in the elderly, which was statistically significant ( $p = 0.001$ ).

**Table 3. Determining the most important predictors of human dignity from the perspective of the elderly**

Variable			Non-standard coefficients	
	Sig	T	Standard deviation	Beta
Age	0.376	0.889	0.149	0.113
Gender	0.001	3.383	3.159	10.684
education	0.195	1.303	6.143	8.005
Number of children	0.543	0.609	0.7555	0.460
Living condition	0.462	0.739-	4.079	- 3.0104
Activity level	0.242	1.164	2.753	3.205
staying time	0.001	11.616	1.964	22.283
The economic situation	0.968	0.041	2.398	0.097

### Discussion

In the present study, the level of respect for human dignity in the nursing home was higher than the average from the perspective of the elderly and the staff of the nursing home and lower than the average from the perspective of master nursing students. The mean score of dignity in the elderly, which was 168 13 13 and above the average, was similar to the results of the study of Mr. Jasilon et al., The degree of dignity in the elderly was good and 99 out of 115. In his study, the attributed dignity scale was used, which included 23 items. Although the research environment was different from the present study, the dimensions of the scale used overlapped with the tools used in the present study (19). Also, in the study of Joybari et al., Who examined dignity from the perspective of the elderly hospitalized, the dignity score was 123-33 and declared dignity from the perspective of the elderly (9). In another study conducted by Mr. Avestan et al. On cancer patients in the hospital, they found that these patients declared their dignity to be in a weak range (20). The reasons for the difference between the results and the present study can be the difference between the research environment and the effects of factors such as disease and health that may affect human dignity.

The results showed that the level of respect for the elderly from the employees' point of view was higher than the average. In the study of Joibari et al., The views of 102 nurses regarding the preservation of patients' dignity were examined. Observance of patients' dignity from the nurses' point of view was desirable and in the range of 139-69. Although the community and environment in the study of Joibari et al. Were different from the present study; But the results were similar (9). Rai et al. In the study of the dignity of the elderly from the

perspective of nurses found that among the components related to the patient's dignity, the observance of independence is more desirable and satisfactory, which was one of the components of the inherent dignity questionnaire in the present study (21). In a study by Liz Davier et al., The experience of nurses and staff at a nursing home in Sweden on the dignity of the elderly was examined. Respect for the dignity of the elderly was declared in a weak range. Employees reported a conflict between what they do and what they should do regarding the dignity of the elderly. This result was not consistent with the results of the present study, which could be influenced by cultural differences and social conditions between Iran and Sweden (22). However, the study of Mariska et al. In the study of human dignity in the elderly living in a nursing home from the perspective of four nursing home staff The Netherlands concluded that, contrary to popular belief that living in a nursing home undermines the dignity of the individual, professional care and appropriate staff support networks can increase the level of respect for the elderly (23).

In the present study, the mean score of respect for the dignity of the elderly was higher than their own view of the staff and was not consistent with the research of Ebrahimi et al. They stated that no patient is satisfied with the quality of services provided to maintain their dignity (24), which could be due to cultural differences, age differences, and the needs of each research unit. The present study was conducted in Ilam province, which is the least populated province in Iran. In Iranian culture and in sparsely populated areas with a traditional texture, respect for the elderly and the elderly is more important.

In this study, with increasing age, the human dignity score increased, which was similar to the study of Mr. Shamsizadeh et al. On the elderly and nurses (16). In the study of Joybari et al., With increasing age, the person's perception of dignity increased and the dignity score increased, which was similar to the results of the present study (9). In the research of Mr. Bagheri et al., A negative and significant relationship was observed between age and innate dignity and older people declared less inherent dignity than younger people (25).

In the present study, women reported less respect for dignity than men, which was similar to the Ajami study of Qaleh Rashidi et al. In their study, men reported respect for privacy and dignity to a higher extent, which could be due to the emotional burden of women and their extreme sensitivity to the care received in nursing homes (26).

## **Conclusion**

The results of this study showed that the level of respect for human dignity in nursing homes in Ilam province was higher than average from the perspective of the elderly and nursing home staff. All MSc nursing students reported that the dignity of the elderly was below average. The results also showed that the most important predictor variables were respect for the dignity of the elderly, male gender and length of stay in the nursing home. The findings of this study can be used in various fields of education, management, clinic and research. By reflecting on the meaning and concept of human dignity and thinking of measures to implement dignity, intrinsic values can be transformed into practical values. According to the results of the present study and the need to respect the dignity of the elderly, it is recommended that the views of the elderly living in a nursing home to respect human dignity in a qualitative manner.

## Funding

This article is the result of the master's thesis of geriatric nursing with ethics code IR.MEDILAM.REC.1399.097. The Vice Chancellor for Research and Technology and the Faculty of Nursing and Midwifery of Ilam University of Medical Sciences are thanked for their financial support and the General Department of Welfare of Ilam Province, Asayeh and Aramesh nursing homes for their spiritual support.

## Reference:

- .1 Hosseinabadi R, Momtaz YA, Shahboulaghi FM, Abbaszadeh A, Kamrani AAA, Pournia Y. Inter-professional ethical values in Iranian aged care: a qualitative study. Iranian aged care ethical values. 2019;17.(1)
- .2 Abdi A, Tarjoman A, BorjiMJAjop. Prevalence of elder abuse in Iran: a Systematic review and meta-analysis. 2019;39:120-7.
- .3 H S, A N, M Z, A K, D G. Respecting for human dignity in elders caring in perspective of nurses and elderly patients. Journal of Medical Ethics. 2015;9.(32)
- .4 M N, S M, M A. Evaluation of mental and physical health indicators among elderly residents and non-residents of elderly homes based on TOPSIS technique. Journal of Gerontology. 2019;4(1):74-84.
- .5 N T, M Fm, B C, N Hp, H H. Factors affecting quality of life among elderly living in nursing homes. Quarterly Journal of Nursing. 2015;2.(1)
- .6 Hatefi M, Tarjoman A, BorjiMJJor, health. Do religious coping and attachment to god affect perceived pain? Study of the elderly with chronic back pain in Iran. 2019;58(2):465-75.
- .7 Khalighi E, Ghiasi G, Karimi E, Borji M, Salimi E, Tarjoman A, et al. Assessment of mental health elderly with chronic pain based on quranic components. 2020;59(6):2807-18.
- .8 khalili Z, Gilani M, Ilali E-A. A Review of Human Dignity in the Elderly and Its Related. Clinical Excellence. 2018;8(3):11-21.
- .9 Peyvakht A, Sanagoo A, Behnampour N, Roshandel G, Jouybari L. Perspectives of Nurses and the Elderly Hospitalized Patients Eegard Respecting the Human Dignity of Elderly Patients in Educational and Medical Centers of Golestan University of Medical Sciences in 2019. Journal of Nursing Education. 2020;4.(3)
- .10 Ferri P, Muzzalupo J, Lorenzo RD. Patients' perception of dignity in an Italian general hospital: a cross-sectional analysis. Health Services Research. 2015;41.(15)
- .11 Gallagher A, Li S, Wainwright P, Jones IR, Lee D. Dignity in the care of older people – a review of the theoretical and empirical literature. BMC Nursing. 2008;7(11):1-12.
- .12 SH T. An overview of the factors affecting the human dignity perceived by patient. J Educ Ethics Nurs. 2016;5(1):9-17.
- .13 Manookian A, Cheraghi MA, Nasrabadi AN, Peiravi H, Shali M. Nurses' lived experiences of preservation of patients' dignity. Iranian Journal of Medical Ethics and History. 2019;7.(1)
- .14 Ali AM. Human Dignity and Euthanasia in Islamic Ethics. J Mazand Univ Med Sci. 2010;20(78):83-95.
- .15 Hall EOC, Høy B. Re-establishing dignity: nurses' experiences of caring for older hospital patients. Scand J Caring Sci. 2012;26:287–94.

- .16 Bagheri H, Taghva F, Sadeh M, Shahbeygi N, Ghaderi F, Mezerji NMG, et al. Viewpoint of Nurses and Patients about Inherent Dignity of Patients. *Scientific Journal of Nursing, Midwifery and Paramedical Faculty*. 2018;4(2):50-8.
- .17 Cairns D, Williams V, Victor C, Richards S, May AL, Martin W, et al. The meaning and importance of dignified care: findings from a survey of health and social care professionals. *BMC Geriatrics*. 2013;13.(28)
- .18 Jafari T, Mahdavi MS, Sarokhani MB. The Social Status of the Elderly in the Family with an Emphasis on TV Role: Survey of Tehrani Senior Citizens. *Journal of Religion and Communication*. 2016;23.(2)
- .19 C J, J D, K K. Development of the Attributed Dignity Scale. *Research in Gerontological Nursing*. 2009;2(3):202-13.
- .20 Z A, A R, F H-N, S M, S F, A A. Perceptions of Iranian Cancer Patients Regarding Respecting their Dignity in Hospital Settings. *Asian Pac J Cancer Prev*. 2015;16(13):8-5453.
- .21 Z R, H A. Nurses' Perspectives on Human Dignity of Hospitalized Patients. *Iran Journal of Nursing*. 2017;29(104):55-65.
- .22 Dwyer LL, Andershed B, Nordenfelt L, Ternstedt BM. Dignity as experienced by nursing home staff. *International Journal Of Older People Nursing*. 2009;4(3):185-93.
- .23 Oosterveld-Vlug MG, Pasman HRW, GennipIEv, Muller MT, Willems DL, Onwuteaka-Philipsen BD. Dignity and the factors that influence it according to nursing home residents: a qualitative interview study. *Leading Global Nursing Research*. 2014;42(1):97-106.
- .24 H E, C T, E M, S V. Patient's perception of dignity in Iranian healthcare settings: a qualitative content analysis. *Journal of Medical Ethics*. 2012;38:723-8.
- .25 H B, F Y, T A, F Z. Development & Psychometric Properties of the Social Dignity Questionnaire in Heart Failure Patients. *Iranian Journal of Medical Ethics and History of Medicine*. 2014;6(6):20-32.
- .26 GRV A, M F, M H. The Relationship between Knowledge and Observance of Patients'rights in Rehabilitation Centers of Tehran. *J Sabzevar Univ Med Sci*. 2012;19(3):296-303.