Assessment of personality often forms the core of psychological assessment for varied purposes. Assessment is a crucial activity undertaken by psychologists in the scientific pursuit of prediction and control of human behavior. Scientific assessment has the capability “to translate human behavior, characteristics, and abilities into numbers or other forms that lend themselves to description and comparison across individuals and groups of people” (Koocher & Rey-Casserly, 2003, p. 165). Apart from research in basic personality theories, assessment of personality is usually undertaken upon request either of the client or of a third party. The kind of assessment required, tools to be used, and scope of assessment are all determined on the basis of the kind of answers being sought by the requesting party. Over the last century the techniques of assessment have been steadily refined and developed by the researchers and practitioners in the field. Today a wide variety of choices are available regarding assessment procedures and tools of personality assessment. Allport (1937) classified two major approaches to assessment of personality: nomothetic, which aims to establish general laws and principles that can be applied universally to all individuals, and idiographic, which attempts to understand the unique aspects of a particular individual through the intensive study of a single or a small number of individuals as complete, complex, and interacting systems. These two approaches have led to the development of a wide range of personality tests. While most personality tests rely on the trait approach to the study of personality, their degree of objectivity and subjectivity differs, leading to the classification of objective tests and projective tests for personality assessment. The basic assumptions underlying the two types of tests lead to diversion not only of assessment procedures, but also of definition issues as to what constitutes personality.

Objective tests of personality assume that personality is consciously accessible and can be measured with the help of self-report inventories. These tests are usually structured to offer a limited range of possible responses, and their administration and scoring is relatively simple. All self-report inventories, in general, are paper-and-pencil tests consisting of a series of questions that require individuals to describe their feelings, environment, thoughts, and actions. In contrast, the projective tests of personality are
based on the assumption that personality is primarily unconscious and is, therefore, not directly accessible. These tests rely on ambiguous stimuli in order to extract information from individuals that will help determine their personality characteristics, and are comparatively less structured or unstructured. Theorists who use projective tests believe that in responding to the unstructured ambiguous stimuli, individuals reveal their unconscious motives, conflicts, fears, needs, feelings, drives, and desires. The responses received from individuals to the presented stimuli can be interpreted in many different ways, thus making the process complex and highly subjective. Apart from the objective and projective varieties of personality assessment tools, there are a multitude of tests and inventories available that combine the two in various proportions.

Assessment of personality is often undertaken for clinical, educational, vocational, organizational, or forensic purposes, its scope and extent varying accordingly. A competent assessment implies that the assessor is conversant with the theory of measurement and methods of test construction, and at the same time has an awareness of the strengths and limitations of the tests being chosen for assessment, and employs proper procedures of administration and interpretation, in order to provide a coherent and relevant report (Society for Personality Assessment, 2006). Psychological assessment is often surrounded by an aura of unchallengeable accuracy and portrayed as a solution to a myriad of applied problems. However, psychological assessment is a complex field, with its obvious strengths and not so obvious limitations, and in their pursuit of providing scientifically valid assessments, psychologists have to deal with multiple ethical issues and dilemmas. In applied contexts, psychological assessment is a potent tool through which a psychologist can affect the assessee’s life in both positive and negative ways. Hence it is imperative that full scientific rigor and ethically appropriate procedures are ensured by the assessor. Koocher and Rey-Casserly (2003) defined the core ethical challenge in psychological assessment as “the appropriate use of psychological science to make decisions with full recognition of its limitations and the legal and human rights of the people whose lives are influenced” (p. 165).

**Ethics and Ethical Behavior in Professional Contexts**

Humanity has always been interested in ethics, and every society has set ethical standards of behavior for its members since man started organized living. The rules framed by a society for regulating the conduct of its members provide a description of expected behavioral standards, prescribe desirable behaviors, and set the norms for evaluating good or bad behavior. Traditionally, as a branch of philosophy, ethics has been concerned with what is morally good and bad, right and wrong. The study of ethics involves analyzing and developing normative criteria for dealing with moral problems. Though, etymologically, the Greek origin of the term ethic (i.e., ethos) and the Latin origin of the term moral (i.e., mores) both have the same meaning (habits or customs), the term ethics connotes a meaning incorporating something more than mere habits or customs. Ethics are the prescriptive and normative standards of behavior expected to be adhered to by members of a group, organization, or society. This implies that besides descriptive and prescriptive norms, ethics provide
an evaluative criterion that actively discriminates the desirable from undesirable. Ethics and morals both offer value-based judgments on the acceptability of behavior, though morals have a wider basis derived from the culture or values of a group or society, and have a general all-pervasive application, whereas ethics, in comparison, are more specific both in terms of origin and range of applicability. Leong, Altmaier, and Johnson (2008) define ethics as “the agreed upon standards of aspirational and mandatory behaviours and practices” (p. 182) by the members of a specific group, in their context the American Psychological Association.

Ethics set an aspirational standard of behavior in a manner that distinguishes the *malum in se* (bad in itself) from *malum prohibitum* (wrong only because law prohibits it). This implies that members of the group are expected to internalize these normative standards as inherent values of the group, and adhere to these under all circumstances, and not only in order to avoid punishment or reprimand. The key attribute that places ethics on a higher level than the law is the freedom of choice – choice that one makes in adhering to good and refraining from bad even in the absence of a binding authority. The core thus lies in voluntarily distinguishing the good from bad and structuring one’s behavior accordingly. Given the extent of general acceptability and uncritical approval of the results of psychological assessment done by an appropriately qualified trained person, and considering the extensive manner in which the outcomes of an assessment can impact the life of any given individual, it is absolutely essential for the professional to inculcate and imbibe appropriate professional ethical values in his or her conduct and practice.

Moreover, psychological assessment is an inherently human endeavor, wherein the psychologist actively constructs interpretations. Though test data contribute majorly to the assessment decisions, assessment cannot be made solely relying on test data. Psychological assessment involves drawing inferences and making holistic decisions about individuals by combining data drawn from multiple sources, which might include interviews, observations, and rating scales in addition to psychological tests. Such data combination procedures can be aided by mechanical predictions based on statistical computations, and algorithmic prediction using computer programmes, yet it has been shown that clinical prediction done by a qualified professional proves comparatively efficacious, especially when assessment includes interview data (Grove, Zald, Lebow, Snitz, & Nelson, 2000). It is obvious that psychological assessment can prove to be a complex task even for a qualified and competent professional, fraught with ethical dilemmas and difficult decisions.

Ethical standards of conduct are derived from multiple sources, and it is difficult to provide a straightforward prescription of do’s and don’ts.

Sources of ethics

Ethics can be derived from a number of sources. Bond (2000) delineated six sources of ethics:

(i) Personal ethics.
(ii) Ethical principles derived from a particular theoretical model.
(iii) Ethical policies and guidelines of the agency that employs the psychologist.
(iv) Guidelines and norms laid down by professional codes.
(v) Moral philosophy.
(vi) Legal obligations.

Nelson-Jones (2002) described these sources, and how they influence ethical decision-making.

Personal ethics are the ethical principles and values that evolve from personal life experiences of the psychologist. The values learned and internalized by the professional as a part of his or her socialization provide the basis for incorporating the professional ethics. Compassion for the client and professional competence can be said to have a basis in the personal ethics of the professional.

The theoretical model subscribed to by the psychologist not only determines the choice of tools and procedure of assessment, but also influences the ethical framework to a large extent. Different theoretical models have differing notions about the autonomy of the client and invasion of privacy by the assessor. The theoretical perspective being followed by the assessor is often the crucial factor based upon which the client makes a choice of going on with the assessment.

The policy of the agency within which the assessor functions determines the ethics question in a huge way, especially by requiring mandatory sharing of information, or by prescribing specific formats for assessment. Notwithstanding the overall commitment of the psychologist to the welfare of the client, certain limits might be imposed by the agency policies on the way particular issues are to be resolved.

Codes of ethics for psychological assessment are published by various professional organizations, and function as the regulatory guidelines for the practitioners in the field. Nelson-Jones (2002) asserted the importance of ethical codes by portraying these as the “starting point for a process of ethical decision making since they lay out what is generally considered acceptable behaviour in the profession” (p. 317). He valued professional codes for they provide a formal framework within which ethical practices can be assessed, though he also cautioned against development of apathy, passivity, and self-deceiving rationalizations that may arise due to overly relying on the professional codes, and not developing ethical decision-making skills.

Moral philosophy as a source of ethics establishes principles for defining the “good” and “bad” in a particular time and place. Accepted moral principles underlying ethical codes for psychological practice are: respect for individual autonomy, working for the benefit of the client, not harming the client, providing services for the benefit of all, and honoring promises.

Law and legal rules provide an important source of ethical practice within the area where the assessor practices. It is obligatory for the psychologist to be aware of the prevalent legal norms, rules, and the law pertaining especially to their area of practice. Bond (2000) advised in this regard to have a basic knowledge of law relating to contract, negligence, defamation, confidentiality, protection and disclosure of records, and acting as a witness in the courts of law. As a self-regulating profession,
the responsibility of practicing psychologists is not limited to codified law, though the limits defined by law are sacrosanct.

Ethical practice in psychological assessment

Koocher and Rey-Casserly (2003) provided a useful template in considering the pertinent ethical concerns that arise in assessment contexts by classifying these in terms of “before, during, and after assessment issues.” It is convenient to consider this classification in order to foresee and describe the probable ethical challenges in a linear fashion. As Koocher and Rey-Casserly (2003) emphasized, the contexts before beginning psychological assessment often appear deceptively simple and uncomplicated, usually beginning with a referral by another professional or with a request for assessment by a client or guardian, followed by setting up an appointment for the same. Yet there are ethical issues involved, requiring conscious decision-making by the practitioner, which if left unresolved might jeopardize the scientific validity and reliability of assessment. Drawing from Koocher and Rey-Casserly (2003), it is pertinent to enlist some such issues that pose ethical dilemmas before beginning actual assessment.

1 Resolving conflicts of interest among the client and the authority or authorities making the referral, determining to whom the psychologist has an obligation to provide answers to questions regarding assessment, who has the right to influence the scope or method of assessment, and who should be provided an access to assessment reports and feedback, and to what extent.

2 Obtaining informed consent well before entering into an agreement to assess the client through an explicit procedure that should “explain the nature of the evaluation, clarify the referral questions, and discuss the goals of the assessment, in language the client can readily understand. It is also important to be aware of the limitations of the assessment procedures and discuss these procedures with the client. To the extent possible, the psychologist also should be mindful of the goals of the client, clarify misunderstandings, and correct unrealistic expectations” (Koocher & Rey-Casserly, 2003, p. 166).

3 Ensuring one’s own competence in the specific area of assessment before agreeing to conduct it.

4 Planning the evaluation and clarifying the goals as well as limitations of assessment through an interactive process.

5 Critically evaluating the scientific validity and appropriateness of the psychological test or other tools before deciding to use these for a given assessment.

6 Judging the cultural and linguistic appropriateness of a test or tool for the particular client and using these in a careful and sensitive manner, allowing for linguistic or cultural constraints that might affect the individual’s range of responses.

7 Ensuring applicability of the normative bases of the test to the client and using a suitable and updated version of the chosen psychological test.
Ethical issues that arise at the time of conducting of psychological assessment also find a prominent place in the discussion by Koocher and Rey-Casserly (2003). To summarize from their detailed discussion, such issues are:

1. Ensuring a conducive environment by making the test-taker physically and emotionally comfortable, monitoring for motivational issues or attempts at faking good or faking bad, and counterbalancing these by use of additional instruments or by appropriately discussing these limiting circumstances in the assessment report.

2. Considering the issue of allowing a third-party observer to be present during the assessment, gauging the impact this might have on the test performance, and deciding upon the matter in the best interests of the client.

3. Ensuring adherence to standard test administration procedures, especially when technicians or other non-psychologist staff are employed either to assist in the assessment or to conduct a part thereof.

4. Preparing a comprehensive written report based on the assessment, and spelling out the limitations and scope of assessment in a clear manner. Making available a written report to the client contingent upon payment of fee is not considered unethical *per se*, provided that the terms and conditions of payment have been clearly spelt out as a part of the consent process while agreeing to the assessment.

5. Providing a professional interpretation and analysis of the test scores that may have been generated by a computer program, making space for describing the impact of specific environmental and contextual conditions and human factors, and providing a contextualized interpretation for the particular case.

The responsibility of a psychologist, however, does not end with conducting of assessment and preparation of the report. Koocher and Rey-Casserly (2003) emphasized and discussed the pertinent questions that psychologists often have to face in post-assessment scenarios and the ethical concerns involved in resolving these. Such issues include:

1. Providing oral and/or written feedback including a copy of the test report to the client, unless the test context precludes this requirement. Even in the contexts where there are limitations on providing feedback to the client, for example in forensic testing, pre-employment testing or security screening, it is required that such limitations be spelt out to the client at the outset.

2. Dealing with requests for alteration or modification of reports, deciding upon the viability and need for such modifications, and maintaining a balance between protecting the rights of the client, ensuring her welfare, and remaining true to the scientific rigor and essence of assessment.

3. Releasing test data to a third party for re-evaluation after deciding upon the competence and right of the third party to have access to the data. Under accepted ethical norms, psychologists are required to exercise caution and ensure that only competent and qualified individuals are given access to the test data. A related concern is to maintain test security, as psychologists are obliged to take care that standardized tests do not fall into the hands of unauthorized and non-competent people.
Ethical Issues in Personality Assessment

APA Code of Ethics: General Principles

An important document that defines ethical standards for psychologists in various fields and ensures compliance is the American Psychological Association (APA) Code of Ethics. The APA published the first code of ethics in the year 1953, the latest code of ethics being published in the year 2002, and has been modified again in 2010. The APA Code features two distinct sections – General Principles and Ethical Standards. The general principles set aspirational standards of ethical behavior for psychologists, and the ethical standards provide specific and enforceable rules of ethical conduct. The code contains five general principles of ethical behavior. It is pertinent to discuss these with reference to the specific context of psychological assessment.

The first principle, that of Beneficence and Non-maleficence, asserts that psychologists need to maintain a balance between providing benefits in the best interest of the client, at the same time avoiding harm to the client. Beneficence implies a duty to improve the conditions of others through the use of one’s professional knowledge and wisdom. The clause of “non-maleficence” puts the onus on the support professional to avoid or minimize any harm to the client. Originating from the Hippocratic Oath, the principle of non-maleficence calls for avoiding all acts that can potentially harm the client, and directs to minimize the effects in case any harm has been caused inadvertently or under unavoidable circumstances. The APA Code states thus, “Psychologists strive to benefit those with whom they work and take care to do no harm.” Put in the context of psychological assessment, the principle of beneficence and non-maleficence translates into a responsibility on the shoulders of the psychologist conducting the assessment, beginning with determining the purpose of assessment, selection of appropriate methods and tools of assessment, obtaining informed consent through an interactive process, through to providing an optimally conducive environment to the client at the time of assessment, and providing a comprehensive assessment report. In this process the psychologist might face quite a few dilemmas. For example, in the cases where the person to be assessed is a minor or has a limited comprehension, making him unable to give informed consent, or where layers of authority are involved, it becomes a difficult question for the psychologist to determine who should be given access to assessment data, or who among the various people involved should be considered as acting in the best interest of the client. The psychologist might also face a conflict if the interests of the institution or organization for whom he/she works and the interests of the client are opposed to each other. The answer lies in an unflinching commitment on the part of the psychologist to scientific rigor of assessment and protecting the rights of the client under all circumstances. As Knapp and VandeCreek (2006) put it, a “remedial approach” to ethical behavior involving a bare minimum compliance with required ethical obligations often proves insufficient. What is required in resolving ethical dilemmas is a pro-active commitment to ethical standards by positively structuring one’s professional behavior on ethical guidelines and aspirational standards.

The second ethical principle concerns Fidelity and Responsibility. Fidelity implies faithfulness of one human being to another (Ramsey, 2002). This includes keeping
one’s word, discharge and acceptance of responsibilities, and maintenance of relationships, including scientific, professional and teaching relationships. The APA Code states, “Psychologists establish relationships of trust with those with whom they work. They are aware of their professional and scientific responsibilities to society and to the specific communities in which they work.” The fidelity of a psychologist is not only an obligation towards the client, but towards the profession and society too. The ethical principle of responsibility expects a psychologist to fulfill this by devoting his time and skills in the interest of social and non-profit purposes. A psychologist engaged in psychological assessment needs to adhere to ethical fidelity and responsibility by honoring the promises and contracts made with clients and professional colleagues; by consistent and responsible professional conduct and performance of duties; by keeping oneself professionally updated and progressively enhancing one’s competence in the chosen field of psychological assessment; by not claiming professional expertise in an area in which one does not have competence and responsibly referring the client to an appropriate professional. Maintaining fidelity and responsibility is an important obligation and has a direct bearing on nurturing a professional relationship with the client. Not maintaining fidelity or engaging in irresponsible behavior not only harms the particular client, but also reflects upon the credibility and reliability of psychological assessment per se.

The third ethical principle of the APA Code for psychologists pertains to maintaining Integrity in professional matters. The code states “Psychologists seek to promote accuracy, honesty, and truthfulness in the science, teaching, and practice of psychology.” Maintaining integrity requires the psychologist to refrain from stealing, cheating, engaging in fraud, subterfuge or intentional misrepresentation of facts, avoiding commitments that one would not be able to maintain, and to minimize use of deceptive techniques. In the context of psychological assessment, maintaining integrity translates into a proactive commitment to ensuring wellbeing of the client by being absolutely honest about one’s professional competence and limitations, deciding upon the scope and nature of assessment required on the basis of an interactive process, conducting the assessment in a prescribed standard format, not compromising on the test data, and providing a holistic and comprehensible test interpretation. In the event of any conflict arising regarding assessment procedure or test data, the psychologist is obliged to cooperate with a qualified and competent professional in the overall interest of the client.

The fourth principle concerns ensuring equitable Justice to all clients. This means that a psychologist is obliged to treat all individuals with care and consistency, not discriminating on the basis of socioeconomic status, role or religion, and to guard against his/her own inadvertent prejudices in providing care to the clients. The APA Code states the principle thus: “Psychologists recognize that fairness and justice entitle all persons to access to and benefit from the contributions of psychology and to equal quality in the processes, procedures, and services being conducted by psychologists.” A psychologist conducting assessment needs to be cognizant of his or her own potential biases and guard against the same. In conducting the testing, while interacting with the client s/he must adhere to the scientific procedures of testing and an unbiased interpretation of results. Commitment to justice also implies
that the policies, procedures, and norms for scientific assessment remain consistent and reliable across clients and across time.

The fifth principle of ethical conduct propagated by the APA Code refers to ensuring *Respect for People’s Rights and Dignity*. This implies being aware of “cultural, individual, and role differences, including those based on age, gender, gender identity, race, ethnicity, culture, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, disability, language, and socioeconomic status, and consider these factors when working with members of such groups.” In the context of psychological assessment, it is absolutely essential for the assessor to be cognizant of these differences right from the beginning, and recognize that certain individuals might be especially vulnerable and would require sensitive handling due to their limitations in independent decision-making. The assessor also needs to actively guard against personal biases based on group identities which could creep into their professional work and affect the validity of assessment. A commitment to the right and dignity of the individual also implies that the client has all the right to know about the procedures and scope of assessment and the extent of personal information-sharing this might entail. Certain techniques of psychological assessment provide access to the unconscious psyche of the client, and the client needs to be informed of the potential of these techniques as part of the process of obtaining informed consent. Similarly, assurance about security of the test data and guarding the privacy of the client must be articulated as part of the ethical commitment of the assessor.

**APA Code of Ethics: Ethical Standards of Assessment**

Psychological assessment forms the core of psychological services across fields. The APA Code of Ethics recognizes the crucial role played by accurate assessment, and lays down specific and enforceable ethical standards to be followed in assessment practice and research. These are enlisted in APA Code 9 (Sections 9.01 to 9.11), incorporating different aspects of psychological assessment (see Table 30.1). Drawing from the APA Code, these are described briefly below.

**Ethical Decision-Making**

It is a prerequisite of professional competence for a psychologist to be aware of ethical standards of conduct in the chosen field of practice, yet it is a common understanding that mere awareness cannot and does not ensure ethical behavior. No code or ethical guideline can be comprehensive enough to serve as a ready-reckoner in order to deal with the myriad of decision dilemmas that occur in the course of professional practice. Any situation involving an ethical dilemma is unique in itself and there is hardly ever a ready-to-apply clause available in the professional ethical codes. A practitioner over the years, through dealing with a variety of cases, needs to evolve a method of decision-making that can be suitably modified and applied as per the needs of each unique situation.
### Table 30.1 APA ethical standards regarding psychological assessment (adapted from APA, 2010)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Brief description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9.01</td>
<td>Bases of assessments</td>
<td>Providing opinions based on appropriate and adequate techniques, after conducting an examination of the individual, describing the limitations of their reports or recommendations, and if examination was not conducted, the context or reasons for that.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.02</td>
<td>Use of assessments</td>
<td>Using assessment techniques in appropriate manner and for appropriate purposes in the light of research evidence. Using a test with appropriate norms, language and cultural sensitivity for the client.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.03</td>
<td>Informed consent in assessments</td>
<td>Obtaining informed consent including an explanation of the nature and purpose of the assessment, fees, involvement of third parties, and limits of confidentiality, and sufficient opportunity for the client to ask questions and receive answers. Explaining about the issues in an understandable manner and language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.04</td>
<td>Release of test data</td>
<td>Releasing test data only to the client or an authorized representative, or as mandated by law in order to prevent any misuse or misrepresentation and to guard against compromising confidentiality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.05</td>
<td>Test construction</td>
<td>Using appropriate psychometric procedures and scientific knowledge for test construction, elimination of bias, and recommendations for use.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.06</td>
<td>Interpreting assessment results</td>
<td>Providing interpretations in the context of assessment purposes, test factors, individual characteristics, factors affecting assessment accuracy, and limitations of assessment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.07</td>
<td>Assessment by unqualified persons</td>
<td>Not encouraging use of psychological assessment techniques by unqualified persons, except for training under supervision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.08</td>
<td>Obsolete tests and outdated test results</td>
<td>Not basing assessments, interventions, or recommendations on obsolete or outdated data or tests.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.09</td>
<td>Test scoring and interpretation services</td>
<td>Providing accurate technical specifications of procedures for the services provided, choosing a service on the basis of sound technical information, and accepting personal responsibility for the appropriate application, interpretation and use of assessment tools even when using automated or other services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.10</td>
<td>Explaining assessment results</td>
<td>Reasonable efforts to provide explanations of results to the client or designated representative, barring certain specific contexts that preclude provision of an explanation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.11</td>
<td>Maintaining test security</td>
<td>Reasonable efforts to maintain security of testing materials (tests, manuals, instruments, protocols) in consistency with law and contractual obligations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Certain decision-making models to resolve ethical dilemmas have been proposed (e.g., Bond, 2000; Corey & Corey, 1998). Bond’s ethical problem-solving model and Corey and Corey’s ethical decision-making model have much in common and prescribe similar steps for the purpose. To summarize: (i) identifying and describing the problem or dilemma; (ii) considering the ethical guidelines, and their adequacy for dealing with the situation; (iii) determining whether consultation or guidance is needed; (iv) identifying all possible alternatives; (v) deciding upon the best alternatives, evaluating and implementing; (vi) evaluating the outcome. Along similar lines, Fisher (2009) has propagated a model for ethical decision-making, beginning with making a commitment to do what is ethically appropriate even before a dilemma arises, becoming familiar with the APA Code of Ethics and the prevailing law of the land, developing an empathetic understanding of the perspective of the parties involved, consulting with colleagues, generating and evaluating available alternatives, selecting and implementing a course of action that appears most ethically appropriate, and finally, monitoring and evaluating the consequences.

There is an abundance of approaches available to facilitate ethical decision-making that either recommend a thorough knowledge of ethical standards and adherence to them, or a high level of personal commitment to ethical conduct, or some combination of both in order to resolve decision-making dilemmas in situations of ethical conflict. The solution lies at the intersection of the two: the general aspirational principles of ethics, and specific enforceable standards of ethical conduct. It is desirable that while making professional decisions, psychologists remain consciously aware and wary of undesirable influences relying solely on scientific and professional knowledge; ensure that the chosen course of action is fair, just and impartial; are cognizant of the way the chosen course of action relates to the modalities of their roles and responsibilities in their area of competence; and make certain that the decisions are based on current and updated knowledge and data (Jeffrey, 2003).

**Concluding Comments**

Psychological assessment forms the core of professional practice and research in most fields of psychology. Accuracy and validity of assessment data is a crucial requirement upon which the credibility of varied psychological services rests. A psychologist engaged in assessment has access and holds power over personal and sensitive data of the client. Competence and integrity of the psychologist, or a lack thereof, can impact the client in irreparable ways. It is imperative that a strong commitment to ethical behavior is maintained under all circumstances. Despite the availability of elaborate professional guidelines and legal advisories, each situation needs to be considered on its own merits. Appreciating the specificities of each situation and empathetically understanding the needs of the client, along with a strong commitment to and thorough knowledge of professional ethics, appear to facilitate ethical decision-making under most circumstances.
References


