

# The Concept of Environment Based on Iranian Mysticism and Wisdom, Toward Development of a Nursing Theory

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## Abstract

**Background and Objective:** Nurses seek to develop their professional knowledge through theorizing. The philosophical viewpoint dominating the nursing theories is based on Western thought and Iranian mysticism and wisdom are unknown concepts in nursing. For developing a nursing theory, there is first a need to define the main nursing concepts, i.e. human, environment, health and nursing. The aim of this study was to synthesize the concept of environment through an analytical review of the literature on Iranian mysticism and wisdom.

**Methods:** This is a library-based study carried out using Ryan-Wenger's Concept Synthesis. For this purpose, first the components of the concept proposed by Walker and Avant were inductively selected as predetermined classes and, then, after reviewing one third of the selected literature, the nature of the cases to be placed in each class was deductively determined. In this study all the ethical considerations were observed and the author did not report any conflict of interests.

**Results:** Based on the results, 'manifestation' and 'existential orders' were defined as the antecedents, 'order of the creations', 'essential movement', 'temperament', 'sacred predisposition' and 'cosmic order' were defined as the attributes and 'balance/imbalance' and 'harmony/disharmony' were the outcomes of the concept of environment.

**Conclusion:** The concept of environment in the Iranian mysticism and wisdom has a dynamic nature and includes physical/nonphysical creations including human beings; every single component inside it is affected by the whole. This is a more comprehensive definition of nursing compared to the current humanistic definitions in nursing theories, which are mainly individualistic and humanistic; it sees the nature of human being along with other creatures and the Creator and taking into account the influence of creations on each other's health.

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## Summary

### Background and Objective

Nurses seek to develop their professional knowledge through theory development. These theories are based on Western philosophical standpoints and the role of Iranian mysticism and wisdom in the texts related to nursing are not

clear. Humanism and existentialism dominate the common theories in this regard and are insufficient in explaining the complex nature of human health and illness experiences particularly those related to spirituality (1). The present study is an attempt to synthesize the concept of environment based on an analytic review of the Iranian mysticism and wisdom.

### Methods

**Compliance with ethical guidelines:** In this study, all the ethical principles related to library research were observed meaning that, in using the references, honesty was observed in mentioning each source and trying to convey the content without changing the meaning.

This study is library-based and was carried out using Ryan-Wenger's Concept Synthesis. To synthesize the concept of environment, the following steps were taken: 1) entering the context of Iranian mysticism and wisdom; 2) reviewing the concept of environment in nursing theories; 3) establishing the concept and determining the classes of the antecedent, 4) reviewing the literature on Iranian mysticism and wisdom, 5) synthesizing the concept; and, finally, 6) naming the themes.

### Results

Human environment includes the whole world of creation encompassing material and non-material entities that are the manifestations of numberless divine attributes; in their unique pathway to perfection, they are related to each other in a complicated network. The antecedents of the concept of environment in the area of Iranian mysticism and wisdom include manifestation and orders of existence (8). From this point of view, the universe is a manifestation of divine attributes reflected in each creature and God has bestowed His divine essence upon all creatures.

The features of the concept of environment in the present study include the orders of existence, essential movement, sacred predisposition, temperament and cosmic order. Based on their share of divine essence, beings create the existential order in the ordered realms of the world. Absolute consciousness has the highest share and preliminary elements (subatomic structures) have the lowest share of the divine essence. Based on the feature of essential movement, all the creatures in the material world tend to move toward completion and antecedent perfection and achieve the status of 'being' as the result of descending into the stage of materiality and having the potential divine essence.

Essential movement of all the creatures at any scale is related to the whole of entity as a single unit. Based on the predispositions, the phenomena reflect a certain aspect of the attributes of their origin while human being can choose to reflect the attributes of antecedent at his/her own will, upon being given the free will to choose (12). Creatures are categorically placed in three realms of sensation, imagination and cognizance based on their level of enjoyment of the sacred essence.

The material realm, which is the lowest rank, lies within the realm of imagination, both of which are in the great realm of cognizance.

On the other hand, at the smallest scale, the world of creation is the result of the interaction between energy and matter. The numberless qualities of this interaction make the creatures that have a particular temperament based on their level of enjoyment of this twofold essence (13). Human being potentially has the most balanced temperament. It is via this balance that the essential movement of human being toward the highest existential statuses possible referred to as human and rational self, and the state of higher self or consciousness can be achieved (10).

In the world of matter, there are two kinds of order including formative and directive. Any conscious and intentional attempt to manifest the divine attributes of human being is categorized as directive rules (9).

The outcomes of the concept of environment, according to this perspective, include balance/imbalance and harmony/disharmony. The best state of evolution toward perfection and transcendence or, in other words, creatures' achievement of perfection happens in the state of physical and mental balance. Harmony refers to the consistency with the divine spirit of human beings and the whole world of existence as the numberless divine attributes (9-10).

### Conclusion

In the present conceptualization, the relationship between the physical and non-physical dimensions of human was discussed in correspondence with the modern sciences. While there has been a long controversy over the relationship between body and mind, Molla Sadra explained the interchange of matter and energy using the concept of kinetic movement. On the other hand, what is called 'spirit' in the current literature on nursing, is the potential divine attributes institutionalized in human, which transcend human spirit toward perfection if they are manifested. In this case, human will feel happy and healthy. This is consistent with the holistic approach to nursing. According to many Islamic philosophy scientists, this view of the spirit can be scientifically explained by the interaction between energy and matter in the atomic structures and modern Quantum physics, so it is scientifically accepted (8).

Regarding the physical or material dimension of human being, it can be explained by the theory of temperament and the interaction of all creations

of the world. Temperament can also help to provide care in a more unique way.

Harmony and balance are the outcomes of nursing in many nursing theories (3). Marta Rodgers considers health and illness as the patterns existing in the context of human and environment and need to be harmonized (1).

In general, this conceptualization of the environment in the area of Iranian mysticism and wisdom is consistent with the recent nursing theories, but a more comprehensive view and moving away from extremist humanism dominate these theories. In this perspective, individualism common in the recent theories is mediated in the physical and spiritual aspects by the increased role of self and others in one's own and others' physical health and spiritual transcendence.

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### Ethical considerations

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### Conflict of interest

The author declared no conflicts of interest.

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