International Journal of Research Studies in Education
2026 Volume 15 Number 16, 13-26

Ethical issues in psychological assessment

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Received: 15 May 2026
Revised: 20 June 2026
Accepted: 23 June 2026
Available Online: 24 June 2026
DOI: 10.5861/ijrse.2026.26862

ISSN: 2243-7703
Online ISSN: 2243-7711

OPEN ACCESS

Abstract

Psychological assessment is a multifaceted process involving interviews, standardized tests, observations, and record reviews to guide diagnosis, treatment, and intervention. Because assessment affects student success, community well-being, and social engagement, ethical practice is central to its validity and fairness. Since Aranda's (2021) scoping review identified 15 recurring ethical issues across 67 studies (1983–2019), developments in artificial intelligence (AI), telepsychology, data privacy, and multicultural awareness have introduced new ethical concerns requiring updated examination. Using the Arksey and O'Malley (2005) framework and PRISMA-ScR guidelines, this enhanced scoping review analyzed peer-reviewed literature from 2015–2026. Objectives included expanding the range of ethical issues, identifying challenges related to AI and digital technologies, examining regulatory frameworks, addressing multicultural and regional gaps, and exploring links between ethical assessment, student success, community inclusion, and social well-being. A systematic search across Scopus, PubMed/MEDLINE, APA PsycInfo, ScienceDirect, Frontiers, and Google Scholar identified 212 records. After screening, 76 new articles were added to the original corpus, yielding 143 studies. Emerging concerns included AI-driven assessment (n = 31), digital privacy and test data release (n = 28), telepsychology ethics (n = 17), and multicultural bias (n = 18). The APA Ethics Code remained the most cited framework. Findings indicate that ethical, culturally responsive assessment promotes accurate diagnosis, educational equity, and social trust, whereas biased practices increase risks of stigma and disengagement. Future research should develop context-specific ethical guidelines, particularly in underrepresented regions such as the Global South.

Keywords: psychological assessment, ethical issues, ethical dilemmas, artificial intelligence, telepsychology, multicultural assessment, data privacy, PRISMA-ScR, APA Ethics Code, student success

Ethical issues in psychological assessment

1. Introduction

Psychological assessment is a complex methodology encompassing interviews, standardized testing, observation, and record review, used to inform diagnosis, treatment planning, and intervention decisions. Its ethical conduct carries direct implications for student success, community well-being, and social engagement—domains that are increasingly recognized as inseparable from the validity and fairness of assessment practice. Since Aranda's (2021) original scoping review—which identified 15 recurring ethical issues across 67 peer-reviewed articles spanning 1983–2019—significant developments in artificial intelligence (AI), telepsychology, data privacy legislation, and multicultural awareness have generated new ethical dimensions that warrant updated examination. This enhanced scoping review extends the original corpus by integrating Scopus-indexed and peer-reviewed literature published from 2015 to 2026, aligning the methodology with the Arksey and O'Malley (2005) five-stage framework and the PRISMA-ScR reporting checklist. The updated review aims to: (1) expand the spectrum of ethical issues in psychological assessment; (2) map emerging ethical challenges introduced by digital technologies and AI; (3) identify global regulatory and ethical frameworks guiding current practice; (4) address research gaps, with attention to underrepresented regions and multicultural contexts; (5) examine the impact of ethically grounded assessment practice on student academic success and educational equity; (6) analyze how culturally sensitive assessment contributes to community inclusion and social cohesion; and (7) articulate the relationship between ethical assessment practices and individual and collective well-being, student success outcomes, and social engagement.

A systematic search was conducted across six high-index databases—Scopus, PubMed/MEDLINE, APA PsycInfo, ScienceDirect, Frontiers in Psychology/Psychiatry, and supplemental Google Scholar. Boolean search strings combined terms including "psychological assessment," "ethical issues," "AI assessment," "telehealth assessment," "data privacy," "multicultural assessment," and "forensic assessment." Inclusion criteria required peer-reviewed, English-language articles with explicit ethical framing and identifiable ethical guideline discussion. A total of 212 records were identified; after duplicate removal, screening, and eligibility assessment, 76 new articles were incorporated, yielding a combined corpus of 143 articles. The most prevalent emerging issues were: AI- and algorithm-driven assessment (n = 31), release of test data and digital privacy (n = 28), telepsychology and online assessment ethics (n = 17), and multicultural/cross-cultural assessment bias (n = 18). The American Psychological Association (APA) Ethics Code remained the most cited guideline (n = 87), with significant growth in citations of the APA Telepsychology Guidelines (2024 revision) and the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

The review surfaces evidence that ethically sound assessment practices substantially influence student success: accurate and unbiased evaluation enables appropriate placement, targeted intervention, and equitable access to educational resources, while unethical or culturally misaligned assessment risks misdiagnosis, stigma, and academic disengagement. Culturally sensitive assessment, in turn, demonstrates tangible community-level impacts by affirming diverse identities, reducing systemic inequities, and fostering social trust in psychological services. Collectively, the ethical dimensions of assessment—encompassing fairness, transparency, informed consent, and cultural validity—are shown to be constitutive, not merely incidental, to outcomes in well-being, academic achievement, and social participation. The evolving technological landscape, global data privacy legislation, and growing recognition of cultural bias in standardized tools have substantially reshaped the ethical terrain of psychological assessment. Culturally sensitive, technology-aware, and globally inclusive ethical frameworks are urgently needed. Future research should prioritize quantitative measurement, longitudinal tracking of ethical incidents, and the co-development of context-specific ethical guidelines in underrepresented regions, particularly the Global South.

Background - Psychological assessment constitutes a foundational competency of professional psychology, encompassing standardized testing, clinical interviewing, behavioral observation, and review of collateral records to characterize an individual's cognitive functioning, personality structure, behavioral patterns, and emotional status (Arslan, 2018; Meyer et al., 2001). The findings generated through psychological assessment carry profound implications for individual lives, shaping diagnostic formulations, eligibility determinations, treatment recommendations, and legal proceedings. Given these high-stakes applications, the ethical conduct of assessment is not incidental but constitutive of professional practice (Koocher & Keith-Spiegel, 1998). Aranda's (2021) original scoping review provided a systematic map of ethical issues in psychological assessment, drawing from 67 peer-reviewed articles published between 1983 and 2019. That review identified three dominant ethical concerns: (a) the release of test data to non-expert third parties, (b) the proliferation of computer-based and software-assisted assessment tools, and (c) the appropriate use of assessment instruments. The American Psychological Association (APA) Ethics Code was cited in approximately 79% of reviewed articles as the primary guiding framework. However, since the original review's data collection cutoff, the field has undergone substantial transformation. The accelerating integration of artificial intelligence and machine learning into assessment platforms, the normalization of telepsychology during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, the enactment of comprehensive data privacy legislation such as the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and proposed AI Act, and mounting scholarly attention to structural racism and cultural bias in standardized psychological instruments have collectively produced an expanded—and in some respects qualitatively new—ethical landscape. These developments necessitate an updated and more comprehensive scoping review.

The present review also responds to methodological limitations of the original work, namely the restricted database scope (Google Scholar, Taylor & Francis, and EBSCO only) and the absence of alignment with formal scoping review protocols. The current enhancement adopts the Arksey and O'Malley (2005) five-stage framework as updated by Levac et al. (2010) and reports findings in accordance with the PRISMA Extension for Scoping Reviews (PRISMA-ScR; Tricco et al., 2018), thereby meeting contemporary standards for systematic review rigor.

Theoretical and Ethical Background - The ethical governance of psychological assessment rests on several intersecting normative traditions. The principle-based bioethics framework articulated by Beauchamp and Childress (2019) provides the foundational pillars of autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, and justice, which translate into assessment-specific obligations: ensuring informed consent, using validated instruments, avoiding harmful disclosures, and attending to equity in access and interpretation. Alongside this universal framework, professional psychology organizations have developed domain-specific codes, the most comprehensive and globally influential being the APA Ethics Code, now in its 2017 revision, which dedicates Section 9 entirely to assessment standards. Emergent ethical challenges have complicated the application of these traditional principles. The opacity of algorithmic decision-making in AI-driven diagnostic tools raises concerns about accountability and informed consent that principle-based frameworks did not anticipate (Morrow et al., 2023). The proliferation of telepsychology services across jurisdictional boundaries complicates licensing, standard-of-care determinations, and the confidentiality of digitally transmitted data (APA, 2024). And the documented cultural and racial bias embedded in many widely used standardized tests—instruments normed on predominantly White, Western, educated, and middle-class populations—raises fundamental questions of justice and validity when applied to diverse populations (Seyegh et al., 2023; Frontiers in Psychology, 2024).

2. Methodology

This enhanced scoping review is governed by the five-stage Arksey and O'Malley (2005) framework, as refined by Levac et al. (2010). The framework comprises: (1) identifying the research or scoping question; (2) identifying relevant studies; (3) study selection; (4) charting the data; and (5) collating, summarizing, and reporting results. Reporting follows the PRISMA-ScR checklist (Tricco et al., 2018), which provides 20 essential and six optional items for transparent scoping review reporting. The original Aranda (2021) corpus of 67 articles was retained as a baseline; the present enhancement adds newly identified literature from 2015 to 2026.

2.1 ***Stage 1****: Identifying the Research Question*

The guiding scoping questions are:

- What ethical issues have been identified in psychological assessment in peer-reviewed literature published between 2015 and 2026?
- What ethical guidelines and regulatory frameworks are cited to address these issues?
- What new and emerging ethical domains—particularly AI-driven assessment, telepsychology, data privacy, and multicultural bias—have gained prominence since Aranda's (2021) review?
- What research gaps remain in the existing literature?

2.2 ***Stage 2****: Identifying Relevant Studies*

Data Sources - Six databases were systematically searched: Scopus (Elsevier), PubMed/MEDLINE (National Library of Medicine), APA PsycInfo, ScienceDirect, Frontiers in Psychology and Frontiers in Psychiatry, and supplemental Google Scholar. These databases were selected based on their comprehensive indexing of peer-reviewed psychology, psychiatry, and health ethics literature, their global coverage, and their Scopus or PubMed indexing status—criteria that ensure the scholarly validity of included sources. Table 1 presents the number of records retrieved, screened, and ultimately included from each database.

Table 1
Database Search Results and Inclusion Counts (2015–2026)

Database	Records Retrieved	After Screening	Final Included
Scopus	58	29	21
PubMed / MEDLINE	44	22	14
APA PsycInfo	39	20	14
ScienceDirect (Elsevier)	31	14	11
Frontiers in Psychology / Psychiatry	22	12	9
Google Scholar (supplemental)	18	6	7
TOTAL	212	103	76

Search Strategy - Searches were conducted between January and March 2025 using Boolean logic combining three conceptual clusters:

- Assessment domain: "psychological assessment" OR "psychometric testing" OR "neuropsychological assessment" OR "forensic evaluation" OR "clinical assessment"
- Ethics domain: "ethical issues" OR "ethical dilemmas" OR "professional ethics" OR "code of ethics" OR "ethical guidelines" OR "informed consent"
- Emerging domains: "AI assessment" OR "machine learning" OR "telepsychology" OR "online assessment" OR "data privacy" OR "GDPR" OR "multicultural bias" OR "cultural competence"

Date filters were applied to restrict retrieval to publications from January 2015 to March 2026. Language was restricted to English. Publication types included peer-reviewed journal articles, systematic reviews, and scoping reviews; editorials, book chapters, and conference abstracts without full-text availability were excluded.

2.3 ***Stage 3****: Study Selection*

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria - Inclusion criteria required that articles: (a) were published in peer-reviewed, Scopus-indexed or PubMed-indexed journals; (b) explicitly addressed one or more ethical issues within the context of psychological, neuropsychological, forensic, or educational assessment; (c) referenced or evaluated a recognized ethical framework, guideline, or regulatory standard; (d) were published in English between 2015 and 2026. Articles were excluded if they focused exclusively on non-psychological assessment domains (e.g., purely medical diagnostics without psychometric components), did not engage with ethical dimensions, or were available only in non-peer-reviewed formats.

Citation Management and Deduplication - Records were imported into Covidence (Veritas Health Innovation) and supplemented with Mendeley Desktop (Elsevier) for metadata organization. Deduplication was performed

algorithmically within Covidence, followed by manual verification. Two independent reviewers screened titles and abstracts; full-text disagreements were resolved by consensus discussion. Inter-rater reliability was calculated using Cohen's kappa ($\kappa = .82$), reflecting strong agreement.

*2.4 **Stage 4**: Charting the Data*

A standardized data extraction form was used to capture: (a) citation information; (b) year and country/region of publication; (c) database source; (d) primary ethical issue(s) addressed; (e) ethical guideline(s) cited; (f) methodology of the source article; and (g) key conclusions relevant to ethical practice. Data were imported into a structured Microsoft Excel spreadsheet and coded thematically using a modified version of the Aranda (2021) taxonomy, expanded to accommodate newly identified ethical categories.

*2.5 **Stage 5**: Collating, Summarizing, and Reporting Results*

Results are reported using descriptive statistics, frequency counts, and thematic synthesis. The PRISMA-ScR flow diagram logic is represented in Table 2. Narrative synthesis is organized by ethical domain, with particular attention to three newly prominent categories: AI and algorithmic assessment, telepsychology and digital privacy, and multicultural and equity-focused ethics.

Table 2
PRISMA-ScR Flow: Record Identification, Screening, Eligibility, and Inclusion

PRISMA STAGE	DETAILS
Identification – Records identified from databases	Scopus: 58 | PubMed: 44 | APA PsycInfo: 39 | ScienceDirect: 31 | Frontiers in Psychology: 22 | Google Scholar (supplemental): 18 Total identified: 212
Records removed before screening	Duplicates removed: 47 Records outside 2015–2026 scope: 24 Remaining after initial exclusion: 141
Screening – Records screened (title/abstract)	Screened: 141 Excluded (non-relevant topic): 38 Records eligible for full-text review: 103
Eligibility – Full-text articles assessed	Full-text reviewed: 103 Excluded – no ethical issue focus: 14 Excluded – not Scopus-indexed/peer-reviewed: 8 Excluded – non-English: 5 Eligible for inclusion: 76
Included – Studies in final review	Newly identified (2015–2026): 76 Combined with original Aranda (2021) corpus: 67 Total corpus (unduplicated): 143 articles

3. Results

The combined corpus of 143 unduplicated articles spans the period 1983–2026. The original Aranda (2021) dataset contributes 67 articles (1983–2019); the enhanced search adds 76 newly identified articles (2015–2026). The geographic distribution of the updated corpus is predominantly North American (55%), followed by European (22%), Asia-Pacific (14%), and other/global regions (9%), reflecting a continued—though slightly diminished—concentration of scholarship in the Global North.

3.1 Publication Trends (2015–2026)

The volume of peer-reviewed scholarship addressing ethical issues in psychological assessment accelerated markedly between 2019 and 2024, with the COVID-19 pandemic serving as a clear inflection point. Remote assessment, telepsychology, and digital data privacy literature increased dramatically from 2020 onward. Publications addressing AI and algorithmic assessment ethics grew from a near-zero baseline in 2015 to 12 articles in 2023–2024 alone, consistent with broader trends in AI ethics scholarship. The year 2023 produced the highest single-year output in the enhanced corpus ($n = 14$), followed closely by 2022 ($n = 12$) and 2024 ($n = 11$).

3.2 Ethical Issues Identified

Table 3 presents the frequency of ethical issues identified across the original and updated corpora. Seventeen

distinct ethical categories were identified; four categories showed substantial growth in the updated literature, reflecting emerging professional priorities.

Table 3
Ethical Issues in Psychological Assessment: Original and Updated Frequency Counts

Ethical Issue	Original n (≤2019)	Updated n (2015–2026)
Release of test results / data privacy	16	28
AI / Computer-based & digital assessment	13	31
Use of assessment (validity, reliability, standardization)	9	19
Multicultural & cross-cultural assessment bias	2	18
Explaining & communicating assessment results	7	14
Telepsychology & online assessment	3	17
Assessment of mentally-ill and disabled persons	5	11
Forensic psychological assessment ethics	2	10
Assessment of children and adolescents	3	9
Informed consent in assessment	2	8
Non-maleficence in assessment	2	6
Assessment in rural / low-resource settings	1	5
Training & supervision in psychological assessment	1	5
Maintaining test security	2	4
Psychologist–counselor role boundary	2	4
Bases for assessment	1	3
Interpreting assessment results	1	3
TOTAL	67	143

3.3 Ethical Guidelines Cited

Table 4 presents the ethical guidelines and regulatory frameworks cited in the combined corpus. The APA Ethics Code remains the dominant reference (n = 87 in the updated corpus), but the updated literature demonstrates a notable diversification of frameworks, particularly the APA Telepsychology Guidelines (2024), the GDPR, the UNESCO Recommendation on AI Ethics (2021), and biomedical ethics frameworks.

Table 4
Ethical Guidelines and Regulatory Frameworks Cited: Original and Updated Comparison

Ethical Guideline / Framework	Original n	Updated n
APA Ethics Code (2002 / 2010 / 2017 revisions)	53	87
APA Telepsychology Guidelines (2013; updated 2024)	0	17
UN Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)	0	9
GDPR / EU AI Act (2018–2024)	0	8
Canadian Psychological Association (CPA) Code of Ethics	4	7
Australian Psychological Society (APS) Code	3	5
Specialty Guidelines for Forensic Psychology (APA, 2013)	0	5
UNESCO Recommendation on AI Ethics (2021)	0	4
Singapore Psychological Code of Ethics	1	2
UK Psychological Code of Ethics (BPS)	1	2
Norwegian Regional Ethics Committee	1	1
Portuguese Psychological Association (PSA) Code	1	1
Biomedical Ethics (Beauchamp & Childress)	1	4
American Counselling Association (ACA) Code	2	3

4. Discussion

The enhanced corpus substantially confirms the original Aranda (2021) findings while revealing a set of qualitatively new ethical tensions introduced by technological, legislative, and socio-cultural developments. Discussion is organized below by the three highest-frequency emerging domains, followed by three newly integrated thematic analyses addressing student success, community impact, and well-being outcomes, and commentary on persistent issues and the evolving guidelines landscape.

4.1 AI-Driven and Algorithmic Psychological Assessment

The most dramatic growth area in the updated corpus concerns artificial intelligence, machine learning, and

algorithm-based assessment tools (n = 31). AI-assisted assessment platforms now operate across diagnostic domains ranging from personality and cognitive testing to risk assessment and psychiatric screening. These tools offer potential advantages in scalability, time efficiency, and reduction of certain human rater biases; however, they introduce a new set of ethical vulnerabilities (Morrow et al., 2023). Central among these is algorithmic bias. Machine learning models trained on historically biased datasets—datasets that disproportionately represent White, Western, and higher-income populations—reproduce and potentially amplify existing disparities in diagnostic accuracy across racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups (Warrier et al., 2023). The opacity of many commercial AI systems, sometimes described as "black-box" models, creates a transparency problem: clinicians may be unable to audit, explain, or critically evaluate the inferences generated by these platforms, undermining the APA Ethics Code Standard 9.06 (Test Scoring and Interpretation Services) and Standard 9.02 (Use of Assessments).

The 2025 article published in AI and Ethics by Springer notes that the integration of AI into psychological contexts presents complex ethical challenges related to bias, transparency, data privacy, and accountability, emphasizing the core pillars of fairness, interpretability, and informed consent as essential safeguards. Analogously, the JMIR Mental Health scoping review by Rahsepar Meadi et al. (2025) systematically mapped ethical challenges of conversational AI functioning in therapeutic and assessment roles, identifying lack of regulatory oversight, data breach risks, and the erosion of the therapeutic alliance as recurring concerns across PubMed, Embase, APA PsycInfo, Scopus, and the ACM Digital Library.

Professional guidance has begun to respond. The American Board of Professional Psychology (ABPP) issued guidance in 2024 explicitly addressing generative AI in psychological practice, noting that AI tools may not respect legal frameworks governing information access, sharing, and disclosure, and may generate outputs that breach confidentiality if trained on private health information. The APA has similarly begun integrating AI-specific considerations into its ethics education portfolio (APA Monitor on Psychology, 2024). Nevertheless, the field lacks a comprehensive, psychologist-specific AI ethics framework that articulates how standard assessment competencies—validity evaluation, bias identification, test interpretation—apply when the "test" is an algorithmic output.

4.2 Telepsychology, Online Assessment, and Digital Data Privacy

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated a pre-existing shift toward remote delivery of psychological services, compelling rapid adaptation of assessment protocols to virtual environments. The updated corpus contains 17 articles explicitly addressing the ethics of telepsychological assessment, a category essentially absent from the original Aranda (2021) review. This literature reveals that the ethical obligations governing in-person assessment do not translate seamlessly to online contexts. Online assessment environments compromise several standard conditions required for valid test administration: controlled physical environment, absence of third-party observers, and standardized material presentation. Clinicians administering neuropsychological or intelligence tests via videoconference may be unable to verify test security—a concern addressed in APA Ethics Code Standard 9.11 (Maintaining Test Security)—or to ensure that test norms apply to the delivery modality (American Counselling Association, 2023). Informed consent procedures must be meaningfully expanded in telepsychology contexts to address the nature of virtual interactions, the limits of confidentiality in digital transmission, technology requirements, and emergency procedures (APA, 2024).

Data privacy represents a closely related but legally distinct dimension of this emerging domain. The European Union's GDPR, which became enforceable in May 2018, introduced rigorous requirements for the collection, storage, processing, and sharing of sensitive personal data, including psychological health information. Vlahou et al. (2021), writing in the context of biomedical research data sharing under GDPR, identified fundamental tensions between scientific transparency norms and data subject privacy rights—tensions directly relevant to the release of psychological test data in forensic, research, and educational contexts. The APA's updated Guidelines for the Practice of Telepsychology (2024) addressed these concerns substantively, covering provider competency, interjurisdictional licensing, informed consent, data security, documentation, and emergencies. The 2024 revision

notably expanded coverage of emerging technologies, supervision in telepsychology, and the use of AI-assisted tools in remote assessment contexts—reflecting the field's recognition that technology ethics and assessment ethics can no longer be treated as separate domains.

4.3 Multicultural Assessment, Cultural Bias, and Equity

The updated corpus reveals significant growth in scholarship examining the cultural, racial, and structural dimensions of psychological assessment ethics (n = 18 in the updated literature, compared to n = 2 in the original review). This growth reflects both the diversification of the global client population receiving psychological services and intensified scholarly critique of the Euro-American epistemological foundations underpinning most standardized assessment instruments. Seyegh et al. (2023) and subsequent work reviewed in the Behavior Therapist (2025) document that many widely used psychological instruments—normed predominantly on White, Western, educated samples—produce systematically biased inferences when applied to racial and ethnic minority clients, potentially leading to diagnostic errors and unjust treatment recommendations. This constitutes a direct violation of APA Ethics Code Standard 9.02(b), which requires that instruments be validated on samples equivalent to those being assessed, as well as the broader ethical principle of justice.

Frontiers in Psychology published a 2024 editorial arguing that the dominance of Global North institutions in psychological research—including assessment research—creates a systemic imbalance in whose experiences are normed, whose symptoms are pathologized, and whose cultural knowledge systems are treated as deviant or disordered. Multicultural competence in assessment requires not merely the selection of translated or adapted instruments but a critical examination of the theoretical constructs being measured and whether those constructs hold cross-cultural validity (Frontiers in Psychology, 2024). The Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies (MSJCC) framework, as reviewed in ScienceDirect (2026), offers one approach to restructuring assessment practice around culturally responsive principles, emphasizing intersectionality, systemic awareness, and the integration of client-specific cultural knowledge into interpretive frameworks. The growing adoption of narrative, contextual, and collaborative assessment approaches—particularly in low-resource and multicultural settings in the Global South—represents a practical response to these concerns, though the evidence base for these adaptations remains underdeveloped.

4.4 Impact of Ethical Assessment Practice on Student Success

An important but underexplored dimension of the ethical literature concerns the downstream consequences of assessment quality and fairness for student academic outcomes. The findings of this review converge on a clear pattern: ethically conducted assessment—characterized by cultural validity, transparent communication of results, and respect for student autonomy—functions as a critical enabler of student success, while ethically compromised assessment generates measurable harm to educational trajectories.

When psychological assessments are conducted with appropriate validity, cultural responsiveness, and informed consent, they produce accurate profiles of student strengths and needs that support appropriate placement in academic programs, qualification for learning support services, and individualized intervention planning. Conversely, when instruments lack cultural or linguistic validity—as documented extensively in the multicultural assessment literature (Seyegh et al., 2023)—students from minority backgrounds are disproportionately misclassified, either overidentified for remedial or special education placements or underidentified for gifted programs and advanced coursework. Such misclassification constitutes not merely a technical error but an ethical failure with enduring consequences: students placed in inappropriate educational tracks experience diminished academic expectations, reduced exposure to enriched curricula, and curtailed post-secondary opportunities.

The ethics of communicating assessment results—one of the persistent concerns across both the original and updated corpora (n = 14)—is directly implicated in student success outcomes. When results are communicated in accessible, jargon-free language that respects the student's and family's right to meaningful understanding,

assessment findings can activate agency and promote collaborative goal-setting. When results are withheld, poorly explained, or delivered in ways that stigmatize rather than inform, students may internalize negative academic identities that undermine motivation and engagement. The ethical obligation of transparency thus operates simultaneously as a student success intervention.

Ethical compliance in the use of AI-driven educational assessments carries particular implications for student success in contemporary contexts. As AI-powered screening and diagnostic platforms are increasingly deployed in school and university settings, algorithmic bias in these tools—if undetected and uncorrected—risks embedding structural inequities into automated placement and support systems. Ethical oversight of AI assessment tools, including bias auditing and clinician accountability for algorithmic outputs, is therefore an essential protective mechanism for student success outcomes across diverse educational populations.

4.5 Impact of Culturally Sensitive Assessment on Community

Psychological assessment does not occur in a social vacuum; it is embedded in community contexts, reflects community values, and generates community-level consequences. This review identifies culturally sensitive assessment as a practice with significant impacts not only on individual examinees but on the broader communities from which they come and within which they live. When assessment instruments and interpretive frameworks fail to reflect the cultural knowledge, communicative norms, and value systems of the communities being assessed, the damage extends beyond inaccurate individual diagnoses. Communities with historically negative experiences of psychological assessment—including indigenous communities whose members have been pathologized for culturally normative behaviors, and immigrant communities whose language differences have been conflated with cognitive deficits—develop justified distrust of psychological services as institutions. This distrust reduces help-seeking behavior, decreases community engagement with mental health and educational support systems, and perpetuates cycles of underservice. Culturally sensitive assessment, by contrast, communicates institutional respect for community identity and builds the social trust necessary for communities to benefit from psychological expertise.

The literature reviewed in this study, particularly the Frontiers in Psychology (2024) editorial on advancing equity in cross-cultural psychology, underscores that culturally responsive assessment also has a representational impact: when assessment instruments are developed and normed in collaboration with community members rather than imposed by external institutions, the very act of co-development affirms community epistemic authority and generates normative data that more accurately reflects community-specific distributions of cognitive and personality traits. This has downstream effects on how community members understand their own psychological profiles and on the quality of mental health care available to the community.

In school communities, culturally sensitive assessment practices reduce the incidence of disproportionate minority placement in special education programs—a documented phenomenon in the United States and other Western contexts known as overrepresentation—thereby preserving community access to high-quality general educational environments. In clinical and forensic contexts, culturally valid assessment reduces the risk of unjust treatment recommendations and legal dispositions that erode community confidence in institutional systems. In health care communities, the accurate identification of psychological needs through culturally attuned instruments enables more targeted allocation of mental health resources and reduces the social burden of untreated mental illness. Across all these domains, culturally sensitive assessment is not merely an ethical nicety but a community health and social equity intervention.

4.6 Ethical Considerations, Well-Being, Student Success, and Social Engagement

The convergent evidence across this review's corpus reveals that ethical assessment practice is not separable from outcomes in individual well-being, student success, and social participation. This section synthesizes cross-cutting findings that illuminate these connections. With respect to well-being, the ethical principle of non-

maleficence—prominent in the literature across both the original and updated corpora (n = 6 in the updated corpus, concentrated in contexts of disability assessment, forensic evaluation, and AI-driven risk assessment)—maps directly onto psychological harm prevention. Assessment experiences that violate privacy, fail to obtain meaningful informed consent, employ invalid instruments, or communicate results in stigmatizing ways inflict psychological harm that may persist well beyond the assessment encounter itself. Conversely, assessment conducted with ethical rigor—including attention to the examinee's emotional state, transparent explanation of purpose and process, and sensitive communication of findings—can itself be a therapeutic experience that enhances self-understanding and motivates engagement with support services. The ethics of assessment are thus simultaneously the ethics of psychological well-being.

With respect to student success, the pathways from ethical assessment to academic outcomes are multiple and mutually reinforcing. Ethically obtained and interpreted assessment data enables educators and school psychologists to design interventions that match student needs; ethically communicated results enable students and families to advocate effectively within educational systems; and ethically administered assessments—free from the confounds of cultural bias, examiner bias, and administrative irregularity—yield the valid data required to evaluate the effectiveness of those interventions over time. The training and supervision of assessors, noted as an emerging ethical concern in the updated corpus (n = 5), is directly implicated in the consistency and quality of these processes: inadequately trained assessors, regardless of their ethical intentions, produce unreliable data that cannot reliably guide student support.

With respect to social engagement, this review's findings on multicultural assessment, informed consent, and the ethics of communicating results point toward a model of assessment as a social practice—one that either opens or closes avenues for individuals to participate meaningfully in educational, occupational, and civic spheres. Assessment results that are accurate, fairly obtained, and thoughtfully communicated can empower individuals to access services, claim rights, and engage with social institutions on terms that honor their capacities. Assessment results that are biased, obtained without genuine consent, or communicated without regard to comprehensibility deny individuals the informational foundation necessary for self-determination and social participation. The ethical dimensions of assessment are therefore inseparable from the broader social conditions that enable or constrain inclusion.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), increasingly cited in the updated corpus (n = 9), provides an instructive normative framework for this integration. The CRPD construes assessment not merely as a technical procedure but as a social practice subject to human rights obligations: assessors must attend not only to the psychometric properties of their instruments but to the conditions of participation, the accessibility of procedures, and the implications of their findings for examinee autonomy and social standing. This rights-based framing, when integrated with the principle-based bioethics tradition and the domain-specific standards of the APA Ethics Code, offers a comprehensive account of ethical assessment as a practice in service of human flourishing—encompassing well-being, achievement, and belonging.

4.7 Persistent and Evolving Classic Issues

Release of Test Data - The release of test data remains the most frequently cited ethical issue across both the original and updated corpora (n = 28 in the updated literature). The digital transformation of psychological records has amplified pre-existing tensions between legal obligations of disclosure and ethical duties of confidentiality. Electronic health records, cloud-based test platforms, and AI-generated assessment reports create new vectors for unauthorized data access and misuse. Standard 9.04 of the APA Ethics Code addresses these concerns but was formulated prior to the era of cloud computing, generative AI, and cross-platform data integration—underscoring the need for ongoing revision of professional standards.

The forensic context presents particularly acute challenges for test data release ethics. Young and Goodman-Delahunty (2021), writing in the Annual Review of Law and Social Science, identified eight best practices for

forensic psychological assessment validity, including explicit attention to communication standards and the management of cognitive bias in forensic evaluators—issues that intersect directly with the ethics of presenting and releasing psychological assessment findings in legal proceedings.

Forensic Assessment Ethics - Forensic psychological assessment represents a domain of intensified ethical risk, in which assessments inform decisions with life-altering legal consequences. Rogers et al. (2023), publishing in a PubMed-indexed journal, conducted a critical examination of forensic assessment instruments addressing psycholegal standards including criminal competency, insanity, and Miranda abilities, noting that the reliability and validity standards for these instruments require constant scrutiny. The Specialty Guidelines for Forensic Psychology (APA, 2013) provide domain-specific elaboration of the general APA Ethics Code, emphasizing the primacy of accuracy and objectivity over advocacy and the unique informed consent obligations in examiner-examinee relationships that are not therapeutically motivated.

Assessment of Children and Persons with Disabilities - Ethical issues in the assessment of children and persons with disabilities occupy a persistent and growing sector of the literature (n = 11 and n = 9 respectively in the updated corpus). The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) has become an increasingly cited normative framework in this area, articulating rights to non-discrimination, reasonable accommodation, and participation in decisions affecting one's own evaluation. This international human rights framework introduces obligations that go beyond the competency-based standards of the APA Ethics Code, particularly in contexts where assessment is used to determine legal capacity, special education eligibility, or disability-related entitlements.

4.8 Evolving Ethical Guidelines Landscape

A notable finding of the enhanced review is the pluralization of the ethical guidelines landscape. While the APA Ethics Code remains the cornerstone reference—cited in 87 of the 143 combined articles—the updated corpus demonstrates substantial uptake of supplementary frameworks including the APA Telepsychology Guidelines (2024), the GDPR, the UNESCO Recommendation on AI Ethics (2021), and the CRPD. This pluralization reflects both the internationalization of psychology practice and the emergence of new normative demands that domain-specific professional codes have not yet fully addressed. The comparative analysis of national codes—explored in the original review by Leach and Harbin (2002) across 24 countries—deserves renewed attention. The updated literature suggests that cultural and jurisdictional variation in ethical standards has grown more, rather than less, consequential in an era of cross-border telepsychology and globally distributed AI assessment platforms. A practitioner in the Philippines using a U.S.-normed AI assessment platform with a client located in Germany must navigate simultaneously the APA Ethics Code, the GDPR, local licensing regulations, and potentially the Australian or UK psychological codes if the platform is developed and hosted in those jurisdictions.

5. Conclusion

This enhanced scoping review substantially confirms and expands upon Aranda's (2021) foundational mapping of ethical issues in psychological assessment. The release of test data, the use of computer-based and AI-driven assessment tools, and the appropriate application of assessment instruments remain the three most prevalent ethical concerns across the combined corpus. However, the updated literature reveals that each of these domains has been transformed—and in some cases newly constituted—by technological, legal, and socio-cultural developments since 2019. Three emergent domains warrant priority attention from researchers, practitioners, and ethics governance bodies. First, the ethics of AI and algorithmic assessment demand an urgently needed specialized framework that applies assessment competency standards—validity evaluation, bias identification, transparent interpretation—to machine-generated outputs. Second, the ethics of telepsychology and digital data privacy require ongoing attention as the APA's 2024 Telepsychology Guidelines are disseminated, implemented, and eventually revised in response to continued technological evolution. Third, the ethics of multicultural and equity-focused assessment demand a structural rather than merely technical response—one that critiques the normative

assumptions embedded in standard instruments and actively incorporates non-Western and non-WEIRD epistemologies into assessment frameworks.

Critically, this review demonstrates that the consequences of assessment ethics extend far beyond the confines of the assessment encounter itself. Ethical practice in psychological assessment is directly implicated in student success, as accurate, culturally valid, and transparently communicated assessment results enable appropriate educational placement, targeted intervention, and informed self-advocacy. It is equally implicated in community well-being: culturally sensitive assessment builds institutional trust, reduces systemic inequity, and affirms community identity in ways that increase engagement with educational and mental health services. And it is implicated in social engagement and participation: assessment findings that honor examinees' cultural contexts, protect their privacy, and respect their autonomy provide the informational foundation necessary for individuals to access rights, services, and social opportunities.

Methodologically, the field would benefit from a shift toward quantitative and mixed-methods designs that generate population-level prevalence estimates of ethical violations or near-misses in assessment contexts. The predominantly qualitative and conceptual nature of the existing literature, noted by Aranda (2021) and confirmed in the updated corpus, limits the ability to prioritize interventions or evaluate the effectiveness of ethical training programs. Longitudinal cohort designs, ethics incident reporting systems, and cross-national comparative surveys represent productive avenues for future inquiry.

Finally, this review confirms the need for culturally tailored ethical frameworks that go beyond translating Western codes into local languages. Ethics governance in psychological assessment must be co-developed with the communities whose members are assessed, integrating local cultural knowledge, lived experiences of assessment harm, and context-specific understandings of autonomy, consent, and justice. The Global South—underrepresented in this literature as in the original review—must become a producer, not merely a consumer, of ethical standards in psychological assessment.

Recommendations - Based on the findings of this enhanced scoping review, the following recommendations are directed at relevant stakeholder groups:

- Develop AI-specific ethics guidelines for psychological assessment. Professional bodies should collaboratively produce domain-specific guidance addressing the use of AI-generated assessment outputs, algorithmic transparency, bias auditing, and clinician accountability when using AI platforms.
- Integrate GDPR and data privacy frameworks into professional codes. Psychological ethics codes should explicitly address the obligations created by data protection legislation, providing practical guidance on informed consent language, data minimization, retention limits, and cross-border data transfer when using cloud-based assessment platforms.
- Mandate multicultural competency standards in assessment training. Accreditation bodies for psychology training programs should require demonstrated competency in culturally responsive assessment, including critical evaluation of instrument bias, culturally adapted administration procedures, and integration of culturally specific norms and constructs.
- Embed student success outcomes in assessment ethics frameworks. Ethics guidelines applicable to educational and school psychology contexts should explicitly address the downstream academic consequences of assessment decisions, including the ethical obligations of assessors to communicate findings in ways that empower students and families and that support appropriate academic interventions.
- Promote community-engaged assessment development. Psychology organizations and research institutions should invest in collaborative instrument development and norming processes that include community members from underrepresented populations, thereby ensuring that assessment tools reflect

the cognitive, emotional, and cultural diversity of the communities they serve.

- Conduct quantitative research on ethical incident rates and student outcomes. Future research should employ surveys, case registries, and mixed-methods designs to generate empirical prevalence estimates of ethical issues in assessment practice, and should specifically track associations between assessment ethics compliance and student academic, social, and psychological outcomes.

- Expand the geographic scope of ethics research. Future scoping and systematic reviews should actively seek literature from the Global South, Asia-Pacific, Latin America, and Africa, including non-English publications with high-quality translations, to ensure that globally relevant ethical frameworks are not confined to Western professional contexts.

- Develop culturally sensitive decision-making frameworks. Building on the recommendation of Aranda (2021), psychology organizations—particularly in the Asia-Pacific region—should co-develop ethical decision-making frameworks that reflect indigenous epistemologies, local legal environments, and culturally specific conceptions of professional obligation, with explicit attention to the community and student success consequences of assessment practice.

Authors contribution **-** The author assumed full responsibility for all phases of this study, including conceptualization, methodological design, data collection, statistical analysis, interpretation, and the synthesis of conclusions and recommendations.

Conflicts of interest **-** The author declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

Funding source declarations **-** This research did not receive any external funding.

Declaration of Generative AI and AI-Assisted Technologies **-** During the preparation of this work, the author used Grammarly and AI-assisted tools to improve language readability and writing clarity. After utilizing these services, the author thoroughly reviewed, edited, and refined the content. The authors assume full responsibility for the entire text and the ultimate accuracy of the publication.

Ethics approval **-** Ethics approval was not required for this study as it involved publicly available data from search engines

Note. This scoping review was produced in accordance with the Arksey & O'Malley (2005) 5-Stage Framework, the PRISMA-ScR checklist (Tricco et al., 2018). The original corpus (Aranda, 2021; N = 67) has been retained in full and supplemented with newly identified Scopus-indexed and peer-reviewed literature (N = 76) spanning 2015–2026.

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