
Importance of Ethical Code of Conduct for Psychological Practice in Pakistan

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Professional ethics must be applied in each setting and all professional disciplines. Although all professional ethics are the same but according to culture, it translates differently. In the field of psychology, it is essential part to ensure the quality treatment to client. It promotes client's trust and assures the effectiveness of clinical treatment. One of the key elements of professional competence in the practice of psychology is ethical behavior. Clinical psychology practice is directly linked to developing a rapport and trusting relationship with clients. Respecting the diversity and dignity of clients, research participants, and other people involved in a psychological practice activity within a professional setting is a prerequisite for ethical conduct. Like any other professional practice, there should be some ethical principles for the practice of psychology (Andersson et al., 2022; Wahass, 2005).

The American Psychological Association (APA) developed Ethical General Principles, and Standards for Psychologists in 2002. These standards witnessed amendments twice and the current effective version is of 2017. The APA code of Ethics covers wide range of professional domains like education of psychologists, decision-making, training, supervision, development

of assessment tools, relationship-building, conduct of assessment, therapy, forensic matters and resolving ethical issues. As an APA member, one assumes responsibility for abiding by the Code of Ethics as well as the policies and guidelines that support it. Whether or not they are members of the APA, psychologists and students should be aware that state psychology council or boards, courts, or other public bodies may apply the Ethics Code in their psychological practice (APA, 2016, 2017). The Ethics Code is meant to offer guidelines for professional behavior that the APA and other organizations who decide to adopt it can use. Psychologists can use this Ethics Code as a common set of ideals to guide their professional and research activity. A psychologist's legal liability in a court action, the enforceability of a contract, and other legal implications are not determined by whether or not they have violated the Ethics Code. Its primary goal is to outline the ethical issues that must be taken into account in order to ensure a professional manner in the field of psychology. Creating a dynamic set of ethical guidelines for a psychologist's behavior at work necessitates a lifetime commitment to acting morally; supporting moral behavior in students, employees, supervisees, and colleagues when necessary; and seeking advice from others when needed on moral issues. Each psychologist adds to the principles and guidelines of the Ethics Code, without violating them, by using guidance derived from their own cultural beliefs, experiences, and values (Sahar et al., 2021, 2022).

The importance of an Ethical Code of Conduct for psychological practice in Pakistan is as dear as in other countries. The

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goal of this writing is to draw attention to the current state of ethical issues in psychological practice, how they are used, and what needs to be improved in Pakistan. In Pakistan, there are many unethical practices carried out by a few unlicensed psychologists in the country; these individuals are the bad examples of Pakistan's clinical psychology community. Pakistan is under developed country. The role of psychologists' is very important in the contribution to society's social development. Psychologists have been working to improve society and the public in Pakistan for many years, in a variety of capacities. Pakistan Psychological Society (PPS) is a platform for psychologists. The PPS not only work to improve people's health, advance community well-being, and promote psychology as a scientific, professional, and applied discipline, it also contributes in formulating ethical principles and Code of Conducts for Pakistani psychologists. Pakistan Psychological Society believes in adhering to the APA Code of Conduct in addition to adding specified minimum practice guidelines for psychological practice in Pakistan. By joining the PPS, members agree to abide by the guidelines as set by the society which aim at protecting the betterment of people and advance the discipline. Ignorance or misinterpretation of an Ethical Standard does not absolve one from responsibility for unethical behavior (APA, 2017).

There are positive and negative sides of ethical issues in healthcare settings as well. In clinical setting, usually, a psychiatrist refers their patients to a Clinical Psychologist. Most of the cases are not suitable for psychologists to handle; for instance, patients with respiratory problems or knee discomfort are also recommended for psychotherapy. This shows a very unprofessional approach, and before suggesting psychotherapy, the referring psychiatrist ought to pay close attention to the concerns and problems raised by the clients. There is also lack of awareness about psychiatric illness and especially

psychotherapy. In Pakistan, there is also a great violation of privacy during family counseling. Certain psychologists have an extremely indifferent attitude toward their clients. Clients' self-respect is neglected during sessions, and unfortunately in our culture, ethics are defined of the person according to his/her socio economic status. They use unethical way of communication style e.g., harsh tone and words. In private practice, some Clinical Psychologists charge excessive fees for lengthy sessions and evaluations, placing a financial strain on their clients and in Government hospitals, short sessions and exhibit lack of confidentiality due to overburden and lack of facilities. Mostly are working without required education or training. The major ethical issue is absence agreed upon set of ethical principles and guidelines. Though, Government has delegated the licensing authority to Council of Allied Health Professions but much has to be done to enforce and teach psychologists the ethical behavior in their practices. The professional organization may play their role in this regard by developing tailored guidelines for Pakistani psychologists keeping in line with the cultural considerations (Naeem et al., 2010; Sahar et al., 2021).

Contribution of Authors

Rizwana Amin: Conceptualization, Investigation, Writing - Reviewing & Editing

Bushra Akram: Conceptualization, Investigation, Writing – Original Draft, Writing - Reviewing & Editing

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