

Ethics in Psychological Assessments

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Psychological assessments are important tools counselors use to understand and evaluate an individual's mental health, cognitive abilities, behavioral conditions, and personality traits (American Psychological Association, 2020). These assessments help outline treatment plans and strategies, but their use requires careful concern for ethical standards. The use of these evaluations must follow strict ethical guidelines to ensure fairness, accuracy, and respect for the individuals being assessed. This paper reviews three key ethical issues in psychological assessments: strategies to avoid these issues, the assessment of behaviors from diverse cultures, and the impact of a client's development on assessment choices. Additionally, it examines how these ethical issues are addressed in "Section E: Evaluation, Assessment, and Interpretation" from the American Counseling Association (ACA) Code of Ethics (2014).

Ethical Issues in Psychological Assessments

Informed consent is an inherent ethical requirement in psychological assessments. Clients must be informed about the assessment's nature, purpose, and potential outcomes, including explaining the procedures, using the results, and any potential risks or benefits. Counselors failing to obtain informed consent can lead to ethical violations and legal consequences (Palmer, 2015). Additionally, maintaining confidentiality is crucial in psychological assessments, so counselors must ensure that the information acquired during the assessment is kept private and only shared with permitted individuals because a lack of confidentiality can harm the client and undermine trust in the therapeutic relationship. One of the main ethical challenges in psychological assessments is the fair and accurate evaluation of individuals from diverse backgrounds (Knauss, 2019). Traditional psychological assessments may contain cultural biases, leading to misinterpretation of behaviors, attitudes, and emotions, so all must be considered.

To address this ethical concern, counselors should select culturally appropriate assessments and take cultural norms, values, and communication styles into account when interpreting results (Sue, 2006). This can also be achieved through receiving training in cultural competence and familiarizing oneself with the client's cultural background before choosing or administering assessments. It is imperative that psychological assessments are suitable for individuals from diverse backgrounds, taking into consideration language differences, and the individual's social norms and values that may impact the assessment process and outcomes (Sue, 2006). Utilizing assessments that have not been validated for specific cultural groups can result in inaccurate findings and potential harm to the client, underscoring the responsibility of the counselor to ensure the appropriateness of the assessment.

Avoiding Ethical Issues in Psychological Assessments

To avoid ethical issues in psychological assessments, counselors can implement several strategies. Counselors should receive adequate training in the administration and interpretation of psychological assessments. They should engage in continual professional development to understand the cultural backgrounds and belief systems of their clients, emphasizing the importance of staying updated in their field (Sue, 2006). Supervision from experienced professionals can help ensure that assessments are conducted ethically and competently. It is essential to use assessment tools that are validated and reliable for the specific population being assessed, which includes considering cultural and linguistic appropriateness to ensure accurate and fair results (Sue, 2006). Counselors must offer clients clear and comprehensive information about the assessment process, including the purpose, procedures, potential risks, and benefits. They should also obtain written consent before proceeding and specify the confidentiality of the

assessment results. For clients with limited English proficiency, translated materials or the assistance of interpreters should be provided (APA. 2017).

Assessing Behaviors from Diverse Cultures

When assessing behaviors that stem from different cultures or subcultures, counselors must adopt a culturally competent approach and educate themselves about their clients' cultural backgrounds (Cohen et al., 2022). This includes understanding cultural norms, values, and practices influencing behavior and assessment outcomes. Selecting assessment tools that are culturally validated and appropriate for the client's background is crucial because it helps ensure that the results are accurate and reflective of the client's true abilities and characteristics. When necessary, counselors should seek consultation from cultural experts or colleagues who have experience working with specific cultural groups (Cohen et al., 2022). This can provide valuable insights and help avoid cultural biases in the assessment process.

Impact of Client's Development on Assessment Choice

A client's academic, career, personal, and social development significantly impact the choice of psychological assessments (Cohen et al., 2022). Additionally, different stages of life bring different psychological, emotional, and cognitive challenges, which must be considered when administering assessments. Assessments for academic purposes should consider the client's educational background and experiences. They should measure cognitive abilities, learning styles, and academic achievement to understand the client's educational needs and strengths. Career assessments focus on understanding the client's interests, skills, and aspirations and help in career planning and development by identifying appropriate career paths and areas for growth (Cohen et al., 2022). Personal and social development assessments evaluate the

client's interpersonal skills, emotional intelligence, and social interactions. These are crucial tools for understanding the client's social functioning and identifying areas for personal growth.

Addressing Ethical Issues in the ACA Code of Ethics

“Section E: Evaluation, Assessment, and Interpretation” of the ACA Code of Ethics (2014) provides comprehensive guidelines for addressing ethical issues in psychological assessments. The ACA Code of Ethics emphasizes obtaining informed consent (E.3.a) before conducting assessments, which involves providing clients with clear information about the process and obtaining their voluntary participation agreement. Confidentiality, code E.5.a, mandates that counselors maintain the privacy of assessment results and only share information with authorized individuals, which protects the client and fosters trust (APA, 2014). Cultural Sensitivity (E.5.b) in the ACA Code of Ethics (2014) highlights the need for cultural understanding in assessments, encourages using culturally appropriate tools, and considers the client's cultural background when interpreting assessment results.

Conclusion

Psychological assessments offer valuable insights, but they must be used carefully to ensure ethical and fair treatment of clients. Counselors can ensure that assessments are carried out fairly and accurately by following ethical guidelines, receiving proper training, using validated tools, and being culturally competent. Addressing issues such as informed consent and test bias in the assessment process is important. Counselors must select appropriate, valid, and reliable assessment tools that consider the client's cultural, educational, and developmental background to navigate the complexities of psychological assessments while upholding the highest standards of professional conduct.

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