

Research Paper

The Struggles of Indian Psychologists Without a Governing Body - Need for Registration and Governing Body in India for Psychologists

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ABSTRACT

Psychology has gone through many struggles to become a well-known and reputable field in the scientific community. "Psychology is the study of human behavior, thinking, and perception. Psychology is the understanding of mental processes and brain functions." Psychology has a long history. This is part of "philosophy". A person who practices psychology as a profession is called a psychologist. A psychologist is a specialist who studies mental states, perception, cognition, emotion, behavior, and social processes. They regularly experience, observe and interpret people's interactions with each other and the environment as part of their work. Although the origins of Indian philosophy date back to ancient times, scientific research did not begin until the 20th century. A governing body is a group of people who establish laws and ethical rules and do work with them to manage the affairs of an individual or organization. Psychographic leaders define culture, norms, etc. (which all psychologists must adhere to) with the support of clinical psychologists. This research paper talks about the struggle of Indian psychologists in the absence of control and how Indians abuse psychology. In India, if the court requires the help of a psychiatrist to treat a mental disorder, the court will seek a psychiatrist or psychologist. We will also explore different regimes in other countries: their existence and importance. In India, it is important to have a regulatory body not for psychology but for all disciplines, otherwise people will misuse and abuse it.

Keywords: *Psychology, Psychologist, Governing Bodies, Struggles, Existence, Importance*

Psychology is the study of human behavior, thoughts, cognition, emotions, and brain function (Ohio State University, 2023). Psychology deals with all processes occurring in our brain. Psychology also studies non-human entities (Ohio State University, 2023). Psychology covers both conscious and unconscious phenomena (Ohio State University, 2023).

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Psychologists work in hospitals, NGOs, forensic fields, etc. They are qualified to work. Psychologists are professionals who work in psychology and study psychology, cognition, behavior, and more. Their work often involves testing, observing, and explaining how people behave and how they affect others and their environment. Psychologists have a code of ethics they must follow, or their license will be revoked, or they will have to pay.

The governing body consists of a group of competent individuals who determine the rules that study participants must follow. They are the ones who create morality and set standards. The governing body may be a council, a board of trustees, a board of directors, a meeting of elders or traditional owners, or a board appointed by the family or clan. They are the authorities who establish new policies and steer the overall direction of an organization (Wikipedia, 2023). Each region has different regulators. For example: There are boards of directors in schools, boards of directors in hospitals, etc. Like these committees, psychology also has governing bodies, but in India, we do not have any psychological governing body. Because of this, Indian psychologists face many problems, and people who do not even know what psychology is take advantage of and misuse this field.

Governing bodies came into existence in the late 19th century and the start of the 20th century. Governing bodies started coming into existence when psychology emerged as a distinct scientific discipline. During the 19th and 20th centuries, many psychological associations and schools of thought took place. They promoted the significance and applications of psychology (Wikipedia, 2023). The very first psychological lab was established by Wilhelm Wundt (also known as the father of psychology) in 1879 at Leipzig, Germany (Verywell Mind, 2023). He established the lab and the first school of psychology (Verywell Mind, 2023). The first psychological lab in India was established by Dr. N.N. Sen Gupta in 1916 at Calcutta University.

Governing bodies play a key role in ensuring the quality and integrity of psychology (Wikipedia, 2023). They develop ethical guidelines, provide resources for professional development, and promote the interests of psychologists. The rules or ethics that an Indian psychologist follows are from the American Psychological Association (APA). It is an association based in the District of Columbia. The APA Regulations establish our main structural units and introduce a comprehensive system of checks and balances to ensure smooth and democratic functioning (APA, 2008).

In India, we do not have a proper psychological governing body. We have the Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI) for people who want to work with clients dealing with addiction. RCI sets the criteria for qualification, training requirements, and the code of ethics for psychologists in India. Other governing bodies India has include the Indian Association of Clinical Psychologists (IACP), Indian Association of Applied Psychology (IAAP), and the National Academy of Psychology (NAOP) (Wikipedia, 2023). These organizations provide networking, professional development, and advocacy platforms for psychologists in India.

Some of the governing bodies abroad are:

- American Psychological Association (APA): The American Psychological Association was founded in the United States in 1892. It is one of the oldest and largest psychological organizations in the world. The APA has played a key role in shaping the field of psychology, establishing ethical standards, and promoting

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research and education in the United States (American Psychological Association, 2008).

- **British Psychological Society (BPS):** The British Psychological Society was founded in the United Kingdom in 1901. It serves as the professional body of psychologists in the United Kingdom, promoting progress, ethical practice, and scientific understanding of psychology (Wikipedia, 2023).
- **Australian Psychological Society (APS):** The Australian Psychological Society was founded in 1966 and is the largest professional organization for psychologists in Australia. It works to advance psychology as a subject, develop professional standards, and protect the psychological health of Australians (AHPA, 2023).
- **Canadian Psychological Association (CPA):** The Canadian Psychological Association was founded in 1939 and serves as the national professional association for psychologists in Canada. It promotes research, education, and ethical practice in psychology and represents the interests of Canadian psychologists (Canadian Psychological Association, 2013).
- **German Psychological Association (DGP):** The German Psychological Association, founded in 1904, is the professional association of psychologists in Germany. It promotes scientific research, education, and professional practice in psychology (Wikipedia, 2023).
- **Japanese Psychological Association (JPA):** The Japan Psychological Association was founded in 1927 and is the leading psychology organization in Japan. It promotes research, education, and the application of psychology in various fields (Springer, 2023).

These are just a few examples of the bodies that regulate psychology abroad, and many other countries have their own respective organizations that regulate and support psychology as a profession. Each regulatory body has a specific history, goals, and role in promoting the field of psychology and maintaining professional standards and ethics.

The Indian Association of Clinical Psychologists (IACP) is only for people who are dedicated to clinical practices (Indian Association of Clinical Psychologists, 2022). We do not have a proper governing body responsible for everything that happens in the psychology field.

Indian psychologists face many struggles. Although there are many benefits to working in psychology, clinical psychologists face many challenges that do not fit their job description. Psychologists are not only asked to meet with their clients and impart new patterns of thought and behavior (Mehta, 2022). They must also be flexible and willing to adapt solutions based on each customer's requirements. Although becoming a psychologist in India is an extremely rewarding and fulfilling career, there are certain disadvantages that every psychology student should be aware of (Mehta, 2022).

There are many struggles Indian psychologists face. Some of them are as follows:

- **Lack of awareness and understanding:** There is still a lack of awareness and understanding about the role and importance of psychology in Indian society. Many people do not fully understand the value of psychological services, leading to limited need for mental health support and intervention (Wikipedia, 2023).

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- Stigma and cultural barriers: Mental health issues are often stigmatized in Indian culture, which can discourage individuals from seeking help from psychologists. Cultural beliefs and norms regarding mental health, therapy, and counseling can create barriers and prevent individuals from accessing appropriate psychological care (Live Love Laugh Foundation, 2023).
- Limited resources and infrastructure: Access to mental health services, including psychological support, is limited, especially in rural areas. There is a lack of well-trained psychologists and inadequate infrastructure for mental health care. This leads to long waiting lists, limited-service availability, and disparities in access to psychological care (Wikipedia, 2023).
- Lack of integration in the health system: Psychological services are not always effectively integrated into the broader health system in India. This can lead to fragmentation of care and lack of collaboration between psychologists and other health professionals. It also affects the availability of funding and resources for psychological services (Wikipedia, 2023).
- Professional recognition and regulation: While the Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI) oversees the regulation of psychologists, discussions and debates are ongoing regarding professional recognition and licensing of psychologists in India. The field of psychology is still evolving in terms of standardization, accreditation, and licensing processes, which can create uncertainty and challenges for practicing psychologists (Mehta, 2022).
- Continued professional development: Opportunities for continuing professional development and training may be limited, especially in some specialist areas of psychology. Access to advanced training, research opportunities, and professional networks can be difficult, affecting the growth and career development of psychologists in India (Wikipedia, 2023).
- Salary and financial issues: Indian psychologists often face financial hardship, with salaries lower than other healthcare professions. This can make it difficult for psychologists to stay afloat and meet their financial needs (Mehta, 2022).

Despite these challenges, the importance of mental health and psychological well-being is increasingly recognized in India (Mehta, 2022). Efforts are being made to address these issues through policy changes, awareness campaigns, and initiatives to promote mental health and psychological support services (Mehta, 2022).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Peterson, D. R. (1976). Doctoral degree in psychology required in professional psychology. *American Psychologist*, 31(11), 792.

The Vail Conference on Professional Education in Psychology recommended the establishment of explicit professional programs and the use of the PsyD degree to certify competency in professional psychology. However, policies surrounding the use of degrees and the professional functions associated with degree titles remain controversial. Critics of the Vail Conference recommendations argued that professional psychologists should be academic experts, advocating for a PhD after graduate training in fields such as clinical psychology. In response, a broader definition of the term "scholar-professional" was offered, highlighting that the traditional meanings associated with scholarship may be false, misleading, or redundant. The article discusses the challenges of using a PhD as a credential

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for professional competency and emphasizes the benefits of the PsyD degree as both confirmation and credentialing of professional competence, while ensuring that those without adequate training are excluded from practice in vocational psychology.

Knapp, S., & VandeCreek, L. (2003). Overview of the 2002 APA Code of Ethics' significant changes. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 34(3), 301.

This article provides a summary of the 2002 American Psychological Association's Ethical Principles and Code of Conduct. While maintaining the general structure of the 1992 Code, the 2002 update does not significantly alter the responsibilities of psychologists. One of the primary objectives was to reduce the risk of the ethics code being misused to unjustly penalize psychologists. Additionally, the updated code reflects a greater awareness of the needs of students, as well as members of linguistic and cultural minorities. The article also addresses certain shortcomings of the 2002 Code of Ethics.

American Psychological Association. (2015). An instruction manual for psychologists working with transgender and gender nonconforming clients. *American Psychologist*, 70(9), 832–864.

This article provides definitions and terminology related to gender diversity and sexual orientation. These definitions vary due to evolving conceptual knowledge, shifting usage of terms, and the contextual emphasis in the documents.

Sharan, V., & Tripathi, R. (2021). Clinical brain research within the modern Indian setting. In *Brain Research in Present-Day India: Chronological, Methodological, and Future Perspectives* (pp. 361–379).

This chapter examines the evolution of clinical psychology in India, focusing on its connection to mental health evaluation and treatment. It highlights the field's professional scope, educational curriculum, clinical practices, and evidence-based behavioral interventions. While not an exhaustive systematic review, it discusses regulatory concerns and the development of clinical psychology in the Indian context.

Philip, S., Chander, K. R., Varshney, P., Patley, R., Pandey, P., Suhas, S., Nirisha, P. L., Suchandra, B., Vinay, B., Manjunatha, N., Kumar, C. N., & Math, S. B. (2022). The lawfulness and ethical issues of certifying laypersons as mental health counselors in India. *Indian Journal of Psychological Medicine*, 44(6), 537–543.

This study investigates the ethical and legal implications of certifying laypersons as mental health counselors in India. The review explores legislative frameworks and ethical considerations to address mental health access gaps in low-resource settings. It concludes that while legally uncertain, layperson certification as community-based mental health counselors is ethically justifiable and can help advance universal mental health care.

Varshney, M., Parel, J. T., Raizada, N., & Sarin, S. K. (2020). Initial psychological impact of COVID-19 and its correlates in the Indian community: A web-based (FEEL-COVID) survey. *PLoS One*, 15(5), e0233874.

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This study assesses the psychological impact of COVID-19 in India during its early stages using an online survey conducted from March 26 to 29, 2020. The survey gathered socio-demographic and clinical data, using the Impact of Event Scale-Revised (IES-R) to measure mental health effects. Results indicate that approximately one-third of respondents experienced significant psychological distress, with higher impact associated with younger age, female gender, and physical comorbidities. These findings underscore the need for systematic assessments to inform holistic interventions for affected populations.

Objective:

- To identify the struggles of Indian Psychologists without a governing and registration body.
- Legal implications of the struggles faced by Indian psychologists operating without a regulatory body.

METHODOLOGY

In this study, they conducted qualitative research. Researchers have found secondary data and have done descriptive analysis to highlight the urgent need of a uniform governing body in India. The number of cases found by the researcher is 18 and all the cases are from Indian Kanon.

The common themes and patterns that were found from these cases were:

- Cases where psychologists were called as witnesses.
- When they are called to the court for suggestions.
- Cases where a psychologist was the victim.

RESULT

Analysts have found 18 cases. They are as takes after:

Legal Cases Involving Clinical Investigators

Case 1: Gabbar Minor Thru His Father vs. State of Haryana (2017)

On May 31, 2017, Gabbar filed an appeal through his father against the State of Haryana in the Punjab and Haryana High Court. He was accused of assaulting a minor in 2012 but claimed he was also a minor at the time. The court allowed his defense after verifying his age through school records and medical examination.

- **Role of Clinician:** A clinician was involved in evaluating whether the juvenile could be released on bail, determining the juvenile's capacity to distinguish right from wrong, and assessing the potential risks of release.

Case 2: All India Judges' Association vs. Union of India (1993)

This case involved judicial counseling in Massachusetts, where a clinical investigator provided support and counseling to help a retired judge maintain self-esteem.

Case 3: Selvi & Ors vs. State of Karnataka (2010)

The case involved narco analysis interviews conducted by a team that included forensic experts, anesthesiologists, counselors, and interpreters.

- **Role of Clinician:** The forensic psychologist collaborated with investigators to prepare and conduct questioning during narco analysis.

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Case 4: Salil Bali vs. Union of India (2013)

A criminal psychologist board assessed a juvenile involved in the Delhi gang rape case to determine whether the individual had psychiatric abnormalities or required further investigation.

Case 5: T.M. Shareef vs. Abdulla K.B (2017)

A habeas corpus petition was filed regarding a minor named Nasni.

- **Role of Clinician:** A clinical psychologist conducted psychometric evaluations revealing personality disorders, including impulsivity and emotional instability.

Case 6: Manish Gupta vs. Ameeka Gupta (2022)

The court appointed a senior woman officer and a child psychologist to facilitate sessions between a minor, Miss Seher, and the engaging party.

- **Role of Clinician:** The psychologist assessed the appropriateness of contact between the minor and the engaging party.

Case 7: Official of Enrollment vs. Kaviyan School (2015)

A multidisciplinary assessment team evaluated the infrastructural facilities of a school.

- **Role of Clinician:** A psychologist participated in evaluating the institution's suitability.

Case 8: Surinder Singh Gehlawat vs. State of Haryana (2015) This case involved an appeal concerning a demotion order.

- **Role of Clinician:** The psychologist contributed to assessing whether the demotion affected the claimant's mental health.

Case 9: Siddhgopal Verma vs. State of Madhya Pradesh (2014)

Badri Prasad Burman committed suicide allegedly due to non-payment of wages.

- **Role of Clinician:** A clinician confirmed a history of mental illness in the deceased, indicating depressive tendencies.

Case 10: Sh. Atma Crush vs. The State (2023)

This case involved juvenile offenders in a planned revenge killing.

- **Role of Clinician:** The psychologist assessed the juveniles' mental state and observed their indifference and lack of remorse.

Case 11: Simplejit Kaur vs. Govt. Medical College (2017)

The plaintiff challenged her exclusion from the selection list for a clinical psychologist position due to age restrictions.

Case 12: Smti Rumi Kalita vs. The State of Assam (2021)

Clinical psychologists worked collaboratively in a custody dispute to determine the child's best interest.

Case 13: Sh. Dhruv Rana vs. State (2017)

A clinical psychologist assisted in assessing the engaging party's mental fitness during the preliminary investigation.

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Case 14: Ramesh Babu vs. State (2009)

- **Role of Clinician:** A psychologist diagnosed hypochondriac disorder and interpersonal issues in the accused.

Case 15: Radhakrishnan vs. Circle Inspector of Police (2009)

- **Role of Clinician:** A psychologist identified and treated the accused for multiple psychological issues.

Case 16: Mrs. Jacqueline Kapoor vs. Surinder Buddy Kapoor (1994)

- **Role of Clinician:** A psychologist recommended that the minor child reside with the mother based on clinical assessments.

Case 17: Sooraj Aditya Pancholi vs. The State of Maharashtra (2017)

- **Role of Clinician:** A psychologist analyzed forensic evidence and conducted psychological assessments to evaluate the accused's state of mind during the crime.

Case 18: Baburao Ukandu Sangerao vs. The State of Maharashtra (2023)

- **Role of Clinician:** A clinical psychologist diagnosed the accused with intellectual disability and recommended psycho-education and occupational training.

DISCUSSION

In this research, we have discussed the governing bodies of psychology and their role. Additionally, we have addressed the challenges faced by psychologists in India due to the absence of a proper governing body. The lack of a governing body in India has resulted in significant struggles for psychologists in securing employment opportunities. In the case of counselors, the Rehabilitation Center of India (RCI) provides registration numbers every 5 years after evaluating their progress. Unfortunately, psychology is often misused in India, as some individuals lack proper knowledge but still engage in discussions and counseling sessions related to psychology. During the COVID-19 pandemic, psychology was frequently misused by people experiencing stress, anxiety, depression, and other issues caused by the loss of family members, friends, jobs, and businesses. Furthermore, Indian psychologists face challenges related to the limited availability of resources and a lack of ethical awareness in some cases. Consequently, many individuals seek psychological services abroad. The struggles faced by Indian psychologists include stigma and cultural barriers, a lack of integration within the healthcare system, limited professional recognition and regulation, as well as salary and financial issues. Despite these challenges, Indian psychologists adhere to the ethics and guidelines set by the American Psychological Association (APA). To gain insights into these struggles, we conducted qualitative research and identified 18 cases, each involving the term "psychologist" in some capacity. Some of these cases involved psychologists resolving issues, while others simply mentioned their involvement. For instance, the case of Smti Rumi Kalita vs The State of Assam and 2 Ors on 2 November 2021 revolved around child custody and featured the collaboration of more than 2 psychologists. They worked together, with one psychologist speaking to the mother, another to the father, and one engaging with the child. Following their discussions, they recommended that the child spend 2 days with the mother, despite the child's close bond with the father. Importantly, the psychologists involved in this case determined that the child did not have any psychological or mental development issues. In our search for cases involving psychologists, we discovered that there were not many instances in India. This is

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because in India, people tend to believe that only psychiatrists are qualified to study and treat individuals with mental illnesses. In order to give psychology and psychologists the recognition they deserve, India requires a stable governing and registration body. This body would establish ethical guidelines and regulations for psychologists and individuals involved in psychology. Additionally, psychology students in India face difficulties in finding internships and pursuing specific courses of interest. For example, some students may be interested in sports psychology, but there are no proper courses or opportunities for work in this area. A governing body is crucial as it oversees all aspects of the field and provides comprehensive information to those involved. It plays a vital role in community awareness, education, quality assurance, professional regulation, ethical principles, professional development, collaboration, and networking. Various countries have their own governing bodies such as the American Psychological Association (APA), Canadian Psychological Association (CPA), British Psychological Society (BPS), and German Psychological Association (DGP). These bodies establish qualification criteria and ethical standards, with many countries following the guidelines set by the APA. If necessary, the APA can modify its ethics for the well-being of patients. For instance, in the Tarasoff case, the APA revised its confidentiality ethics to allow psychologists and counselors to share information with family members and friends if a patient expresses thoughts of self-harm or harm to others. India urgently requires a governing body as many individuals are experiencing mental disorders but are unable to seek support due to fear of stigma and gossip. Mentally challenged individuals require a trustworthy individual who can safeguard their information and aid. Additionally, psychologists aspire for acknowledgment within their profession.

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Conflict of Interest

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