

Clinical Psychology in Pakistan: Past, Present and Future

Zainab Fotowwat Zadeh. PhD
Institute of Professional Psychology
Bahria University Karachi Campus

Abstract

The article reviews the past position and present status of clinical psychology in Pakistan with special reference to training and credential required for practice, the issue of regulatory body and statutory recognition of the subject. The paper also reflects the status of psychology in Pakistan in general with special reference to emergence of professional psychology in Pakistan. The subjects including stigma related to seeking help from mental health professionals or clinical psychologists, awareness related to services offered by clinical psychologist are discussed. Future developments and areas for growth have also been recommended in the light of arguments and analysis presented in the paper.

Keywords: Clinical Psychology, Pakistan, professional

Pakistan since its independence in 1947 was created as a homeland for Muslims in South Asia. It is a country consisting of four main provinces including Punjab, Sindh, KPK, and Baluchistan, in addition to the federally administered tribal areas and federal capital territory of Islamabad. Pakistan is bordered by Afghanistan, China, India and Iran, has a population of over 169 million and an approximately geographical area of 803,940 km². The country is a low income group country based on World Bank 2004 criteria. The overall literacy rate is 46% (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics 2011). The system of the Universities in Pakistan initially was extended throughout the country with the support provided by the University Grants Commission (UGC) which had been an independent institution of recognizing the universities till 2002 when it was led by the Higher Education Commission (HEC).

The Past and Present

Psychology was given a position of separate field of study in Pakistan almost 53 years ago. After partition of Pakistan in 1947 Psychology was taught in only two colleges one of the Government College (GC) and the other was Forman Christian College, Lahore. In GC Lahore as a common practice until the 1960s psychology was taught as part of the philosophy syllabus. In 1962 under the dynamic leadership of Dr. Muhammad Ajmal psychology achieved an independent status at the GC Lahore and he became the founder chairman of the psychology department. At Karachi University the first independent psychology department was founded with Qazi Muhammad Aslam as chair, whose academic background was in philosophy. The psychology department at the University of Sindh became independent in 1960, with Dr. Rafia Hasan (Haque 2000). These new departments could not attract many students in the beginning, hardly more than three or four every year. That was mainly due to lack of job opportunities. Until 1991 there were 10 departments of psychology, offering mainly M.A. and M.Sc. degrees (Ansari, 1987, 1989). At present (in 2015) around 10 universities are offering clinical psychology program at MA, MSc, MPhil and PhD level.

The era starting from 1960 can be considered as the excellent period of Psychology in Pakistan. The progress can be judged from the fact that the Universities of Karachi, Sind and Peshawar have established full-fledged Psychology departments. Various affiliated colleges started M.A classes in Psychology and Psychology became an independent subject of study at the Inter, B.A. BSc level. In 2007 four year BS Psychology program was introduced by HEC which led to remarkable change in the training of psychologist at undergraduate level. The key development for clinical psychology was the launch of two institutes of clinical psychology in two major cities of Pakistan including Karachi and Lahore in the year 1983. Both the institutes initially offered one year diploma in clinical psychology after Master's. Later on both institutes also introduced doctoral level program in clinical psychology. The Institute of Clinical Psychology Karachi was founded by Dr Farrukh Zahor Ahmad, who was first trained clinical psychologist in Pakistan from University of Stanford.

One more millstone in the history of Psychology was covered with the establishment of National Institute of Psychology, Islamabad in 1976 (Zaman, 1991). The Institute of Professional Psychology Bahria University, Karachi was established in 2000. International Islamic University, Islamabad, NUST, Islamabad, and Beacon House, Lahore are among other Universities offering undergraduate, graduate and post graduate level program in the field of psychology and clinical psychology. Another significant milestone covered in the field was establishment of Pakistan Psychological Association (PPA) in 1968 and Pakistan Association of Clinical Psychologist (PACP) was established in 1988. These are two national organizations for psychologist and the later one specifically for clinical psychologists. The development of Psychology can also be assessed from the psychological Journals as well. The first journal was published 1965 and till 1991 there were five journals in psychology (Zaman, 1991). The Journal of Psychology renamed as the Psychology Quarterly from the Government College, Lahore began its publication from 1962 and an Urdu Journal called "Zehan" in 1978. Pakistan journal of Clinical Psychology was published biannually from 1992 to 1995 from the Institute of Clinical Psychology, University of Karachi. From 1995 to 2005 the publication of journal stopped, however it was republished from 2006 and since then is regularly being published.

The issue of Regulatory body

Until 2001 lunacy Act 1912 was the only regulation in the field of mental health (Zaman 1991). New Mental Health Ordinance was promulgated on 20th February, 2001 with objective of being implemented immediately in all Pakistan but is yet to be executed (Afridi 2008). To date (in 2015) there is no authority under law to regulate the practice of clinical psychology. However, according to the PPA guidelines qualified clinical psychologist is the one with PhD in clinical psychology, with specific internship requirement completed. A non-PhD holding diploma or Master degree in Clinical Psychology may practice under qualified supervisors.

In Pakistan insight towards various other disciplines of professional psychology including educational and organizational psychology developed recently. Psychologists are now offered jobs in hospitals and armed forces for psychotherapy of patients and psychological assessment for recruitment of military personnel's. Educational institutions and corporate sector both government and private have also started to hire psychologists with specialization in the relevant fields. In educational institutions responsibilities of the incumbent includes student assessment, guidance and counseling, while organizational psychologists are often hired for employee recruitment/selection and personality assessment. However, in absence of qualified educational or organizational psychologist these jobs are often done by clinical psychologists (Zadeh, Ghani 2012).

Moreover, in the last couple of years changes have been observed towards rendering of mental health services in Pakistan (Mubbashir, 2003). Unluckily, the present services are not well used because of social stigma attached with the psychological patients and popular misconception about mental illnesses. The perception is that mental illnesses are caused by evil, Jin or so called supernatural evil force or possession, (Afridi, 2008). However, on the other hand the role of clinical psychologist, psychotherapist or counsellors was highlighted and given due importance after national traumatic experiences of earthquake in Northern Pakistan and various terrorist attacks at school/public places.

Future

This was the brief summary of development of Psychology in Pakistan. On the basis of the aforementioned arguments it can be concluded that clinical psychology in Pakistan is confronted with three main challenges:

- 1. Accretion and regulatory body**
- 2. Overcoming gaps in professional training and enhancing public awareness about the profession and the professionals.**
- 3. Enhancing job opportunities by getting the profession recognized.**

However, a bright future can be predicted from the fact that the younger generation is taking keen interest in development of psychology and specifically clinical psychology in Pakistan. Some young Psychologists have gone so far as to bring psychologists of all Eastern countries together in the form of Asian Psychological Association. In addition to this, Institute of Professional Psychology Bahria University is working towards launching Psy.D program in Pakistan which will be another important achievement in the field. Moreover, working towards accreditation of the psychology programs in Pakistan especially clinical psychology program or moving towards having regulatory body for practice of clinical psychology will strengthen the status of the subject.

On the international front Increasing collaboration between local and international researchers and universities will facilitate the achievement of aforementioned tasks. International associations could explore closer collaboration with local psychological associations. Workshops offered in association with national, international conferences may provide opportunities to address training issues with Pakistani psychologists.

Conclusion

In the light of this brief review in can summarized that since 1947 to date Clinical Psychology has made significant progress. It has potential for growth and from the present status of the subject the bright future of the subject may be assumed.

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