

Re-conceptualising Psychological Assessment in Africa: A Critical Analysis of Eurocentric Methodologies and Framing Culturally Informed Psychometric Instruments

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Abstract

This scoping review critically examines the limitations of Eurocentric methodologies and tools used in psychological assessment across Africa, emphasising the urgent need for the development of culturally informed and contextually relevant psychometric instruments. A systematic and comprehensive search of peer-reviewed literature published over the last four years identified 20 studies spanning 12 African countries and involving over 800 participants. The review employed a rigorous methodological process, including contextual analysis of the gathered data, to evaluate the applicability and effectiveness of existing psychological assessment tools in African settings.

The findings highlight the pervasive dominance of Eurocentric methodologies and psychometric tools in psychological assessment across Africa, revealing their inadequacy in capturing the unique psychological, cultural, and contextual realities of African populations. These tools often fail to account for the cultural nuances, values, and lived experiences that shape mental health and well-being in African societies. As a result, they risk misdiagnosis, inappropriate treatment, and the perpetuation of mental health disparities.

In relation to the theory and practice, the study challenges the universality of Eurocentric psychological theories; it is supportive of theory change towards indigenous psychologies based on African worldviews, values, and cognitive systems. It underlines the epistemic injustice in dominant psychology and calls for a pluralist approach to understanding behaviour and mental health.

Furthermore, through the critical exploration of Eurocentric assumptions employed in assessment tools, the study maintains a theoretical respect for the reality that notions of intelligence, personality, and mental illness are culturally mediated. The inquiry fosters the formation of emic (culture-specific) approaches as contrasted with etic (universal) approaches.

Lastly, this study influences educational and clinical training by stressing cultural competence and the need to appreciate local belief systems and idioms of distress. Psychologists and counsellors are prompted to apply indigenous wisdom as well as community-based approaches in their assessments and interventions. By moving away from Eurocentric norms, assessments

become more equitable and inclusive, reducing the risk of misdiagnosis or cultural bias. This enhances client trust, diagnostic validity, and treatment outcomes in African populations. In practice, the study oversees the development and standardisation of psychometric tests that are culturally congruent with African communities. This renders psychological tests valid, reliable, and ethical. It can lead to the translation or creation of measures sensitive to language and context, such as the South African Personality Inventory (SAPI).

In conclusion, this scoping review highlights the limitations of Eurocentric psychological assessment methodologies in Africa and advocates for a transformative approach that centres on cultural relevance and contextual accuracy.

Keywords: Eurocentric methodologies, culturally informed psychological instruments, psychological assessments, Afrocentric psychological assessments tools, cultural competence, mental health

Introduction

Psychological assessment is a cornerstone of mental health practice, playing a critical role in diagnosis, treatment planning, and intervention. However, the dominant paradigms and instruments used in psychological assessment have been predominantly developed and standardised in Western contexts, with limited consideration for the cultural, social, and historical realities of African societies (Mpofu, 2020). This has led to the widespread imposition of Eurocentric methodologies and instruments on African populations, often without adequate attention to their cultural validity, relevance, or applicability (Nwoye, 2020).

The use of Eurocentric methodologies and instruments in psychological assessment in Africa has been widely criticised for perpetuating cultural imperialism, pathologising African cultures, and neglecting the unique mental health needs of African populations (Kamya, 2022). As a result, they risk misrepresenting or misdiagnosing mental health conditions, leading to inappropriate or ineffective interventions (Mpofu, 2020).

Research has consistently shown that Eurocentric instruments are ill-equipped to capture the cultural nuances and complexities of African societies. For example, constructs such as resilience, emotional expression, and coping mechanisms may manifest differently in African cultures compared to Western contexts; yet, these differences are rarely reflected in standardised assessment tools (Nwoye, 2020). This cultural misalignment can result in inaccurate diagnoses, ineffective treatment plans, promote stigmatization, loss of rapport and engagement between client and assessor, impact legal and ethical issues, systematic inequality

and bias, and the perpetuation of mental health disparities across the continent (Ridley et al., 1994)

The primary objective of this paper is to advocate for re-conceptualising psychological assessments in Africa by examining the limitations of Eurocentric methodologies and instruments and advocating for the development of culturally informed psychometric instruments. To achieve this, the paper draws on existing bodies of literature to critically analyse the shortcomings of Eurocentric approaches in psychological assessment (Ratele, 2016; Holdstock, 2000; Mkhize, 2004; Bulatao & Bernardo, 2016). It synthesises findings from various studies, highlighting the cultural biases and limitations of these approaches in capturing the unique cultural, social, and historical contexts of African society (Nsamenang, 1995; Mpofu, 2002; Van de Vijver & Tanzer, 2004; Atilola, 2015; Eagle, 2005).

In summary, this paper underscores the urgent need to move beyond Eurocentric frameworks and embrace culturally informed approaches to psychological assessment in Africa. By doing so, mental health professionals, researchers, and policymakers can work together to design a more inclusive, equitable, and effective mental health system that truly serves the diverse needs of African populations (Abdullah & Ridge, 2008; Ratele, 2016; Owusu-Bempah & Howitt, 2000). This shift not only addresses the limitations of existing practices but also paves the way for improved mental health outcomes and reduced disparities across the continent (Sodi et al., 2011; Laher & Cockcroft, 2014).

Background

Psychological assessment is a vital component of mental health practice, providing essential information that informs diagnosis, treatment planning, and intervention strategies (Nwoye, 2020). Accurate and culturally sensitive assessment is critical for developing effective treatment plans, improving mental health outcomes, and fostering cultural competence in mental health practice (Sue & Sue, 2020). However, the dominant methodologies and instruments used in psychological assessment have been predominantly developed and standardized in Western contexts, often without consideration for the cultural, social, and historical realities of African societies (Mpofu, 2020; Nwoye, 2020). This has led to the widespread use of Eurocentric tools in Africa, despite their limited applicability and potential for cultural bias, misdiagnosis, and inappropriate interventions (Kamya, 2022).

The reliance on Eurocentric methodologies and instruments in psychological assessment has been extensively criticised for its cultural insensitivity and lack of relevance in African contexts

(Mpofu, 2020; Nwoye, 2020). These tools are often rooted in Western cultural values, norms, and assumptions, which may not align with the diverse and complex realities of African societies. This cultural misalignment can lead to inter alia; inaccurate diagnoses, ineffective treatment plans, promote stigmatisation, loss of rapport and engagement between client and assessor, impact legal and ethical issues, systematic inequality and bias, and the perpetuation of mental health disparities across the continent (Ridley et al., 1994)

The limitations of Eurocentric instruments are further compounded by their lack of cultural validity, reliability, and standardisation in African contexts (Mpofu, 2020). Without proper adaptation and validation, these tools risk misinterpreting assessment results, leading to inappropriate interventions and treatments (Kamya, 2022). For instance, a study by Kamya (2022) found that the use of Eurocentric instruments in Uganda resulted in the misdiagnosis of mental health conditions, underscoring the need for culturally informed assessment tools. Such misdiagnoses not only undermine the effectiveness of mental health services but also erode trust and confidence in these services among African communities.

Research has consistently shown that Eurocentric instruments often fail to capture the cultural nuances and complexities of African societies, leading to inaccurate diagnoses and interventions (Mpofu, 2020; Nwoye, 2020). For example, the Western conceptualisation of mental health conditions such as depression or anxiety may not fully align with how these conditions are experienced and expressed in African cultures. This disconnect can result in the misdiagnosis and mistreatment of mental health conditions, exacerbating the mental health disparities faced by African populations (Kamya, 2022).

To address these challenges, it is essential to develop culturally informed psychometric instruments that are grounded in the unique cultural, social, and historical contexts of African societies (Mpofu, 2020). This requires collaboration between African researchers, mental health professionals, and communities to ensure that assessment tools and interventions are culturally responsive, relevant, and empowering (Kamya, 2022).

In summary, the dominance of Eurocentric methodologies in psychological assessment in Africa has, among other consequences, significant limitations, including cultural bias, misdiagnosis, promotes stigmatization and neglects of indigenous knowledge systems. To address these challenges, there is an urgent need for a paradigm shift that prioritises the development and use of culturally informed psychometric instruments. By embracing this shift, Africa can move toward a mental health system that respects and reflects the diversity of its

populations, ultimately improving mental health outcomes and reducing disparities across the continent.

Scoping objectives

- 1) To critically interrogate the limitations of Eurocentric psychological assessment tools in African contexts.
- 2) To explore the conceptualisation and efficacy of culturally-grounded psychometric tools that are sensitive to African populations.
- 3) To explore the implications and consequences of integrating indigenous knowledge systems into psychological assessment tools for mental health practice and policy in Africa.

Scoping research questions

- 1) How do Eurocentric psychological assessment tools fall short in aligning cultural values and social realities of African populations?
- 2) What empirical data in existing studies supports the efficacy of culturally-grounded assessment tools in improving mental health outcomes across different African contexts?
- 3) What are the practical and policy implications of adopting culturally-informed psychological assessments in African mental health services?

Knowledge gap

While diagnostic tools are widely applied in African countries, the majority of test instruments are developed and tailed to Western contexts which do not capture the sociocultural realities of the African people. Psychometric tools in Africa lack normative data and exhibit over simplified linguistic, educational, and contextual differences (van de Vijver & Tanzer, 2004; Mpofu, 2002).

Dependence on these Western instruments has fostered a culture of epistemic violence, exacerbating misrepresentation and misdiagnosis in the assessment of African mental health, intellect and personality (Mkhize, 2004). These insights demonstrate that there is an urgent need to re-think frameworks of psychological assessment in Africa (Ratele, 2016). Whilst, scholars across Africa have been advocating for this, there is not enough development being done in terms of designing new culture specific instruments. That said, the translation of this academic consensus amongst African scholars into pragmatic action has been slow (Mpofu, 2020). The reasons for this are various, but at the crucifix of this conundrum are a lack of

funding support, lack of access to research facilities by scholars, and continued dependence on the Western norm referenced assessment tools (Nwoye, 2025; Adams et al., 2017).

Significance of the study

This review expands and taps into the current emerging decolonisation narrative in psychology by illustrating how psychological evaluations may be more meaningful, valid, and ethical in Africa if they are guided by indigenous frameworks and cultures (Pillay, 2017; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013).

This study explores:

- ❖ A critical framework to assess existing tools and their validity in a different culture.
- ❖ The efficacy of culturally sensitive, ethically sound, and scientifically rigorous socially responsible instruments.
- ❖ Empirical advocacy for Afrocentric methodologies that confront the cultural invisibility within global psychological science frameworks and how the same impacts policy and pragmatic application (Stevens, 2018).

The review may also guide changes in training, clinical practice, and educational policies to make psychological services more relevant and effective in African contexts (Nsamenang & Tchombe, 2011). It also hopes to galvanise gatekeepers to be proactive in funding development of such tools.

Justification

Use of non-culturally and linguistically adapted tests leads to misdiagnosis, exclusion, validity threat, and influence stigma (van de Vijver & Tanzer, 2004). Ethical guidelines of institutions like the American Psychological Association (APA, 2023) and the International Test Commission (ITC, 2017) emphasise cultural sensitivity in test use, although these standards are not equally embraced in the African context.

Besides, African scholars argue that Western psychological science is far from being globally neutral and universal, but is based on colonial assumptions about mental health and human development (Mkhize, 2004; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013). Such a review is then warranted by the urgent need to redefine African epistemology, construct context-specific assessment tools, and enhance the scientific and ethical quality of psychological services in the continent and to re-

galvanise African scholars and authorities to take a pragmatic approach in addressing the gaps and applying scholarly knowledge into solving the conundrum.

Methodology

A justified archival research methodology was employed to critically analyse the limitations of Eurocentric methodologies and instruments in psychological assessment in Africa and explore the development of culturally informed psychometric instruments (Arksey & O'Malley, 2020). This approach was chosen to systematically review and synthesise existing literature, providing a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities in psychological assessment practices across the continent.

A systematic search of previous research studies was conducted using major academic databases, including PsycINFO, Scopus, and PubMed (Tricco et al., 2020). The search strategy incorporated a combination of keywords such as “psychological assessment,” “Eurocentric methodologies,” “culturally informed psychometric instruments,” “Africa,” and “cultural competence” (Kamya, 2022). Boolean operators (AND, OR) were used to refine the search and ensure the inclusion of relevant studies.

Inclusion and exclusion criteria

The inclusion criteria for this review were as follows:

- a) Peer-reviewed articles, book chapters, and conference proceedings published in English.
- b) Studies focusing on psychological assessment in African contexts.
- c) Research published within the specified time frame (2018–2023).

The exclusion criteria included:

- i) Studies that did not focus on psychological assessment in Africa.
- ii) Research published outside the specified time frame.
- iii) Non-peer-reviewed studies, such as opinion pieces or editorials.

Study selection process

The initial search identified 250 studies. After applying the inclusion and exclusion criteria, 50 studies were selected for further review. Following a thorough evaluation of these studies, 20 were chosen for inclusion in the final analysis. These studies represented 12 African countries and involved over 800 participants.

Data extraction and analysis

Data extraction and analysis involved content and textual analysis of the included studies. A standardised data extraction form was developed to capture key information related to study design, sample characteristics, and findings (Elo et al., 2020). The form was piloted on a subset of studies to ensure its reliability and validity.

The data extraction form captured the following information:

- 1) Study design: Methodology, sampling strategy, and data collection methods.
- 2) Sample characteristics: Demographics, cultural background, and mental health status of participants.
- 3) Key findings: Limitations, challenges, and implications of Eurocentric methodologies and instruments in psychological assessment in Africa.

The content and textual analysis followed a systematic and transparent process, using a combination of inductive and deductive approaches (Tricco et al., 2020). The inductive approach involved identifying emerging themes and patterns in the data, while the deductive approach tested predefined hypotheses and research questions against the data.

Thematic analysis

The thematic analysis focused on identifying recurring themes related to the limitations of Eurocentric methodologies and the potential of culturally informed psychometric instruments.

Key themes included:

- i) Cultural bias and misdiagnosis: The inability of Eurocentric tools to capture the cultural nuances of African societies, leading to inaccurate diagnoses and interventions.
- ii) Neglect of indigenous knowledge systems: The marginalisation of traditional healing practices and cultural beliefs in psychological assessment.
- iii) Development of culturally informed instruments: The importance of creating assessment tools grounded in African cultural values and norms.
- iv) Cultural competence and sensitivity: The need for mental health professionals to develop cultural competence when working with African populations.

Rigorous and transparent process

The use of content and textual analysis in this study allowed for a detailed and systematic examination of the included studies. This approach ensured that the findings were grounded in

the data and provided a robust foundation for drawing conclusions. The systematic process of coding and categorising the data enabled the identification of key themes, patterns, and findings related to the use of Eurocentric methodologies and instruments in psychological assessment in Africa.

Contribution to the field

The findings of this study contribute to a deeper understanding of the limitations and challenges of Eurocentric methodologies and instruments in African contexts. They highlight the urgent need for culturally informed and responsive approaches to psychological assessment and mental health practice.

In summary, the methodology employed in this study was rigorous, transparent, and systematic, ensuring the reliability and validity of the findings. The use of archival research, combined with content and textual analysis, allowed for a comprehensive exploration of the limitations of Eurocentric methodologies and the potential of culturally informed psychometric instruments in Africa.

Results

The findings from the archival research methodology revealed a substantial body of literature critiquing the predominance of Eurocentric methodologies and instruments in psychological assessment across Africa frequently fail to account for the cultural nuances and complexities of African societies. This oversight often leads to inaccurate diagnoses, inappropriate interventions, and a lack of relevance to the lived experiences of African populations.

Key findings

- a) How do Eurocentric psychological assessment tools fail short in aligning cultural values and social realities of African populations?**

Criticism of Eurocentric instruments

The review found that 85% of the studies criticised the use of Eurocentric instruments in psychological assessment in Africa. Common critiques included cultural bias, limited applicability, and the neglect of indigenous knowledge systems (Mpofu, 2020; Nwoye, 2020). These studies argued that Eurocentric instruments often impose foreign frameworks that do not align with African cultural values, worldviews, or social realities. These tools use Western assumptions and normative data in their standardisation which may not be congruent to African cultures.

i) Cultural bias in constructs and norms

Western cultures are individualistic and not communal centred and highly spiritual like the Africa cultures, and norming a test instrument in such constructs demands culture etiquette and sensitivity (Mpofu, 2020; Nwoye, 2015). Such a misinformed narrative leads to misinterpretation of what may be a normal behaviour in Africa as abnormal behaviour. Mpofu (2020) goes on to argue that ancestral worship and communication may be interpreted as delusional and hallucinatory when we use the Western cultured assessment instrument. In addition, the imposition of Eurocentric instruments on African populations often ignores the historical and cultural contexts of mental health experiences in Africa (Mpofu, 2020). Also, a study conducted in Ghana found that the use of Eurocentric instruments neglected the role of traditional healing practices and cultural beliefs in shaping mental health experiences (Ofori-Atta, 2023). This oversight not only undermines the effectiveness of mental health services, but also perpetuates the marginalisation of indigenous knowledge systems and practices.

ii) Linguistic and contextual inappropriateness

Most of the Western assessment tools come prescribed in an English language which may, among other things, lack proper wording for specific issues in Africa and the vocabulary used may not be common and even unknown by both test taker and administer (Nwoye, 2020). Nwoye further posts that language complications alone can make the whole process meaningless. A study involving 200 participants in Uganda demonstrated that a culturally-informed instrument tailored to the Ugandan context yielded more accurate diagnoses and interventions compared to Eurocentric tools (Kamya, 2022). The study underscored the importance of incorporating local cultural practices, language, and values into psychological assessment.

iii) Incompatibility with indigenous worldviews

African view on health is more than just medical and psychological, it encompasses spirituality, social, community and holistic perspectives (Kamya, 2022). On the other hand, Eurocentric tools do not validate such a perspective. In South Africa, De Jager Meezenbroek et al. (2020) developed the South African Spirituality Scale (SASS) which was standardised and is used in clinical settings to integrate the country's spiritual side in psychological assessments.

iv) Overpathologising of cultural norms

In Africa, the behaviours and practices that are common may be interpreted as abnormal in Western grounded assessment instruments (Mpofu, 2020) and then may lead to wrong diagnosis and treatment. Daniels and Isaacs (2023) did a study in South Africa and it was established that;

“Given the power and voice attributed to colonial power over indigenous power, discourses of colonial origin have taken centre stage in the realm of psychology, leaving indigenous discourses to be silenced and marginalized”

In another study in South Africa, Galvin et al. (2024) interrogated how rural women in Limpopo Province perceive mental illness. The findings of that inquiry discovered that mental illness is often attributed to supernatural causes such as ancestral displeasure or witchcraft. Unfortunately, the Eurocentric assessment tools grounded in the biopsychosocial models do not recognise such nuances.

v) Reduced acceptability and engagement

It is normal for people to disengage when they assume and perceive that the tool being used does not capture the essence of what they are going through (Adebowale, 2022). In a Nigerian study, Adebowale (2022) found that culturally unfounded instruments were the main reason why clients disengaged from assessment processes.

b) What empirical data in existing studies supports the efficacy of culturally-grounded assessment tools in improving mental health outcomes across different African contexts?

A significant proportion of the studies (75%) emphasised the urgent need for culturally-informed psychometric tools that reflect the unique cultural, social, and historical contexts of African societies (Kamya, 2022; Adebowale, 2022). These studies highlighted the importance of developing instruments that are not only culturally sensitive, but also rooted in African epistemology and practices.

i) Improved diagnostic accuracy

Inquiries across Africa show that tools that are culturally alive improve diagnostic accuracy in mental health settings (Kamya, 2022). A study involving 200 participants in Uganda demonstrated that a culturally informed instrument tailored to the Ugandan context yielded more accurate diagnoses (30% improvement over Western tools) and interventions compared to Eurocentric tools (Kamya, 2022).

ii) Enhanced client engagement

Culturally sensitivity tools are likely to motivate locals to participate more in assessments than use of Western tools (Adebowale, 2022).

In Nigeria, Adebowale (2022) researched on 300 participants and discovered that culturally-informed instruments were more acceptable to participants, leading to higher engagement with mental health services.

iii) Positive treatment outcomes

It has been proved beyond doubt that, when evidence-based treatment plans and culturally appropriate instruments are utilised to assess mental health, they yielded better improved therapeutic outcomes (Ofori-Atta, 2023); and such results include improvement on symptom severity. This study showed that there was 25% increase in treatment adherence and severity in symptoms were reduced in depression patients.

iv) Trust and accessibility

Assessment tools that are culturally informed help reduce the perception that mental health issues are foreign and do not concern locals (Mpofu, 2020). In a study on rural and marginalised communities, Mpofu (2020) found that locals put more trust into instruments that were in local languages and recognised local practices and etiquette and anything not aligned was perceived as foreign and not applicable locally.

v) Integration of indigenous knowledge

Some Africans are more likely to accept relevance and resonance of assessment tools and practices when these include local understanding of the involvement of cultural spirituality and distress (Nwoye, 2020). In the study conducted at the University of KwaZulu Natal, Nwoye (2020) argued that culturally sensitive tools that include indigenous healing theories encourage more holistic and meaningful interventions.

c) What are the practical and policy implications of adopting culturally-informed psychological assessments in African mental health services?

Incorporating culturally inspired assessment tools in the psychological assessment discourse impacts practical and policy issues immensely. Several studies (e.g., Mpofu, 2020; Nwoye, 2020) stressed the importance of integrating indigenous knowledge systems into psychological assessment.

i) Improved diagnostic accuracy and treatment outcomes

Mpofu (2020) and Kamya (2022) argue that culturally grounded tools improve validity and reliability of the assessment results. They assert that assessment tools must include; indigenous belief systems, idioms of distress, and culturally normative behaviours, as this would then help reduce pathologising everything in Africa and avoid incidents of misdiagnoses as is the norm with Eurocentric tools. The study done in Uganda by Kamya (2022) proved that context matters to improve meaningful diagnosis.

ii) Increased acceptability and engagement

When policies by both local authorities and health providers recognise that the assessment tools must include local practices and belief system, it fosters a sense of trust, participation and engagement by local populations (Adebowale, 2022).

iii) Integration of indigenous knowledge systems

When assessment tools are cognisant of indigenous knowledge systems, it then allows for inclusion of traditional healing approaches in managing mental health. Such a holistic approach supports pluralist health care systems and enforces respect to traditional value system (Mpofu, 2020, Nwoye, 2020).

iv) Policy development and institutional reform

The approach to include culturally specific inclusions in the assessment tools demands that gatekeepers provide the legal and institutional frameworks as this affects the nexus between psychology and legal regulation (Kamya, 2022; Ofori-Atta, 2023). The scholars go on to argue that researchers need financial and institutional resources to engage in research and to develop tools that are locally norm referenced.

v) Reduction in mental health stigma

In an African context, when tools are aligned to culture specific tenets, then it follows that many psychopathology diagnoses are not necessarily mental illnesses (Mpofu, 2020). This could help reduce stigma and help improve both early treatment and adherence to prescribed interventions.

Discussion of findings

Criticism of Eurocentric instruments

The review confirmed that 85% of reviewed studies were negative about the use of Eurocentric psychological instruments in African contexts. Researchers all argue that such measures are

culturally biased, of low ecological validity, and insensitive to African sociocultural contexts (Mpofu, 2020; Nwoye, 2020; Serpell, 2017). They are grounded in Western theories of mental health and cognition, which are not universally applicable (van de Vijver & Leung, 1997). For example, ideas like individualism and nuclear family patterns found in most Western tests are in conflict with African communalism and large family systems (Mkhize, 2004; Ratele, 2016). Therefore, such tests may lead to misdiagnosis or stigmatisation of culturally normal behaviour.

Call for culturally-informed instruments

About 75% of the analysed studies stressed the importance of immediate action for culturally based psychometric instruments. Researchers advocate for tools that are linguistically, contextually, and culturally appropriate as well as cognisant of African epistemologies (Kamya, 2022; Adebawale, 2022; Nsamenang & Tchombe, 2011). Culture-appropriate measures would increase validity, reliability and acceptability in a range of African samples (Draguns & Tanaka-Matsumi, 2003). This is in line with international best practices, as exemplified by a best practice referred to by the International Test Commission that recommends testing through adaptation rather than direct translation (ITC, 2017).

The role of indigenous knowledge systems

A significant amount of research emphasises the use of indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) in psychological evaluation (e.g., Mpofu, 2020; Nwoye, 2015; Holdstock, 2000). African languages, belief systems, community-based healing, and culturally grounded conceptions of wellbeing are all included in IKS. According to scholars, these systems offer therapeutic relevance, cultural resonance, and conceptual clarity that are absent from the majority of imported assessments (Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars, 2000). It is believed that incorporating indigenous knowledge is not only morally right, but also necessary for social justice and psychological validity.

Implications for mental health services

Underutilisation of treatments has resulted from a mistrust of psychological interventions brought on by the ongoing employment of Western tools in African mental health services (Atilola, 2015; Kleintjes et al., 2010). On the other hand, culturally sensitive tests have been associated with increased accessibility, increased participation, and better accuracy of diagnosis (Kamya, 2022; Adebawale, 2022). This supports the public interest psychology; a psychology that is culturally responsible and socially embedded as argued by Ratele (2016).

Implications for practice and policy

According to the findings, policy reform is desperately needed to facilitate the creation and institutionalisation of assessment instruments that are African-centred (Pillay, 2017; Nsamenang, 1995). Training programmes ought to be revised to give professionals assessment skills that are suitable for their culture. Policies supporting domestic research and infrastructure for psychometric development must be adopted by national psychology councils and health ministries throughout Africa (Stevens, 2018; Asante, 2007). In order to create assessments that accurately represent the lived reality of African populations, cooperation between academic institutions, communities, and traditional health systems is also required.

Recommendations

- i) Development of culturally informed instruments: There is an urgent need for researchers and practitioners to collaborate with local communities to develop psychometric tools that reflect African cultural values, languages, and social contexts. These tools must be integrated with technological platforms.
- ii) Training and capacity building: Mental health professionals should be trained in culturally sensitive assessment practices, including the use of indigenous knowledge systems and community-based approaches.
- iii) Policy reforms: Governments and mental health organisations should prioritize the adoption of culturally-informed instruments in national mental health policies and programmes. Policy makers and scholars must be engaged in this regard to develop ideal tools.
- iv) Further research: More studies are needed to explore the effectiveness of culturally-informed tools across diverse African contexts and to document best practices for their development and implementation. More is needed in systematic development and validation of locally and culturally sensitive assessment tools in Africa. Such tools must address cross country culture diversity. Many such developed tools in Africa lack rigorous academic validation.
- v) Longitudinal studies are recommended to help validate tools whose inferences cut across various cultures across Africa.

Limitations and future directions

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the reliance on archival research methodology restricts the findings to existing literature, limiting the scope of the study. Future research should address this by conducting empirical studies that develop and test culturally-informed psychometric instruments in real-world African contexts. Such studies would provide valuable insights into the effectiveness, feasibility, and acceptability of these tools.

Second, even the literature published in the last four years may not fully capture the breadth of research on culturally-informed psychometric instruments in Africa. Future studies should expand their scope to include a wider range of literature, including older studies and those published outside mainstream academic journals, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the topic.

A critical area for future research is the development of culturally-informed psychometric instruments that address the unique mental health needs of African populations. This requires a deep understanding of the cultural, social, and historical contexts that shape mental health experiences in Africa.

Despite these limitations, the study highlights the urgent need for ongoing research and development in the field of culturally-informed psychometric instruments in Africa. By addressing these gaps and prioritising the creation of culturally relevant tools, researchers can contribute to more effective, responsive, and equitable mental health services across the continent. This, in turn, can improve mental health outcomes and enhance the well-being of African populations.

Conclusion

The findings of this scoping review highlight the significant limitations of Eurocentric methodologies and instruments in psychological assessment within African contexts. These results emphasise the urgent need to develop and implement culturally-informed psychometric tools that accurately reflect the sociocultural realities of African populations. The review reaffirms longstanding critiques of the dominant Eurocentric frameworks, which often fail to account for the diverse cultural, contextual, and lived experiences of African societies.

The findings call for a paradigm shift in psychological assessment practices across Africa, one that prioritises cultural competence, cultural sensitivity, and the creation of contextually relevant assessment tools and interventions.

The implications of these findings are far-reaching, underscoring the need for collaborative efforts among mental health professionals, researchers, and policymakers. Such collaboration is essential to design, validate, and implement culturally-informed psychometric tools and interventions.

Additionally, the findings highlight the importance of integrating cultural competence and sensitivity into mental health education and professional training programmes. Emphasising these components in curricula would equip mental health practitioners with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to provide culturally attuned and ethically sound care.

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