

**THE ONTOLOGY AND PRAXIS OF RESPECT: A LONGITUDINAL ANALYSIS OF
ISLAMIC ETHICS FROM CLASSICAL HISTORY TO THE CONTEMPORARY ERA**

Abdujabborova Zahrobonu Jaloldin qizi

Teacher of religious studies at Kokand University

E-mail: zahrobonu81@gmail.com

Abstract This article explores the concept of respect (Ihtiram and Waqar) within the Islamic tradition, tracing its evolution from foundational theological principles to historical applications and modern challenges. By analyzing the distinction between "inherent dignity" (Karāmah) and "earned respect," the study highlights how Islamic civilization historically fostered pluralism and inter-faith respect. The article concludes by evaluating the application of these principles in the modern digital and globalized context.

Key words: respect, akhlaq, dignity, ethics, Medina, Karamah, Islam, Baytul hikma.

The word "respect" comes from the Latin respectus, meaning "to look back at" or "to look again." This implies that respect requires a second, deeper look—moving beyond superficial judgment to see the true worth of someone or something.

In the Islamic context, respect is not just a feeling but a religious obligation and a virtue (Akhlaq). It is defined through two main concepts:

- **Ihtiram (Respect/Deference):** This is the act of honoring someone. It is often hierarchical in a social sense (respecting parents, teachers, and elders) but egalitarian in a spiritual sense (respecting every human as a creation of Allah).
- **Adab (Refined Manners):** This is the behavioral manifestation of respect. It includes the "proper way" of doing things—how one speaks, sits, or listens to others. In Islamic scholarship, Adab is often considered more important than mere knowledge, as it represents the practical application of respect.

In the Islamic ethical framework, respect is not merely a social convention but a divinely mandated responsibility towards all of creation (The Religion of Islam, n.d.). The primary source of this respect is the Quranic concept of Karamah (human dignity), which is viewed as an ontological reality bestowed by the Creator upon all descendants of Adam, regardless of their faith or social status (The Qur'an Project, 2025).

As stated in the Quran:

"And We have certainly honored the children of Adam... and preferred them over much of what We have created" (Surah Al-Isra, 17:70).

This "Allah-given dignity" forms the legal and ethical foundation of human rights in Islam, requiring that every individual be treated with honor, reputation, and privacy (The Qur'an Project, 2025; The Religion of Islam, n.d.).

Islamic history provides numerous examples of how respect was institutionalized to manage diverse societies.

The Pact of Medina (622 CE)

Upon arriving in Medina, Prophet Muhammad established the Constitution of Medina, a seminal document in the history of human rights. This pact transformed Medina into a pluralistic city-state where Muslims, Jews, and other groups were recognized as a single community (Ummah) with equal rights to follow their own laws and traditions (Qurtuba University, n.d.). This established a precedent of state-sponsored respect for religious autonomy.

During the Abbasid Caliphate, the House of Wisdom in Baghdad became a hub for cross-cultural respect. Muslim rulers encouraged a "translation movement" where scholars of Greek, Hindu, and Persian backgrounds were respected and funded to translate manuscripts into Arabic (DergiPark, n.d.). This period demonstrated a deep respect for the "knowledge of the other," integrating diverse intellectual heritages into a unified scientific tradition.

Historically, Islamic civilizations often allowed religious minorities (Dhimmis) to maintain their own judicial and religious structures (Qurtuba University, n.d.). Figures like the Caliph Umar ibn al-Khattab and later Saladin are cited as historical archetypes of chivalry and respect, even during times of conflict, prioritizing the safety and dignity of non-combatants and adversaries (The Religion of Islam, n.d.).

Contemporary Perspectives: Respect in the Modern Era

In the 21st century, the Islamic concept of respect has adapted to address global issues such as healthcare ethics, women's rights, and minority integration in the West.

- **Clinical Ethics:** Modern research compares Islamic "inherent dignity" with Western nursing concepts of "authority-based dignity." In Islam, respect for patients is rooted in their status as creations of God, which influences bioethical codes against practices like euthanasia (Khosropanah et al., 2020).

- **Gender and Dignity:** Contemporary discourse emphasizes that historical Islam elevated the status of women by restoring their rights to reclaim dignity and property (NCBI, 2026).

- **Social Integration:** In the modern West, Muslim minority communities emphasize Maslaha (public interest) and interfaith initiatives to foster mutual respect within diverse societies (ResearchGate, 2017).

The trajectory of respect in Islam shows a transition from a strictly theological mandate to a sophisticated system of social and intellectual ethics. While historical applications focused on legal pluralism and chivalry, modern applications emphasize universal human rights and ethical care. The core principle remains: to respect humanity is to fulfill one's obligation to the Creator (The Religion of Islam, n.d.).

Dimensions of Modern Respect:

Dimension	Core Principle	Practical Application
Clinical Ethics	Karāmah (Inherent dignity)	Protecting patient privacy and providing care regardless of recovery potential.
Gender & Dignity	Nafsin Wahida (One self)	Ensuring legal equity and protection from discrimination.
Social Integration	Al-Ta'ayush (Co-existence)	Engaging in interfaith dialogue and fulfilling the duties of citizenship.

REFERENCES

1. DergiPark. (n.d.). Islamic civilization's contribution to the world and its influence. Eurasian Journal of English Language and Literature.

2. Khosropanah, A. H., et al. (2020). Comparison of the concept of patient dignity in Islamic and nursing texts. Medical Research Archives, 8(6). <https://doi.org/10.18103/mra.v8i6.2142>
3. NCBI. (2026). Women rights from Islamic perspectives: Navigating rights, challenges and contemporary perspectives. PMC. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC12848632/>
4. Qurtuba University. (n.d.). The Islamic civilization. The Dialogue. https://www.qurtuba.edu.pk/thedialogue/The%20Dialogue/1_1/04--Islamic%20Civilisatino.pdf
5. ResearchGate. (2017). The value and respect given to humankind in Islam. The International Journal of Religion and Spirituality in Society, 4(3), 43-52.
6. The Qur'an Project. (2025). Dignity in Islam. <https://www.quranproject.org/Dignity-in-Islam-672-d>
7. The Religion of Islam. (n.d.). Respect (part 1 of 3). <https://www.islamreligion.com/en/articles/1721/viewall/respect-part-1>
8. Al-Islam.org. (n.d.). Respect of human beings: Principles of sociology in Islam.
9. SciSpace. (n.d.). Development of Islamic thought and civilization in history perspective. <https://scispace.com/pdf/development-of-islamic-thought-and-civilization-in-history-2g7hfy34sy.pdf>
10. Essa, A., & Ali, O. (2012). Studies in Islamic civilization: The Muslim contribution to the Renaissance.
11. Rahman, F. (1997). Islamic methodology in history.
12. Hitti, P. K. (1970). History of the Arabs.
13. Marboe, K. (2022). Historical conceptions of Islamic civilization.
14. Rogers, C. (1951). Client-centered therapy: Its current practice, implications and theory.
15. Ashcroft, R. E. (2005). Making sense of dignity. Journal of Medical Ethics, 31(11), 679-682.