


Looking inward: Reflections on the *African Journal of Psychological Assessment* and the way forward



Author:
Sumaya Laher¹ 

Affiliation:
¹Department of Psychology,
Faculty of Humanities,
University of the
Witwatersrand,
Johannesburg, South Africa

Corresponding author:
Sumaya Laher,
editor@ajopa.org

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Three and a half years ago, I had the opportunity to write the inaugural editorial for the *African Journal of Psychological Assessment* (AJOPA). At that time, the editors, editorial board and the Psychological Society of South Africa (PsySSA) shared a vision about creating a platform to collate the disparate research being conducted in psychological assessment as well as open up opportunities for collaboration and indigenous knowledge production. This vision is slowly being realised as AJOPA grows its contributions with every issue. The most recent AJOPA report indicates that the journal has tripled its user count since 2019 with a large percentage of users visiting more than one page on the journal site. Submissions to the journal have also increased with the journal publishing relevant and contemporary research consistently. What is even more encouraging are the download statistics and citation counts for the articles in the journal that continue to increase exponentially each year. These are strong empirical indicators that the research published in AJOPA is actively contributing to the field. The 2022 issue of AJOPA provides contributions broadly located within the educational, organisational, neuropsychological and clinical areas of psychological assessment, all of which present rigorous research interrogating the relevance of assessment tools for the South African, African and Global South contexts.

The health and wellbeing of young adults is a core concern particularly post the pandemic and the many lockdowns. In this fourth volume of the journal, Pretorius (2022) discusses the validity of a loneliness scale to be used among emerging adults in the Western Cape, South Africa finding that the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) Loneliness Scale does have some merits for the South African context. De Bruin et al. (2022) found support for the utility of the locally developed Basic Traits Inventory as a measure of personality in adolescents in South Africa.

Similarly, Khumalo and Guse (2022) explored the psychometric properties of the Dispositional Hope Scale (DHS) among university students in South Africa, arguing that hope is associated with several positive mental health outcomes for students and that a scale like the DHS could be used in interventions to enhance hope and consequently improve mental health for students. Interestingly, the study did not find support for the factor structure of the DHS and the model of hope on which it is based. The authors acknowledge that this could be because of measurement instability but raise an important question around the conceptualisation of hope in the South African context making reference to the relevance of a cross culturally transported theoretical construct (p. 7).

There is an urgent need to screen and assess children for developmental delay in both clinical and research contexts. In this volume, Springer et al. (2022) report on the use of the Molteno Adapted Scale, a developmental screening tool for children under 5 years that assesses language skills, personal and social development as well as fine and gross motor domains. The results suggest that this tool only be used by trained professionals as the evidence for its validity in younger children was variable. Du Preez and Combrinck (2022) describe the development and validation of the Sensory Classroom Teacher Questionnaire (SCTQ) concluding that SCTQ is useful to 'gauge and plan effecting attention (co)regulation, learning space design and sensory modulation and synergy for the child diagnosed with ADHD'. However, the authors acknowledge that their studies were conducted on learners from well-resourced schools. Hence, further research is needed to determine the SCTQ's utility for the broader population in South Africa.

Other articles in this volume consider the use of assessments with individuals living with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). Human immunodeficiency virus-associated neurocognitive disorder (HAND) is prevalent across sub-Saharan Africa. There is therefore a huge need for

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assessments for people living with HIV, which will facilitate accurate classification of HAND especially in low-and middle-income countries (LMIC) where sophisticated laboratory and neuroimaging techniques are not easily accessible. Nweke et al. (2022) explored the psychometric properties of the Hopkins Verbal Learning Test-Revised (HVLT-R), controlled oral word association test (COWAT), Trail Making Test-A (TMT-A) and -B (TMT-B), Digit Span Test-forward (DST-f) and -backward (DST-b) in a sample of 60 people living with HIV in Nigeria. They found support for the use of TMT-A, DST-f and DST-b, but the TMT-B, HVLT-R and COWAT exhibited at least one form of sociodemographic bias. In South Africa, Kirkbride et al. (2022) explored the psychometric properties of the Montreal Cognitive Assessment (MoCA) in a sample of people living with HIV as well as a control group. Kirkbride et al. (2022) found that the MoCA had limited utility as a screening or diagnostic tool for cognitive impairment. They discuss issues related to methodological choices as well as contextual factors in explaining the lack of discriminant validity as well as the overall applicability of the MOCA in detecting cognitive impairment in South Africans.

Other articles in this volume advocate for instruments in the neuropsychological, educational and organisational psychology fields. Mhomed-Kola et al. (2022) found support for the use of Hooper Visual Organization Test (HVOT) in a sample of clinical and non-clinical individuals, and they provide preliminary stratified normative data for South African adults who do not speak English as a first language and who attended public schools arguing that the provision of such normative data is vital for clinicians working in the area.

Van Wijk (2022) found support for the bidimensional structure of the Life Orientation Test-Revised (LOT-R) in a South African sample and provided preliminary normative data based on a sample of workers against which individual scores can be interpreted. Similarly, Pretorius and Padmanabhanunni (2022) found support for the use of the Satisfaction of Life Scale in a sample of South African school teachers.

De Beer et al. (2022) argue for the necessity of a locally validated burnout tool especially as job stress has been compounded during the pandemic. They found support for the use of the Burnout Assessment Tool (BAT-12) in a sample of South African employees. The BAT-12 is also available as an open access, online application for employees to estimate their risk of burnout. Schoeman and Cassimjee (2022) report on the efficacy of the Brief Sailor Resiliency Scale (BCRS) for use with the South African Army. Their findings concur with those of Van Wijk and Martin (2019) who found the scale to be an effective measure of resilience in members of the South African Navy. The evidence in support of using the BCRS to measure resilience in military personnel as well as the support for the use of the BAT-12 is important as this allows for appropriate screening of personnel to identify individuals

for further assessment and targeted intervention by appropriate support providers.

The final article in this volume provides evidence in favour of using the Quality of Translation and Linguistic Equivalence Checklist (QTLC) arguing for the necessity of an instrument to ensure that test translations are rigorous and can be reliably used in South Africa as well as across Africa.

The diversity of research across this and the other volumes in AJOPA speaks to the broad scale applicability of psychological assessment within all the sub disciplines of psychology. However, the collection of research in this volume highlights once again that the 'transport and test' approach is not viable. It is necessary for research to establish the equivalence and contextual relevance of assessment instruments interrogating the theories on which these assessments are based as well as the ways in which the constructs being measured are understood. It is encouraging to note the number of individuals developing scales for use in the local context. Research into the use of instruments that are freely available must also be encouraged given the resource difficulties faced across the continent.

Psychological assessment is an active and continuously growing field of research and practice in Africa. However, this work is not adequately reflected in AJOPA with a majority of the articles stemming from South Africa. Given that the journal is only in its fourth issue and has its origins at the PsySSA, the dominance of South African research was expected. However, going forward, the editorial board would like to strongly encourage submissions from across the continent. As AJOPA is not yet accredited by Scopus or Web of Science, it may be less attractive to researchers who wish to publish in journals listed in international databases. What is encouraging is AJOPA's inclusion in the Directory of Open Access Journals and subsequently in the South African Department of Higher Education and Training database (a year sooner than anticipated bearing testament to the increasing recognition of the scholarship in the journal). Another possible detracting factor for publication in AJOPA might be the introduction of article processing charges (APCs).

Smith et al. (2022b) analysed articles published open access in the Elsevier system and found that authors in the Global South were indeed underrepresented in journals charging APCs and concluded that APCs are a barrier to open access publication for these researchers. This is hugely problematic as it is evident from the literature that publishing research as open access allows authors to get more online views have higher download rates and ultimately more citations. A number of journals that offer this route also have higher impact factors so that publishing in these journals increases the scientific standing of the researcher (Wang et al. 2015; Nabyonga-Orem et al., 2020). Hence, there is a need for more affordable open access publishing options. Currently,

local open access journals like AJOPA offer this, but there is a need for further conversation on the best models of publication that are accessible, inclusive and affordable.

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