

## The Role of Islam in Decent Care for People with Stigmatized Diseases: An Evaluation via the Concept of Human Dignity \*

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### Abstract

Individuals' rights and freedoms within the scope of human rights have been tried to be guaranteed by many international organizations and laws (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, World Health Organization) with universal legal regulations. In addition to many norms of respect, such as personal rights and freedom, justice, peace, and social equality, human dignity is at the forefront of an individual's own value as a human. Although these norms are considered to be applicable to all individuals through international legal regulations, it is often overlooked to identify an approach under the qualification of human dignity when it comes to pandemic (such as HIV/AIDS) or other dangerous epidemics. With the increasing interest, many health-oriented approaches have been developed in recent years by taking into account human dignity, thanks to the careful efforts of many health institutions, especially the World Health Organization. However, the contribution of religious attitudes to these approaches is lacking, especially in Muslim communities either because people do not have enough religious knowledge or have an unclear understanding of it. For this reason, in this study, a conceptual framework related to human dignity was first evaluated in the context of human rights, then it was discussed in the context of Islam and it was explained how important human dignity is in both the Qur'an and the Hadith. And then the suggestions of the general quality of health services in the light of human dignity were given. Finally, the components that are based on human dignity and decent care are highlighted and it is discussed whether there is a compensatory function in the health sector of human dignity for future studies.

Today, it is noted that the underlying reason for ignoring human dignity today is due to religious explanations and discourses rather than social perception and stereotyped thoughts or tradition-traditions. Whereas, as in other Abrahamic religions, Islam says that human dignity originates from God, and considers human as valuable only because it is human. That is, according to Islam, a human

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being is a worthy being by birth. Given that, ignoring human dignity will lead to unavoidable consequences when it comes to vital loop since human dignity, which is a universal value, is a concept with theological, sociological and psychological dimensions. In particular, decent care required for stigmatized individuals, such as people with HIV/AIDS, can lead to various psychological and sociological problems, as human dignity is not taken into consideration. Likewise, showing offensive attitudes and behaviors towards this kind of pandemic disease will lead people who have such illnesses to lose their respect for themselves and others, to be excluded and to withdraw socially. In Islam, many verses and the hadith underline the protection and maintaining human health under all circumstances.

Considering all these, this study examines the four basic components of human dignity according to Islam in order to develop new attitudes in healthcare. The first and most important of these is *the right to live*. Here, several human dignity norms such as respecting the individual and social rights of the person, ensuring personal safety, promoting freedom of belief system, etc. are included. These are supported by the verses and the hadiths in Islam, and actions such as murder, suicide, killing or maiming are explicitly prohibited. The second is *the right of freedom*, which means that people control their decision-making processes, are subject to their own actions and do nothing to endanger the freedom or safety of others. The third is *the right to religiosity*, which is accepted as a natural right of human dignity. What is meant here is that no one has the right to force someone else to choose religion or to change religion, and at the same time they will not be judged for their right to religiousness. The fourth and last one is *the right to equality social advantages in justice*. In Islam, human dignity is based on the freedom of choice in every person's social life. Therefore, Islam brings fundamentally responsible and protective regulations to human dignity so that people can live in peace, security, and comfort.

Moreover, elements such as the right to live, the right to freedom, the right to religiousness and the right to equal justice offered by religion are within the scope of a belief system in which people respect the dignity of all individuals and that each person has an unconditional value. These components have the potential to play an important role in developing innovative approaches and techniques that promote decent care in health services for individuals whose health status requires special treatment. Although these human dignity components that we have mentioned have common meanings in terms of universal legal values, the place of human dignity in practice may be affected by cultural and social judgments. For this reason, the religious security of each person should be carefully examined so that healthcare providers can provide decent care. Undoubtedly, having a deeper understanding and sensitivity about the concept of human dignity in the context of belief will provide a responsibility to apply and develop decent care in many societies. In addition, it is the ultimate goal of this study that healthcare providers or practitioners can use religious perspectives to help stigmatized people how to manage their lives without losing their dignity and health.

In conclusion, this study aimed to understand the developmental state of religion with human dignity and pandemic diseases. The most obvious result of the study is to raise awareness about some of the basic components of religion, such as freedom, rights of life, equality, and safe religious life, to safeguard human dignity. As a step towards creating more perspectives for awareness-raising, it is suggested that researchers who care about human dignity can use belief systems to create innovative approaches in health care. In this way, it will be possible and visible to make human rights and especially human dignity better equipped in the context of health.

**Keywords**

Psychology of Religion, Health Issues, Stigmatized Individuals, Decent Care, Human Dignity, Islam

## Hastalığı Sebebi İle Damgalanan Kişilere Yönelik İnsan Onuruna Yakınsır Bakım Konusunda İslam'ın Rolü: İnsan Onuru Kavramı Üzerinden Bir Deęerlendirme

### Öz

İnsan hakları kapsamında bireylerin hak ve özgürlükleri, pek çok uluslararası kuruluş ve yasalar (İnsan Hakları Evrensel Beyanamesi, Dünya Sağlık Örgütü) tarafından evrensel yasal düzenlemelerle garanti altına alınmaya çalışılmıştır. Kişisel haklar ve özgürlük, adalet, barış ve sosyal eşitlik gibi birçok saygı normuna ek olarak, insanlık onuru da insanın bir birey olarak sahip olması gereken öz değerlerinin başında gelir. Her ne kadar tüm bu normların uluslararası yasal düzenlemeler yoluyla tüm bireyler için geçerli olduğu düşünülse de, pandemi (HIV/AIDS gibi) veya diğer tehlikeli salgınlar söz konusu olduğunda insan onurunun nitelięi altında bir yaklaşımın tanımlanması genellikle göz ardı edilmektedir. Artan ilgiyle, son yıllarda, başta Dünya Sağlık Örgütü olmak üzere birçok sağlık kurumunun dikkatli çabaları sayesinde insan onurunu dikkate alarak birçok sağlık odaklı yaklaşım geliştirilmiştir. Bununla birlikte, dini tutumların bu yaklaşımlara katkısı, özellikle Müslüman topluluklarda, insanların yeterince dini bilgiye sahip olmadıkları ya da belirsiz bir anlayışa sahip oldukları için eksiktir. Bu nedenle bu çalışmada, insan onuru ile ilgili kavramsal bir çerçeve önce insan hakları bağlamında değerlendirilmiş, daha sonra İslam bağlamında tartışılmış ve insan onurunun hem Kuran'da hem de sünnette ne kadar önemli olduğu açıklanmıştır. Daha sonra, insanlık onuru ışığında sağlık hizmetlerinin genel kalitesinin önerileri verilmiştir. Son olarak, insan onuru ve insan onuruna yakınsır bakımı temellendiren bileşenler vurgulanıp, gelecek çalışmalar için insan onurunda dinsel yaklaşımın sağlık hizmetlerinde telafi edici bir işlevinin olup olmadığı tartışılmıştır.

Bugün, insan onurunu görmezden gelmenin altında yatan nedenin sosyal algı ve kalıplanmış düşünceler veya gelenek-göreneklerden ziyade, dini açıklamalar ve söylemlerden kaynaklandığı belirtilmektedir. Oysa, diğer İbrahimî dinlerde olduğu gibi, İslam dini, insanlık onurunun Tanrı kaynaklı olduğunu söyler ve insanı sadece insan olduğu için değerli olarak görür. Yani İslam'a göre insan doğuştan değerli bir varlıktır. Bununla birlikte, evrensel bir değer olan insan onuru teolojik, sosyolojik ve psikolojik boyutlara sahip bir kavram olduğundan, insan onurunu görmezden gelmek hayati bir döngü söz konusu olduğunda kaçınılmaz sonuçlara yol açacaktır. Özellikle, HIV/AIDS'li insanlar gibi damgalanmış bireyler için gereken insan onuruna yakınsır bakım (decent care), insan onuru dikkate alınmadığı için çeşitli psikolojik ve sosyolojik sorunlara yol açabilir. Örneğin, bu tür bir pandemik hastalığa yönelik saldırgan tutum ve davranışlar göstermek, bu tür hastalıkları olan insanların kendilerine ve başkalarına olan saygısını kaybetmelerine, dışlanmalarına ve sosyal geri çekilmelerine yol açacaktır. İslam'da ise birçok âyet ve hadis, her koşulda insan sağlığının korunmasının ve sürdürülmesinin altını çizmektedir.

Tüm bunlar göz önüne alındığında, bu çalışma, sağlık hizmetlerinde yeni tutumlar geliştirmek için İslam'a göre insan onurunun dört temel bileşenini incelemektedir. Bunlardan birincisi ve en önemlisi 'yaşama hakkı'dır. Burada, kişinin bireysel ve sosyal haklarına saygı duyulması, kişisel güvenlięin sağlanması, inanç özgürlüğü sisteminin desteklenmesi vb. gibi çeşitli insanlık onuru normları yer almaktadır. Bunlar İslam'da âyet ve hadislerle desteklendięi gibi cinayet, intihar, öldürme veya sakat bırakma gibi eylemler de açıkça yasaklanmıştır. İkincisi, insanların karar verme süreçlerini kontrol altına almaları, kendi eylemlerine tabi olmaları ve başkalarının özgürlüklerini veya güvenliklarını tehlikeye atacak bir şey yapmamaları anlamına gelen 'özgürlük hakkı' dır. Üçüncüsü, insan onurunun doğal bir hakkı olarak kabul edilen 'dindarlık hakkı'dır. Burada kastedilen, hiç kimsenin birisini din seçmeye veya dini değiştirmeye zorlama hakkının olmadığı, ve aynı zamanda kimsenin dindarlık haklarından dolayı da yargılanmayacağıdır. Dördüncü ve sonuncusu 'adaletle sosyal eşitlik hakkı'dır. İslam'da insan onuru, her insanın sosyal yaşamında seçim özgürlüğüne dayanır. Bu nedenle İslam, insanların barış, güvenlię ve rahatlık içinde yaşayabilmesi için insan onuruna temelde sorumlu ve koruyucu düzenlemeler getirmektedir.

Ayrıca, yařama hakkı, zgrlk hakkı, dindarlık hakkı ve dinin eřit adalet hakkı gibi unsurlar, insanların tm bireylerin onuruna saygı duyduėu ve her insanın kořulsuz bir deėerinin olduėunun kabul edildiėi bir inanç sistemi kapsamındadır. Bu bileřenler, saėlık durumu zel tedavi gerektiren bireyler iin saėlık hizmetlerinde iyi bakımı teřvik eden yeniliki yaklařımların ve tekniklerin geliřtirilmesinde nemli bir rol oynama potansiyeline sahiptir. Bahsettiėimiz bu insanlık onuru bileřenleri evrensel yasal deėerler aısından ortak anlamlara sahip olsa da, insanlık onurunun uygulamadaki yeri kltrel ve sosyal yargılardan etkilenebilir. Bu nedenle, saėlık hizmeti sunucularının insan onuruna yakıřır bakım saėlayabilmesi iin her hastanın dini gvenliėi dikkatle incelenmelidir. Kuřkusuz, inan bağlamında insan onuru kavramı hakkında daha derin bir anlayıř ve duyarlılıėa sahip olmak, birok toplumda insana yakıřır bakım uygulama ve geliřtirme sorumluluėu saėlayacaktır. Buna ek olarak, bu alıřmanın nihai amacı saėlık hizmeti saėlayıcılarının veya uygulayıcılarının damgalanmıř insanların onurunu ve saėlıklarını kaybetmeden hayatlarını nasıl yneteceklerine yardımcı olmak iin dini perspektifleri kullanabilmesidir.

Sonuç olarak, bu alıřma dinin insanlık onuru ve salgın hastalıkları ile geliřimsel durumunu anlamayı amalamıřtır. alıřmanın en belirgin sonucu, insan onurunu korumak iin dinin zgrlk, yařam hakları, eřitlik ve gvenli dini yařam gibi temel bileřenleri hakkında farkındalık yaratmaktır. Farkındalık iin daha fazla perspektif yaratmaya ynelik bir adım olarak, insan onuruna nem veren arařtırmacıların inan sistemlerini saėlık hizmetlerinde yeniliki yaklařımlar oluřturmak iin kullanabileceėi nerilmektedir. Bu sayede, insan haklarını ve zellikle insanlık onurunu saėlık bağlamında daha donanımlı hale getirmek mmkn ve grnr olacaktır.

### **Anahtar Kelimeler**

Din Psikolojisi, Saėlık Sorunları, Damgalanan Bireyler, İnsan Onuruna Yakıřır Bakım, İnsan Onuru, İslam

### **Introduction**

Human rights are safeguarded by the various international organizations such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the International Covenants of Human Rights (ICHR), and Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ESCR) by bounding closely to the recognition of freedom, justice, and peace.<sup>1</sup> The scope of human rights has received a growing interest among researchers over the last few decades in the context of health concerns. Especially human dignity has been situated as a prime concern in Muslim religious discourse in terms of life manners. Regarding the inherent dignity, Islam has given a distinct position to humanity by viewing humans as the noblest of creatures and man as the trusteeship (or vicegerent) of God on earth.<sup>2</sup> Thus, according to the Islamic attitude, all individuals deserve to be treated in a way of dignity, nobility, and respect, and deserve to be taken decent care for any health issues.<sup>3</sup> However, the issue of stigmatized illness in the Muslim majority countries has been an on-going debated situation among Islamic scholars and jurists.

During the period of 1980s and 1990s, Islamic scholars have focused on the problem of those infected with HIV/AIDS and LGBTQ individuals as an illness caused by homosexual relations instead of taking under control of the widespread virus. In 2000s,

<sup>1</sup> Mohammad H. Mozaffari, "The Concept of Human Dignity in the Islamic Thought", *Hekmat Quarterly Journal, Canadian House of Wisdom* 4 (2011), 11-27.

<sup>2</sup> David L. Johnston, "A Muslim and Christian Orientation to Human Rights: Human Dignity and Solidarity", *Indiana International & Comparative Law Review* 24/4 (2014), 899-920.

<sup>3</sup> See Abdul H. Ansari - Raheem K. Salman, "Human Rights, Human Dignity and Justice: The Islamic Perspective", *Journal of Islamic Law Review* 7/1 (2011), 91-124.

Muslim scholars have taken the HIV epidemic more realistic and as a more complex issue. Therefore, many religious leaders and scholars organized a comprehensive program known as Cairo Declaration regarding how to respond to the HIV epidemic. Yet, with regards to the mechanism and the protection of fundamental human rights, the right of dignity remained the most debatable concept in the human rights concept because of different approaches given by moral thoughts and divine discourses.<sup>4</sup> For instance, some religious perspectives consider that it is possible to think human dignity as one of the jurisprudential decision makings since it is derived from God's will and eventually should evaluate it based on the scripture and religious traditions<sup>5</sup>. On the contrary, others challenge this phenomenon and say that it is not necessary to link human dignity to the scripture or religious doctrines because it has a reliable basis based on fundamental rights.<sup>6</sup> Recently, it has been adopted a different behavior by promoting a prevention model from the Islamic view and understanding, which focuses on compassion instead of condemnation for those living with HIV/AIDS epidemic in Muslim communities, and as aligned with the teachings of Islam.<sup>7</sup> But the question arose here is that what the scope of human dignity is in Islamic sense when considering the health care sphere.

The arguments made on this subject reveal that Islamic religion already involves in human dignity. Yet how it functions is based on the interpretations of Islamic sources or cultural diversity.<sup>8</sup> This study intends to increase the knowledge of the concept of human dignity in Islamic sources to improve decent care for all people, as well as enhance awareness of the ethical challenges entailed, including how it is neglected when people face the health care issues in Islamic countries. Thus, this paper leads health care providers or practitioners to gain a deeper understanding regarding the notion of human dignity in the context of Islamic beliefs, and this investigation aims to guide them in producing innovations in health that takes into consideration human dignity.

### 1. The Conceptual Framework of Human Dignity

In order to utilize human dignity in a decent care for people in need, it is necessary to understand first its general concept across cultures and systems. Human dignity is considered as an important fundamental value for human and refers to being honorable and worthy; however, the arguments on dignified care have been a

<sup>4</sup> Ruth Horn - Angeliki Kerasidou, "The Concept of Dignity and Its Use in End-of-Life Debates in England and France", *Cambridge Quarterly of Healthcare Ethics* 25/3 (2016), 404-413; See more Behrouz Yadollahpour, "Human Dignity and Its Consequences in the Holy Qur'an", *International Conference on Sociality and Economics Development IPEDR* 10 (2011), 551-555.

<sup>5</sup> Sheriff, Vaffi Foday, "Concept of Human Dignity in Islamic Thought", *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science (IJRISS)* 3/1 (2019), 148-155.

<sup>6</sup> Kiarash Aramesh, "Human Dignity in Islamic Bioethics", *Iran Journal of Allergy Asthma Immunol* 6/5 (2007), 25-28. See more Akrami, Forouzan et al. "Adapting the Principles of Biomedical Ethics to Islamic Principles and Values in the Context of Public Health Policy", *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies* 17/49 (2018), 46-59.

<sup>7</sup> Mohammad H. Kamali, "Human Dignity in Islam" (Access 23 September 2019).

<sup>8</sup> Abeer A. Alamri, *How Can a Focus on the Ethical Notions of Dignity and Respect for Autonomy Help to Improve Healthcare for Elderly People in Islamic Countries?* (PhD diss., Duquesne University, 2016), 1-372.

matter of both ethical contention. More attention is required in research to define an accurate attitude to those who need a decent care. Therefore, discussing what the contextual determination of human dignity around religious discourses is of vital importance.

Regarding the scope of human dignity, two different interpretations are revealed by scholars. Some scholars argued that human dignity derives from a divine origin that one can have as a virtue.<sup>9</sup> This idea would be coherent with the universal validity as well as the expressions of the Abrahamic religions.<sup>10</sup> On the other hand, some believes that human dignity is a transcendental status shaped by cultures or traditions.<sup>11</sup> For example, according to an article by Chummar who studied HIV/AIDS in Africa, his understanding of human dignity is twofold; one point is described as “an endowment or gift,” and the other “as an achievement or acquisition”.<sup>12</sup> He highlights the first type by saying, “every human being is by nature a valuable being, a being to be revered and respected from the very beginning of his/her existence”.<sup>13</sup> The second type is described as “the dignity to which human beings are called as intelligent and free persons capable of determining their own lives by their own free choices”.<sup>14</sup> The approach of the Catholic Church on the subject of human dignity is that “human dignity is rooted in the concept of Imago Dei which denotes the theological theory that human beings are made in the likeness and image of God”.<sup>15</sup> From the Jewish perspective, the concept of human dignity is described saying, “the original source of human dignity is not intrinsic to the human being but extrinsic, namely in God”.<sup>16</sup> In the Islamic tradition in general, human dignity that is rooted in a divine source for mankind advocates the common good and the right to life in this world.

Theologically, human dignity is grounded in three doctrines similarly as Aramesh writes, “Christians, Muslims and Jews typically refer to the ultimate source of human dignity as divine”.<sup>17</sup> In this regard, these three religions see humanity as exceedingly valuable because of its value given by God. Dignity, with regards to religion, is similar to dignity in legal and cultural traditions that includes many values of people. As The Universal Declaration of Human Rights explains, human dignity is “the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world”.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Adeno Addis, “The Role of Human Dignity in a World of Plural Values and Ethical Commitments,” *Netherlands Quarterly of Human Rights*, 31, 4 (2013), 403-444.

<sup>10</sup> Addis, “The Role of Human Dignity”, 2013; Mozaffari, “The Concept of Human Dignity”, 2011.

<sup>11</sup> Glenn Hughes, “The Concept of Dignity in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights”, *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 39/1 (2011), 1-24.

<sup>12</sup> Paul Chummar, “HIV/AIDS in Africa: A Bioethical Hard Blow to Human Dignity and Human Rights”, *Proceedings of the International Conference on Bioethics*, ed. J. M. Mathooko (Kenya: Egerton University, 2008), 7.

<sup>13</sup> Chummar, “HIV/AIDS in Africa”, 7.

<sup>14</sup> Chummar, “HIV/AIDS in Africa”, 7.

<sup>15</sup> Aramesh, “Human Dignity in Islamic Bioethics”, 26.

<sup>16</sup> Aramesh, “Human Dignity in Islamic Bioethics”, 26.

<sup>17</sup> Aramesh, “Human Dignity in Islamic Bioethics”, 26.

<sup>18</sup> Aramesh, “Human Dignity in Islamic Bioethics”, 25.

## 2. The Quranic Framework of Human Dignity

According to the constitutions of many states in the world, human dignity means that the human being is a venerated, esteemed and honored creature by nature. In this regard, the values and fundamentals of human rights such as human dignity, respect or honor, recognized by the international human rights or laws, were already introduced by Islam fourteen centuries ago.<sup>19</sup> The Qur'an sheds light on how human beings should relate to one another while observant of each other's dignity. For example, there are several verses in the Qur'an that reflect a shared value of mankind for the inherent dignity:

- “We have honored the sons of Adam; provided them with transport on land and sea; given them for sustenance things, good and pure; and conferred on them special favours, above a great part of Our creation”.<sup>20</sup>

- “And: ‘Proclaim! (Or read!) In the name of Thy Lord and Cherisher, who created- Created man from a clinging substance, recite, and your Lord is the most Generous who taught (the use of) the pen, taught man that which He knew not’”.<sup>21</sup>

- “O Iblis! What prevents thee from prostrating thyself to one whom I have created with my hands? Art thou haughty? Or art thou one of the high (and mighty) ones?”<sup>22</sup>.

- “Not only that He created human being by His hands and gave humans the best form, but He called the spirit of human being His spirit to give honor and dignity to human beings: ‘I breathed into him my spirit’”.<sup>23</sup>

As an inference from these verses and the lifestyle of the Prophet Mohammad, Islamic tenets embrace the universal basic values such as dignity, respect, equality, equity, acceptance of diversity, etc regarding decent care because of the fact that both the Qur'an and the Hadith specifically emphasizes the importance of good health for human life<sup>24</sup> as the Prophet Mohammad urges people to seek a proper treatment by saying “God has not created a disease without creating a cure for it”.<sup>25</sup> Since Allah has chosen people as the best creature and His vicegerent on the earth, health practitioners need to acknowledge their responsibility to provide a decent care for all.

Muslims believe that all things we encounter in life, good or bad, come from Allah, and all of them are considered a way to become close to Allah. Thus, the common belief among Muslims is that “if Allah wants to do good to somebody, He afflicts him with

<sup>19</sup> Abdul H. Madani, “Freedom and Its Concept in Islam”, *2nd International Conference on Humanities, Historical and Social Sciences IPEDR* 17 (2011), 116-120.

<sup>20</sup> *The Noble Quran* (20 February 2015), al-Isra 17/70.

<sup>21</sup> al-Alaq 96/1-5.

<sup>22</sup> al-Tin 95/4.

<sup>23</sup> al-Hijr 15/29; al-Sad 38/72.

<sup>24</sup> Sayed Elzenari, “An Islamic View of Health and Sickness: How Our Core Values Promote Decent Care”, *Restoring Hope Decent Care in the Midst of HIV/AIDS*, ed. Ted Karpf vd. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008). See more Farid Esack, “Care in a Season of AIDS: An Islamic Perspective”, *Restoring Hope Decent Care in the Midst of HIV/AIDS*, ed. Ted Karpf, vd. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

<sup>25</sup> Muhammad H. Al-Khayat, “Health: A Blessing from God” in *The Right Path to Health: Health An Islamic Perspective* (Egypt: World Health Organization, 4, 1997).

trails”.<sup>26</sup> Muslims believe that sickness is a test from Allah to be purified, and so they become ready for the afterlife. However, one of the most challenging stigmas that receive unfairly discrimination in treatment service and care is HIV/AIDS pandemic. In this regard, people with HIV/AIDS should be considered it as a test from Allah that needs to be cured rather than a punishment from Allah that deserves no compassion. Trying to cope with sickness makes people more patient and compassionate by keeping hope of healing and seeking pleasure of God. According to the Holy Qur’an, human life vitally significant in any case. As Allah says:

We ordained for the Children of Israel that if any one slew a person – unless it be for murder or for spreading mischief in the land – it would be as if he slew the whole people: and if any one saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of the whole people. Then although there came to them Our apostles with clear signs, yet, even after that, many of them continued to commit excesses in the land.<sup>27</sup>

Be that as it may, it is clear that the health care is essential and necessary in Islam because Allah clearly says that He gave a cure for each illness in the Qur’an saying, “There is no disease that Allah has created, except that He also has created its treatment”.<sup>28</sup> The duty of Muslims is to discover all cures and remedies by seeking new attitudes toward treatments parallel to the development of new medical technologies.

Most contemporary researchers introduced a suitable approach towards health care through the spirit of the Holy Book and the lifestyle of the Prophet Mohammad. For example, Sayid Elzenari, as one of the contemporary Muslim researchers who explored the challenges derived from health and sickness from an Islamic perspective, expressed that “Islam grants ill people the right to not only physical treatment but also psychological, social and spiritual support; in other words, it calls for decent care”.<sup>29</sup> According to the explicit or implicit messages of the Qur’an, Allah expects that people who are sick be treated in accordance with dignity regardless of their differences in terms of race, religion, gender differences, sexual orientation, and social and health status.<sup>30</sup>

In this regard, as patients, community members or caregivers, people should embrace each other with the consciousness of being brothers and sisters instead of discriminating against each other. At the same time, living with HIV/AIDS (as all sickness) is neither a punishment resulting from a sinful life, nor is there is no treatment for it. People who suffer from HIV need to be supported and treated by health care providers with the dignity and respect for the sake of Allah. To use an example from the life of the Prophet Mohammad, he says to his companions “Feed the hungry, visit the sick” without making any specific definition of what kind of sick.<sup>31</sup> No matter which illness needs to be cured, the emphasis about decent care in Islam is that all people have the same

<sup>26</sup> Elzenari, “Islamic View of Heath and Sickness”, 48.

<sup>27</sup> Elzenari, “Islamic View of Heath and Sickness”, 49.

<sup>28</sup> Elzenari, “Islamic View of Heath and Sickness”, 50.

<sup>29</sup> Elzenari, “Islamic View of Heath and Sickness”, 50.

<sup>30</sup> Elzenari, “Islamic View of Heath and Sickness”, 50.

<sup>31</sup> Elzenari, “Islamic View of Heath and Sickness”, 51.



value; so all people have the right to heal. Here, a hadith narrated by Usamah ibn Sharik is quoted:

The desert Arabs came from here and there. They asked: O prophet of God, should we make use of medical treatment? He replied: Make use of medical treatment, for Allah has not made a disease without appointing a remedy for it, with the exception of one disease, namely old age.<sup>32</sup>

And also, there is a story that says:

“In the afterlife Allah will say to someone O my servant when I was sick you didn’t visit me. The servant will reply how come you became sick my Lord? Allah will say did you not know that someone was sick and if you had visited him you would find me there beside him”.<sup>33</sup>

As stated in previous studies, HIV has been described in two ways: “affirming the humanity of the HIV –positive ‘other’, and being aware that we are doing so for ourselves as an affirmation of our own humanity”.<sup>34</sup> Illness and disease are also described in three ways in the light of Islamic texts: “1. a punishment from God, 2. a means of cleansing the individual from sin, and 3. a means of preparing the sick for blessings from God”.<sup>35</sup>

Islam’s emphasis on ethics and virtues in relation to the community-subjects leads people to be aware of their duties and responsibilities on the earth to provide welfare, peace, and justice among themselves and others in light of human dignity. The dignity of human kind in the Quranic context is described as ‘honour’ (al-izzah), and the Muslim community is described as ‘a community of moderation’ (ummatan vasatan).<sup>36</sup> The Qur’an says, “The believers, both men and women, are friends and protectors of one another; they enjoin good and they forbid evil”<sup>37</sup>. This is given a more concrete manifestation in the following hadith: “If any of you sees something evil, he should set it right with his hand; if he is unable to do so, then with his tongue, and if he is unable to do even that, then (let him denounce it) in his heart. But this is the weakest form of faith”.<sup>38</sup> In one Qudsi hadith (that is, God speaks directly in the words of the Prophet Mohammad), God reminds the people of this duty saying:

One who offends any of My friends is like declaring war against Me...and My servant gets closer to Me through good deeds until I love him, and when I love him, I become like his ear by which he hears, and like the eye by which he sees, like his hand by which he reaches out, and I walk with him; when he asks Me, I give, and when he seeks protection through Me, I protect him.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Abu Dawud, *Patial Translation of Sunan Abu-Dawud*. “Book of Medicine (Kitab Al-Tibb)”, 22 (No. 3846), (Access 5 March 2020).

<sup>33</sup> Elzenari, “Islamic View of Health and Sickness”, 51-52.

<sup>34</sup> Esack, “Care in a Season of AIDS”, 65.

<sup>35</sup> Esack, “Care in a Season of AIDS”, 67.

<sup>36</sup> Kamali, “Human Dignity in Islam”.

<sup>37</sup> al-Tawbah 9/71.

<sup>38</sup> Kamali, “Human Dignity in Islam”.

<sup>39</sup> Kamali, “Human Dignity in Islam”.

### 3. Components of Human Dignity and Decent Care

Allah clearly insists on how to protect human dignity and human rights by defining it in several verses of the Qur'an, and the way that the Prophet Mohammad lived in which his life served as a role model for his companions reflects the human values defined by the Qur'an. Consequently, human dignity can be examined in several dimensions:

#### 3.1. The Right to Life

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights' framework of human dignity aligns with the following Islamic contexts; for instance, respectfulness to one's individual and social rights, assuring personal safety, promoting freedom of belief system, and so forth. In fact, most religions agree with commonly held societal norms of behavior. Especially Muslims believe in a safe way of life for all people. Homicide, suicide, killing or maiming someone is blatantly forbidden in Islam. Evidence of these beliefs can be found in the verses of Surah al-Nisa 4/93, Surah al-Maidah 5/32, Surah al-An'am 6/151, Surah al-Furqan 25/68.<sup>40</sup> Based on this, it is a religious obligation for Islamic-ruled governments to guarantee a person's life, regardless of their sexual orientation or faith differences. This includes those infected with HIV/AIDS.

Islam leads Muslims and others to ponder how to treating people living with HIV unintentionally. People should not hold negative attitudes towards those infected by HIV because each person has dignity and value. Although sex outside marriage is not allowed in Islam and described as one of the biggest sins, the Qur'an emphasizes in many verses to extend compassion and mercy in all human relations. A couple of hadiths illustrate that the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) says: "Have compassion towards those who are on earth and the One who is beyond will have compassion towards you"<sup>41</sup>, and "You will not enter into paradise until you believe, and you will not believe until you love one another." In another hadith, he says: "Allah shows compassion only to those of his servants who are compassionate".<sup>42</sup>

When looking at the stigma of people living with HIV, religious jurists or Ulama in Islamic countries do not foresee positive outcomes in these people's futures. They are left to die as a punishment, because considering HIV/AIDS is a consequence of a sinful life. This is definitely in opposition to the Islamic core concept of protection of living a dignified life, whether one is well or sick. Thus based on Islamic beliefs all people should have access to proper health care. Sometimes, Muslims believe that those suffering from HIV/AIDS are a fault of their own, or result of having multiple partners or result of homosexual relations. This belief may not be true. For instance, an HIV positive man may infect his wife not knowing he had the disease, and, not associated with the stigma of homosexuality, could be an HIV infected woman that gives birth to an HIV infected baby. In both examples, the people are innocent and behave well within acceptable societal and religious norms.

<sup>40</sup> Yadollahpour, "Human Dignity and Its Consequences in the Holy Qur'an", 552.

<sup>41</sup> Abdul K. Ahmed - Fahmeeda Miller, "HIV, AIDS and Islam", *Category: Islamic Medicine* (Access 23 September 2019).

<sup>42</sup> Ahmed - Miller, "HIV, AIDS and Islam".

### **3.2. The Right to Freedom**

Social and political freedoms are emphasized in Islamic teachings. Muslims believe that God has a plan for everyone, and it is called as ‘destiny’ in Islam. One can come to a conclusion that since God creates humans equal, nobody can make someone else his slave. Muslim people can only pray to their creator, God.<sup>43</sup> The right of free will allows people to take control of their decision making, be subject to their own actions, and not force another to do something that would jeopardize his/her freedom or safety. For instance, women in Islam have many rules in comparison with men, such as covering hair and covering the whole body except parts of face, feet, and hands. If they need to go to hospital for a health situation, they should have a right to prefer to be seen by a female doctor instead of male doctor as long as they feel more comfortable themselves in this way. Nobody should attempt to take the rights away from him or her.

### **3.3. The Right to Religiosity**

Religiosity is considered as a natural right of human dignity. According to Islamic texts, humans are God-oriented and seeking God in many ways. It has been mentioned in the Qur’an outlined in a verse that states “There is no compulsion in religion. The right direction is henceforth distinct from error”.<sup>44</sup> It can clearly be seen in this verse that no one can force others to choose a religion, or to change their religions because of deference to human dignity and rights. Since religion is God-oriented for humanity, there are several ways to go to God. No one has the right to judge others because of the difference of their religions or faiths.

### **3.4. Equal Social Advantages in Justice**

Human dignity in Islam is based on freedom of choices in each person’s social life. From the viewpoints of Quranic concepts, God has sent prophets to bring social justice in the communities in order to organize human relationships.<sup>45</sup> Social justice and advantages are of great significance for human dignity, because God says:

O Mankind! Lo! We have created you male and female, and have made you nations and tribes that ye may know one another. Lo! The noblest of you, in the sight of Allah, is the best in conduct. Lo! Allah is Knower, Aware.<sup>46</sup>

By spreading around peace, love and justice among people living together in the Islamic communities, Islam brings some vital and essential regulations that include responsibility and caring to one another with regard to human dignity.

### **Conclusion**

The focus of this article is on human dignity in the light of equal access to health care meeting people’s expectations in terms of health approaches in Islam. From the

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<sup>43</sup> Yadollahpour, “Human Dignity and Its Consequences in the Holy Qur'an”, 553.

<sup>44</sup> Yadollahpour, “Human Dignity and Its Consequences in the Holy Qur'an”, 553; al-Baqara 2/256.

<sup>45</sup> Yadollahpour, “Human Dignity and Its Consequences in the Holy Qur'an”, 554.

<sup>46</sup> al-Hujurat 49/13.

views of the Qur'an and the Hadith, Islamic declarations demonstrate that human beings are shaped and formed as noble creatures.

In this study, it was discussed how society negatively affects the individuals' perceptions and reactions towards stigmatized people. And also, in this study, it was pointed out that right to life, right to freedom, right to religiosity, and equal justice for those underrepresented are consistent in accordance with Islamic religious perspectives where human dignity is considered as the unconditional value of every human being. It is a moral duty to address this issue and strive to protect all individuals' honor and dignity.

On the other hand, it is said that, through Islamic guidance, it can be possible to foster the care system in Muslim communities. Therefore, to develop healthy communities and to promote decent care, the values of Islam can be seen as promising to take care of each other in all difficult situations and medical conditions in accordance with God's commands. Especially, in the face of highly negatively stigmatized diseases, such as, HIV/AIDS which is mostly neglected in the context of health care. Islamic instruments provide promising elements for those suffering from HIV/AIDS for trusting in God, and other people for being full of love and compassion. Even though Islam does not allow sex outside marriage, it is a reality that many happen in the Muslim world as well. Sexual intercourse out of wedlock happens among Muslims in private. Muslim scholars and Muslim communities should be aware of this fact rather than ignoring it and should attempt to develop some educational programs related to decent health care. This education could help teach Muslims the beliefs of their own faith and how they can be applied to treating those that are sick, of different sexual orientation, or religious beliefs with human dignity.

In conclusion, human dignity must be promoted for the stigmatized people when it comes to social or psychological problems. Stigmatized people often face intense discrimination or rejection by the people around them. This puts lots of pressure on them psychologically or socially. Thus, it is necessary to develop a safe system in which people respect the dignity of all individuals. As discussed in the light of the Quran and the Hadith, Islam offers a safe system for those who are not adequately represented at various times when they need wellbeing, solidarity, and safety. The key point here is that health practitioners or caregivers can benefit from religious perspectives to help stigmatized persons how to manage their lives without losing their dignity and health. Still, two key questions that researchers should ponder: First, how do people's perceptions that arose from customs and traditions take precedence over the Qur'an and the Hadith regarding those who are underrepresented minorities? And second, what responsibility do Muslim scholars have in distinguishing between religion and custom? These questions suggest further research to address an enriched understanding of human dignity on decent care perspective.

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