YOU'RE COUNTING THE WRONG THINGS. YOU'RE NOT COUNTING DIGNITY OF PEOPLE.

Winnie Byanyima

Measuring Felt Respect for Dignity

Brief on a new validated measure

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IDinsight

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About IDinsight
IDinsight uses data and evidence to help leaders combat poverty worldwide. Our collaborations deploy a large analytical toolkit to help clients design better policies, rigorously test what works, and use evidence to implement effectively at scale. We place special emphasis on using the right tool for the right question, and tailor our rigorous methods to the real-world constraints of decision-makers.

IDinsight works with governments, foundations, NGOs, multilaterals and businesses across Africa and Asia. We work in all major sectors including health, education, agriculture, governance, digital ID, financial access, and sanitation.

We have offices in Dakar, Lusaka, Manila, Nairobi, New Delhi, Rabat, and Remote. Visit **www.IDinsight.org** and follow on Twitter **@IDinsight** to learn more.

The Dignity Initiative

IDinsight has launched its new Dignity initiative to equip leaders in government, NGOs, philanthropies, and social enterprises with the tools they need to ensure their programs respect the people they serve. This initiative stems from Tom Wein's work with the Dignity Project over the last five years, in which he conducted research on how to better affirm the dignity of people from all around the world, what that means for their lives, and the practical changes leaders can make to build cultures of evidence-based respectfulness.

IDinsights's Dignity initiative has three main components. The first is helping the most influential actors in global development put systems in place to keep their promises to respect those they serve. The second is expanding the research agenda to keep demonstrating what works to uphold dignity and why it matters. The third component is to ensure IDinsight is an exemplary and accountable home for progressing the dignity agenda by connecting with allies and building internal processes.

Research has shown that respect for dignity is something citizens across South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa value and are frequently denied. Innovation, learning, and improvement are needed for the social sector to fully respect their dignity. Evidence suggests that respectful interactions produce greater wellbeing and self-efficacy, improved health, better functioning democratic spheres, greater cooperation, and increased service uptake and satisfaction (Wein, 2022).

Many organizations and governments are taking note. In November 2021 Tom Wein testified about dignity to the UK Parliament's International Development Committee's inquiry on the philosophy of aid, a precursor to the new FCDO aid strategy. An earlier IDinsight project to incorporate people's preferences into funding decisions contributed to the reallocation of $375 million based on a survey of people living below the poverty line in Ghana and Kenya.

IDinsight will be identifying partners committed to measuring the respectfulness with which their services or programs are delivered. These include philanthropic foundations, non-profit organizations, government ministries, and social enterprises who will work with IDinsight to identify challenges and opportunities to build a culture of dignity.

By developing and validating a measure of Felt Respect for Dignity, we can understand quantitatively whether people receiving aid, accessing services, participating in research or otherwise interacting with an institution experience respectful treatment that perceives and values their full and complex humanity.

We can integrate this into monitoring and evaluation processes, and design and test interventions and improvements to help deliver this thing that many people value and are frequently denied, realising the benefits of respectful treatment for all.

Recommended survey scale

The five questions below form a validated survey scale for understanding people's experiences of respect for their dignity in receiving aid, participating in research or other development interactions.

The scale is the result of a rigorous validation process across three contexts and three countries, as described in the following section.

We hope they will be employed widely by academic researchers and Monitoring & Evaluation professionals to understand whether their programs and interactions are properly respectful of people's dignity. Please attribute this work to the authors if you use it in your work.

Box 1: Five item 'Felt Respect for Dignity' Measure

Can you recall what happened during the interaction with the organization in as much detail as possible?

Thinking about the interaction you just described, please rate your experience on the statements below:

1. The organization treated me with dignity.
2. The organization representative listened to my requests.
3. I felt respected by the organization.
4. I felt valued by the organization.
5. I felt supported by the organization.

(Strongly disagree / Disagree / Neither / Agree / Strongly agree)

How we developed this scale

We undertook a series of steps to develop this proposed scale. Validation tests allowed us to establish that this scale performs well across three countries with divergent traditions of dignity (the US, Morocco and China), across three categories of interaction (policing, healthcare and financial services) and among multiple demographic subgroups.

Defining dignity

We employ the 'workhorse' definition of dignity used in Wein et al (2022):

> "we define dignity as a trait universal to all humans, which is inalienable, inherent, and unearned. Recognising the dignity of a person requires us to treat them in a way that respects their dignity. When we fail to show that respect for dignity, the disrespected individual can appeal to the wider society for redress (Wein, 2022). We recognize that dignity is complex, multivocal, and contested (LaVaque-Manty; Debes, 2017)—but we think ours is a reasonable workhorse definition, uniting several of the major philosophical traditions and popular understandings (Wein, 2022)." (Wein et al, 2022).

This definition of dignity draws on a thorough review of philosophical and popular traditions of dignity around the world. This is discussed in full in Wein (2022). It is especially inspired by the work of Remy Debes (2017).

How this respect is to be shown varies enormously around the world. It seems likely we will find common concerns - representation, agency and equality seem to recur often in different approaches - but at the heart of our work can be a simple question: did this person feel respected. For this reason, any measure of respect for dignity we develop must be subjective.

Mattson & Clark (2011) use the concept of sufficiency to unfold an elegant summary of the aim of this project: to develop "a concept of dignity that allowed for broad participation and contextual sensitivity in application, yet was specific enough, transcending local contexts, to allow for a productive global conversation."

Measurement literature

This work sits alongside some of the many attempts to widen the types of things we measure and take seriously as social aims – such as capabilities, desire satisfaction and happiness.

A review of 9 major collations of measures and tests in the social sciences yielded just three tests that focus on dignity or respect. Informal searches over time produced a larger number of attempts. All of this is detailed in full in Wein, Khatry & Bhimani (2022).

That search uncovered efforts to develop various similar measures in international development, social psychology, and medicine. Within the medical field, attempts to develop measures had taken place in palliative care, maternal health and mental health. Yet, our review also confirms that no well-validated measure of Felt Respect for Dignity presently exists in the literature.

In particular, other measures have primarily focused on observation or reporting of behaviours that are said to constitute respect for dignity, such that they are more firmly linked to a single conception of dignity; this work captures more variation by inviting respondents to offer a subjective report of whether they were treated in the way they would want to be.

Development phases and methods
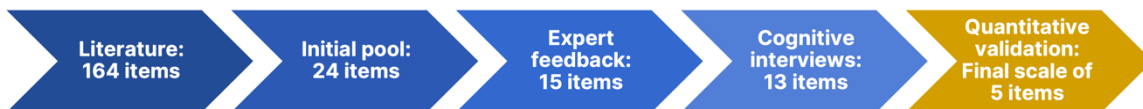
Item pool development

To develop this scale, we followed the method outlined by DeVellis (2003): generating an item pool, winnowing it down based on theory, expert literature and cognitive interviews, before proceeding to quantitative validation.

The various efforts in the literature review provided 164 different survey questions on which we could draw. Prioritising among these based on the literature and our working definition of dignity, we arrived at an initial pool of 24 items. This took place in May 2021.

On these we sought feedback from 4 social scientists who have also studied dignity. Integrating this feedback, we were left with a pool of 15 items. This feedback was gathered in June 2021.

We proposed to validate the resulting scale in the US, Morocco and China, since theory suggests people in these places would exhibit high divergence in their understanding of dignity; a scale that worked across all three countries would have a higher chance of performing well across new geographies. Since none of the authors had previously significantly studied Morocco or China, and to provide a check on excessive influence of Western philosophical approaches and linguistic norms, we conducted cognitive interviews in these places.

An intensive iterative process of translation, feedback, development and cognitive interviews took place from July-October 2021. 5 interviews were conducted in Morocco and 6 in China. We were left with a pool of 13 items that we had sufficiently high confidence would be consistently translated and interpreted across our three geographies.

| Literature: 164 items | Initial pool: 24 items | Expert feedback: 15 items | Cognitive interviews: 13 items | Quantitative validation: Final scale of 5 items |

Survey method

At this point, we prepared to select and validate the 13 items through a survey in the three countries.

We developed a survey that featured a prompt to recall a situation in the previous 1 year in which they had interacted with either a healthcare professional, a financial services provider or the police. Participants were randomly assigned to one of these scenarios. They were invited to write as much detail as they could about that experience. We then asked them to evaluate that experience using the 13 items.

The survey also included a series of scales that previous research suggested are associated with experiences of Felt Respect for Dignity. The additional scales we included in the survey measured self-dehumanization, social desirability, happiness, self-efficacy, cooperation, self-integrity, 'dignity, honor and face cultures'; all are established measures widely used in the peer reviewed literature. We also elicited respondents experience of disrespect and collected socio-demographic data.

The full version of this survey was administered to 233 US respondents via MTurk. Owing to a lack of MTurk respondents in the other countries, 270 Moroccan respondents and 214 Chinese respondents were recruited via SurveyMonkey. (We discuss the representativeness of this sample below). The SurveyMonkey panel places strict limits on questionnaire length. For this reason, a reduced version of the questionnaire was administered to these samples,

featuring only the Felt Respect for Dignity scale and the happiness and self-efficacy scales, in addition to experiences of disrespect and demographics. Consequently, convergent validity is established for a narrower list of constructs outside the US.

On the resulting sample of 717 respondents, we conducted four main tests in the following sequence:

1. We first test which of the 13-items fall into a single dimension, and how much of the variance this dimension explains. This permits us to propose a reduced-length scale. Formally, we conduct a Principal Components Analysis.
2. We assessed the internal consistency of the proposed reduced-length scale. We calculated Cronbach's alpha to measure the similarity of items, or internal consistency. Scales with high internal consistency are regarded as performing better.
3. We assess how well the proposed reduced-length scale identified in step 1 relates to other existing measures that should correlate with a measure of Felt Respect for Dignity. Formally, we assess convergent validity by calculating the correlation between our scale with the other scales.
4. We assess the robustness and equity of our scale by examining these results among many subgroups.

Quantitative results summary

We present here only a brief summary of the statistical analysis performed. Full detail and all statistical tables will be produced in the accompanying working paper.

Scale validation tests

First, we find that a five-item version of the scale loads onto a single factor, and that this factor explains a large proportion of the variance ($\rho = 0.480$). A second factor, containing two items, explains only a little more of the variance. In simple terms, this allows us to propose the use of the five-item version of the scale, since these items are 'doing the most work'.

We then perform a series of tests to check the performance of this five-item version.

The five-item version of the scale reported above has a high internal consistency, which we check by calculating the statistic Cronbach's alpha (α = 0.909). This means that these items cohere together, and is interpreted as a strong performance for a scale of this nature (DeVellis, 2003).

A scale performs better if it exhibits 'convergent validity' – if data on that scale correlates with previously established scales that the literature suggests it ought to correlate with. The proposed version of the scale displayed convergent validity with 5 of the 7 scales included in our study. The strength of the correlation (r) ranged from 0.100-0.800 for scales measuring self-dehumanization, happiness, self-efficacy, self-integrity, and cultural syndrome. Convergent validity was not observed (r was below 0.3) with scales for social desirability and cooperation. Convergent validity of at least 0.3 is considered useful in the social sciences (DeVellis, 2003).

We then looked at whether this version of the scale continued to show high internal consistency among several subgroups. This allows us to assess whether the scale is robust, and to avoid reinforcing social inequities by ensuring the scale works for people of a wide variety of identities. This version of the scale performed consistently well ($\alpha > 0.7$) for interactions experienced in the past year across all three countries, three situations (financial services, healthcare and policing), and across gender, age, education, disability, socio-economic status, income, household size, marital status and urbanisation, suggesting it is appropriate for use with a wide range of contexts and populations.

We conclude that the five-item version of the scale is appropriately valid, and recommend its use in future research.

Replication materials are available on request, and will be shared publicly alongside a working paper shortly.

Sample representativeness

In scale development, the most important priority is that the scale performs well with a varied sample, since we hope to arrive at a scale that can be used across many places. However, we also want to know whether these results can be said to be representative of particular populations, in order to ascertain whether we can confidently recommend the resulting scale for a particular country. We therefore look at whether our sample differs from the general population for our three countries across gender, education, age and income.

Considering gender, there is no significant difference between the US or Chinese population and sample means. In Morocco, our sample has significantly more women than the wider population. Our sample is significantly better

educated and significantly wealthier than the population in the case of Morocco and China. The US-based sample has no significant difference with its population in terms of education at 0.05 level. However, the US sample has a significantly lower household income on average than the population. When it comes to age, the three countries' sample mean ages of 18+ individuals are significantly smaller than the population.

Since we especially hope to use the measure in studying development, we further conducted an analysis on a subgroup of 179 respondents who earn less than $10,000. The measure performed similarly among this group. However, we are conscious that this income level is higher than the poverty line in many countries.

These results suggest that while the overall scale can be recommended for general use, caution should be used for poorer and less educated samples, and further validation is needed for those groups and for additional countries.

Future research

These results are shared as part of IDinsight's Dignity initiative. A central goal for that initiative is to conduct and aggregate research to produce credible indicators that demonstrate the severity of disrespect for dignity, and the effectiveness of interventions to uphold respect for dignity, and share it with the audiences discussed in the introduction.

The results from this study are be reported in further detail in two working papers. The first of these examines the construction and performance of the scale (Wein, Khatry & Bhimani, 2022), while the second (Wein, Khatry & Bhimani, in progress) will offer descriptive results of our respondents' experiences of Felt Respect for Dignity.

The research shall continue beyond that. We recently published a consensus statement on the research agenda for dignity (Wein & Attendees of the Dignity Symposium, 2022), which outlined five themes around which future research should focus:

1. How is dignity to be defined?
2. How can respectfulness be measured?
3. How does dignity and respect operate?
4. What acts increase perceptions of respectfulness, and what are the consequences of that?
5. How do actors and sectors regard dignity and what actions will increase support for a dignity agenda?

This scale supports theme 2. In the future, we will contribute more to theme 2 by employing and further validating this scale in a wider range of geographic and situational contexts, and with special attention to poorer and less educated populations. We hope also to develop three further iterations of this scale: an incentive-compatible approach to help overcome potential social desirability biases that are present in all survey research, a shortened adaptation of the Respect for Persons scale (Lalljee et al, 2007) to measure whether people embrace an ethic of respecting the dignity of others, and thirdly a parallel scale measuring respondents' 'global sense of respectedness', appropriate for use in studies in which some participants do not experience an interaction with an aid-giver (such as a 'pure' control group in a randomised control trial).

We further propose to deploy this scale to deepen our understanding of theme 3 and especially theme 4.

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