

Ethics Code of Iranian Organization of Psychology and Counseling

Introduction:

Item 2 of the constitution of the Iranian Organization of Psychology and Counseling (IOPC advocating clients' rights, as well as psychologists' and counselors' privilege and accountability), has been identified.

Item 12 of this regulation has recognized forming of a central committee to investigate professional violations of those practicing as psychologists and counselors. In article 1, item 19, one of the actions causing members of IOPC to lose their licenses is the violation of the professional ethics code.

Considering the previous points, the ethics code of IOPC was designed to respect the cultural, social, and religious backgrounds of people of Iranian heritage. It was designed to consider the cultural backgrounds and variations of psychotherapy and counseling services, and scientific achievements of psychologists and counselors in Iran and the world, to secure and protect the rights of clients and users of psychological and counseling services on one hand, and maintain the rights of psychologists and counselors and the status of experts on the other hand. The ethics code of IOPC consists of two parts: general principles of professional ethics, and b standards and rules of professional ethics.

A. General Principles of Professional Ethics:

This part consists of general principles and widespread ethical and human values which are expected to be considered by psychologists and counselors in regulating and guiding all professional behaviors of their own at all times, and to do their best to obey them.

These principles are actually the foundations for forming standards and professional ethical rules. General rules of the IOPC ethics code are:

- 1 The principle of respect and choice of individuals.
- 2 The principle of accountability and responsibility.
- 3 The principle of helpfulness and avoidance of hurting.
- 4 The principle of equity.
- 5 The principle of considering other's welfare.
- 6 The principle of respecting the orders and rules of society's values.
- 7 The principle of respecting human rights.

B. Standards and Rules of Professional Ethics:

Professional standards and ethics consist of a collection of dos and don'ts which focus on special professional circumstances that require psychologists and counselors to have certain behaviors and avoid some other behaviors. These standards will be presented in the following 10 sections:

1. Eligibility/Qualification

- 1.1 Psychologists and counselors giving professional services, research, and education should work in areas in which they are specially qualified.
- 1.2 Psychologists and counselors should only use the degrees obtained from accredited universities to introduce themselves.
- 1.3 Psychologists and counselors should not use titles which they have not actually obtained.
- 1.4 Psychologists and counselors should only use treatments and counseling techniques and methods which they have been trained for, educated, and have experience in.
- 1.5 Psychologists and counselors should avoid using treatments and counseling techniques and methods in which they have no experience.
- 1.6 In the process of offering services and research, psychologists and counselors should take into consideration, and pay attention to the role and effects of cultural, tribal, ethnic, racial, and religious factors, as well as gender, in the framework related to their work.
- 1.7 Psychologists and counselors should put forth continuous efforts in order to develop and maintain their abilities and qualifications.
- 1.8 When assigning duties to employees, trainees, educational and research assistants or when using others' services (like administration and interpretation of cognitive and psychological tests) psychologists and counselors should take necessary attempts to make sure these people:
 - a. have proper abilities and education for the task.
 - b. apply the specific services and treatments appropriately and accurately.
- 1.9 Psychologists and counselors should avoid working in conditions in which they feel their personal problems might, in any way, interfere with their work duties.
- 1.10 Psychologists and counselors should refer certain cases in which they are not qualified to their qualified colleagues.
- 1.11 When facing certain client's problems in which psychologists and counselors do not have enough knowledge and expertise, they should either consult with their colleagues or refer their clients to their more qualified colleagues for services.
- 1.12 In critical and urgent situations psychologists and counselors should provide necessary help and psychotherapy services to clients even if they have not had special training for such services. In these cases as soon as the proper special services become available, they will stop their services.

2. Responsibility

- 2.1 Psychologists and counselors are obliged to do all they can to follow and obey standards and rules of their profession, and take full responsibility for their behavior and their statements. They should also make sure that their services are used correctly.
- 2.2 Psychologists and counselors should practice within the framework of the country's laws and regulations, and for this reason they should be quite aware and familiar with laws related to their field of work.
- 2.3 Psychologists and counselors should know their duties to prevent any kind of misuse of the research findings.

- 2.4 Psychologists and counselors should be responsible for the welfare of their clients and all those who are affected by their attempts and decisions. They should respect the rights of people and groups with whom they work and do their best to protect clients' welfare and gains.
- 2.5 Psychologists and counselors should inform their clients about all the costs and expenses of the treatment in advance and come to a mutual agreement with them.
- 2.6 Psychologists and counselors should only accept credits and profits for their own work.

3. Professional Relations

- 3.1 Psychologists and counselors should avoid any injustice and prejudice towards their clients and patients.
- 3.2 Psychologists and counselors should not allow any sexual harassment towards their clients, and in case they find out about any kind of unethical activities by their colleagues they should take actions against it either by warning that colleague, or if necessary, by informing the committee in charge of violations in IOPC.
- 3.3 Psychologists and counselors should avoid making any kind of unprofessional relationship with their clients and employees who work under their supervision.
- 3.4 Psychologists and counselors should avoid inflicting any harm to clients, patients, students, trainees, research participants, organizational clients, and others with whom they work. They should also take necessary actions to do the least amount of harm possible in unpredictable or inevitable situations.
- 3.5 At times when there are conflicts between personal benefits and professional roles, psychologists and counselors should not avoid taking the professional role in those specific cases.
- 3.6 Psychologists and counselors should not take advantage of professional relationships.
- 3.7 If necessary or urgent, psychologists and counselors should consult, cooperate or make reference to other specialists in order to provide appropriate and effective services to their clients and patients.
- 3.8 Using simple understandable language with others, psychologists and counselors should come to a mutual agreement with patients about administration of research, assessment, treatment, guidance, and consultation.
- 3.9 In cases when clients cannot come to a mutual agreement because of severity of illness or being under legal age, it is necessary for psychologists and counselors to get permission of parents or a legal guardian. Even with this legal agreement, it is necessary to get client's implicit consent and respect his/her dignity.

4. Confidentiality and Privacy

- 4.1 Psychologists and counselors should take cautionary attempts to protect and keep secret, information they obtained in their field of professional activities.

- 4.2 Psychologists and counselors should only take as much information as necessary for evaluation, diagnosis, treatment, and research, and avoid asking for extra information.
- 4.3 Psychologists and counselors should register and report the information in ways that there would be no way of misusing the information.
- 4.4 Psychologists and counselors should obtain written permission from people or their legal representatives before using audio-visual recording.
- 4.5 Only in the following instances could psychologists and counselors violate confidentiality:
 - 4.5.1 Based on the request and consent of the client or his/her legal guardian in conditions that this violation would not endanger the client's benefits.
 - 4.5.2 When there is a life and death situation for clients or others.
 - 4.5.3 When there is a contagious disease like HIV and AIDS.
 - 4.5.4 When this violation is ordered by law or authorities of law.

Article: In case of violation of confidentiality, psychologists and counselors should do their best efforts to protect clients' benefits, and disclosure of information in the above-mentioned cases should be kept at the minimum level, and clients should be aware of the disclosure of information.

5. Assessment, Evaluation, and Interpretation

- 5.1 Psychologists and counselors should use valid and reliable tests.
- 5.2 Psychologists and counselors should only use the test for which they have acquired qualifications in advance.
- 5.3 Psychologists and counselors should only use psychological tests in a purposeful and appropriate way according to the needs and demands, and only in the framework of diagnosis, treatment, guidance, counseling, and research.
- 5.4 Psychologists and counselors should not allow psychological tests to be administered, graded, and interpreted by people who are not eligible and qualified.
- 5.5 Psychologists and counselors will submit test results to authorities, legal guardians, or court with written official request, taking in to account the client's benefits unless they feel doing so will hurt the client or will lead to misuse of the results.
- 5.6 Psychologists and counselors should take necessary precautions so that the results of the tests will not be misused or misinterpreted.
- 5.7 Psychologists and counselors should keep the questionnaire, test results, and reports of the results in the client's file.
- 5.8 Psychologists and counselors should attempt to design, prepare, standardize, and determine validity and reliability of the psychological tests only if they have the required knowledge and specialty, and are aware of the current scientific disciplines of psychometrics.
- 5.9 Psychologists and counselors should keep background information of clients for at least 5 years after treatment and in case of children and adolescents until they reach legal age.

- 5.10 When interpreting the test results psychologists and counselors should consider the aims of evaluation and other different related factors which might effect the examiner's judgment or the accuracy of the interpretation of test results (e.g., the ability to take the test, client's characteristics, conditions of the test taking environment, linguistic and cultural differences).

6. Psychological Interventions

- 6.1 Before applying any kind of intervention, psychologists and counselors should obtain client's or his/her legal guardian's complete permission.
- 6.2 If the psychologist or counselor is in the training process, s/he should make the client aware of this before getting the client's permission.
- 6.3 If a psychologist or counselor wants to use a specific method which does not have enough research support for a client, s/he should make the client aware of the process of this method in advance and get his/her consent.
- 6.4 Psychologists and counselors should archive clients' files in a completely safe way and should keep all files for 5 years after the end of the intervention.
- 6.5 Psychologists and counselors should not enter into relationships which will be in conflict with their professional role.
- 6.6 Psychologists and counselors should avoid getting involved into any sexual relationships with their clients.
- 6.7 Psychologists and counselors should not marry any of their clients unless at least 2 years after the end of their intervention.
- 6.8 When psychologists and counselors are working with a couple or a family, they should not act as a witness for one of them and against the other in court.
- 6.9 Psychologists and counselors should receive their wages for psychological and counseling services based upon the determined amounts of IOPC and should not receive any other payments from their clients.

7. Education, Training, and Supervision

- 7.1 Psychologists and counselors should only carry out educational, training, and internship programs for which they have the necessary knowledge and experience.
- 7.2 Psychologists and counselors should make students, trainees, and interns aware of the title, content, and process of the educational programs.
- 7.3 Educational, training, and internship programs offered by psychologists and counselors should be relevant, scientific, accurate, and current.
- 7.4 Psychologists and counselors should determine the aims, expectations, educational content, and assessment methods of the program in their education and training.
- 7.5 Psychologists and counselors should have complete control over application methods of which they are responsible, and give necessary feedback to interns.
- 7.6 With constant evaluation, psychologists and counselors should stay aware of personal and scientific abilities and limitations of their trainees, and in case

these limitations become obstacles in achieving their goals psychologists and counselors should try to remove these limitations.

- 7.7 Psychologists and counselors should not give medical or counseling services to their students, trainees, and interns and if necessary refer them to qualified specialists.
- 7.8 Psychologists and counselors should encourage students, trainees, and interns to follow and obey ethical rules of professional psychology and counseling.
- 7.9 Psychologists and counselors should determine and respect ethical professional and social borders and limits with their students, trainees, and interns, and avoid any kind of relationships which will lead to misuse.
- 7.10 Psychologists and counselors should respect the dignity of students, trainees, and interns during their education and internship periods and avoid entering in to the domain of their personal lives.
- 7.11 Psychologists and counselors should not take their own workers, employees, and close relatives as their trainees and interns.
- 7.12 Psychologists and counselors should provide suitable grounds in their educational programs for their students, trainees, and interns, to introduce and acquire experience in different perspectives and techniques of psychology and counseling, and encourage them to develop their academic and practical experiences.
- 7.13 Psychologists and counselors should provide academic recommendation letters to a person only within the framework of his/her real qualifications and abilities and based on their own knowledge of that person.

8. Research and Publication

- 8.1 Psychologists and counselors should make sure their research is based on scientific rules and disciplines and that it is conducted and applied accurately.
- 8.2 In planning and conducting their research, psychologists and counselors should make sure that it is in line with the principles and doctrines of professional ethics.
- 8.2 In case psychologists and counselors have doubts about whether or not their research is based on professional ethical rules, they should have it approved by the professional ethics committee of their university or organization with which they are affiliated. If there are no such committees in their university or organization, they should refer it to the above mentioned places in other universities or the IOPC itself.
- 8.4 Psychologists and counselors should understand and accept the fact that participating in any kind of psychological research is voluntary and any reluctance in taking part and collaboration from people should not have negative affects on them.
- 8.5 Before conducting any research, psychologists and counselors should get official written consent from the participants or their legal guardians using clear and easy to understand language. Their agreement and permission consists of the following information:
 - 8.5.1 Volunteer participation in the research.

- 8.5.2 The kind of activity the participants should do.
- 8.5.3 Explanation of possible benefits and dangers of participation in the research.
- 8.5.4 Participants' rights to withdrawal and discontinue their participation at any time.
- 8.5.5 Explanation of the confidentiality methods and possible limitations in this matter.
- 8.5.6 Address and phone number of the researchers and the organization carrying out the research.
- 8.6 Psychologists and counselors are only allowed to use deception in the research when the benefits of the research outweigh its possible losses, and also when there would be no other way to conduct the research project.
- 8.7 Psychologists and counselors can use deception without the consent and awareness of the participants in their research only when it guarantees to have no harm, conflict, and injury. For example, when research instruments are questionnaires which are completed anonymously, or investigating regular educational activities which are conducted in educational settings and conditions, or natural and scientific observations in which peoples' responses do not expose them to any kind of danger.
- 8.8 Psychologists and counselors are responsible for the ease, convenience and safety of the instruments as well as the participants in the research, and should take all the necessary precautions to avoid any kind of physical, psychological and social harm to them.
- 8.9 Psychologists and counselors should make sure all the information related to the instruments and participants in the research are kept confidential and that the results and outcomes of the research are prepared and presented in a way that identifying the participants would be impossible.
- 8.10 Psychologists and counselors should carry out research projects on animals only if doing so would be necessary and essential, and when the results obtained from such studies would be effective and beneficial to the advancement of psychology and the promotion of quality in people's lives.
- 8.11 Psychologists and counselors should make sure the animal is not exposed to unnecessary pain and injury and if it is necessary to end the animal's life after the research they should make sure it is done in the fastest way with the least hurt possible to the animal.
- 8.12 Principal investigator has scientific and ethical responsibility in the research; however, all those who are involved in the project in any way are also responsible for their deeds and duties in the study.
- 8.13 Psychologists and counselors should be completely honest and faithful when presenting the results of experimental research and interpreting them.
- 8.14 Psychologists and counselors should not present artificial and fake information.
- 8.15 Psychologists and counselors should avoid presenting and publishing old data and research as current studies.
- 8.16 It is the duty of psychologists and counselors to ensure necessary attempts have been made to maintain the rights of citizens, and prevent misinterpretations and misuse of the results of their reports and research to ensure that these results

will not be used in reporting any prejudice between ethnic groups, tribes, cultures, religions, and gender.

- 8.17 In case psychologists and counselors make any errors or mistakes in their published information, they should make necessary appropriate attempts to correct it.
- 8.18 Psychologists and counselors should accept the fact that all materialistic and spiritual rights of the research and publications are reserved for the researchers and authors and in all scientific, research and professional activities should take this right into consideration.
- 8.19 Psychologists and counselors should accept no responsibility and no credit for work they have not done, or in which they had no role or control over its administration.
- 8.20 In articles derived from students' theses or dissertations, students should be named as the first author unless the student has no role in deriving the article out of his/her own work.

9. Advertisement and Public Services

- 9.1 Psychologists and counselors should avoid stating any untrue and false information about their education, experiences, qualifications, abilities, academic status, degrees, organizational and congressional affiliations, services, scientific or clinical ranks, or degrees of success in services, published books and research discoveries.
- 9.2 Psychologists and counselors who provide suggestions and recommendations for the public through books, magazines, newspapers, internet, radio, television, and other media should pay enough attention and be careful to guarantee that the presented statements have the following requirements:
 - 9.2.1 Should be based on their current psychological knowledge and professional experiences.
 - 9.2.2 Should be within the framework of their qualifications and expertise.
 - 9.2.3 Should be in accordance with the professional ethics code of psychologists and counselors.
 - 9.2.4 Should state that there has been no professional communication with the addressees.
- 9.3 If media, congresses, groups, and people give out false information about their degrees, specialties, abilities, services, and speeches, psychologists and counselors should correct them in a proper way as soon as possible.
- 9.4 If psychologists and counselors are using some people or organizations to advertise their services, they should make sure about the accuracy of what they present, have control over the process of advertisement, and take responsibility for that task.
- 9.5 In offering public education services, psychologists and counselors should make sure about the efficiency, effectiveness, currency, and accuracy of these educational programs.
- 9.6 In the framework of their specialty domain and in the range of their ability, psychologists and counselors should take part in social activities related to the

development of social welfare and public wellbeing, such as sociopolitical adjustments and corrections of the rules and regulations, etc.

- 9.7 Psychologists and counselors should devote some of their time to offer free public specialty services to people and groups who are in need.
- 9.8 In critical situations such as natural disasters, etc., psychologists and counselors should make attempts to offer psychological and counseling services voluntarily.

10. Solving Ethical Problems and Conflicts

- 10.1 At times when there are conflicts between two or more ethical rules, while investigating and evaluating the situation and methods of resolving it carefully, psychologists and counselors should devote all their efforts and attention to solving the conflict. If they still cannot solve the problem, taking into consideration their commitment to obey and follow ethical rules, they should choose a solution which has the most positive outcome and the least harm for that person or people who receive the effect.
- 10.2 At times when there are conflicts between rules of professional ethics and the law, after trying to use reasonable, rational ways and following the rules of professional ethics to solve the conflict, if the conflict remains irresolvable, psychologists and counselors are obliged to obey the law.
- 10.3 If there is a conflict between rules of professional ethics and regulations of the organization where psychologists and counselors work, they should obey the rules of professional ethics.
- 10.4 If psychologists and counselors find out that one of their colleagues has disregarded the rules of professional ethics and acted against them, first they should try to prevent him/her from continuing the violation by reminding him/her. If this does not work, they should notify the superior and in case of continuation and repetition of the violation, they should inform the committee in charge of investigating the violations of the ethical code of the IOPC.
- 10.5 In the process of investigating violators' cases and files, psychologists and counselors should cooperate with the committee in charge of investigating the violations of the ethical code of the IOPC.