For *Rashida Hassim*

Castrum doloris

Symbol of eternal virtue

Your sacrifice has been beyond measure. You gave me life, dignity, and unconditional love. I could never repay you!

For *Kulsum Hassim*

Castrum doloris

Symbol of eternal virtue

Whose gentle soul carried a boy’s aggressive search for meaning.

For *Ebrahim & Amina Patel* AND *Amod Ismail*

Ubi amor. Ibi dolor

Symbols of eternal faith.

Thank you for your legacies.

For *Fatima Hassim*

Castrum doloris

Symbol of eternal strength.

Thank you for everything. From before the beginning until after the end.

A father, best friend, and an inspiration.

For *Rashidusha Hassim*

Cor unum; intaminatus fulget honoribus

Symbol of eternal inspiration

Your sacrifice has been beyond measure. You gave me life, dignity, and unconditional love. I could never repay you!

For *Iatima Hassim*

Fortis facere; nunc scio quid sit amor

Symbol of eternal connection

This achievement would have been impossible without you as my anchor.

For *Mikhail* AND *Sadil Hassim*

Nosce te ipsum; vive et vivas

Symbols of eternal resilience

Joy and hope – personified.

Your father’s treasures!
CRITICALLY QUESTIONING AN AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE ON PSYCHOPATHOLOGY: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

By

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Promoter:

Prof. C. Wagner

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I learned: the first lesson of my life: nobody can face the world with his eyes open all the time.

(Rushdie, 2008, p. 171)

All games have morals; and the game of Snakes and Ladders captures, as no other activity can hope to do, the eternal truth that for every ladder you climb, a snake is waiting just around the corner; and for every snake, a ladder will compensate. But it’s more than that; no mere carrot-and-stick affair; because implicit in the game is the unchanging twoness of things, the duality of up against down, good against evil; the solid rationality of ladders balances the occult sinuosities of the serpent; in the opposition of staircase and cobra we can see, metaphorically, all conceivable oppositions, Alpha against Omega, father against mother… but I found, very early in my life, that the game lacked one crucial dimension, that of ambiguity – because… it is also possible to slither down a ladder and climb to triumph on the venom of a snake…

(Rushdie, 2008, p. 194)

Reality is a question of perspective; the further you get from the past, the more concrete and plausible it seems – but as you approach the present, it inevitably seems more and more incredible. Suppose yourself in a large cinema, sitting at first in the back row, and gradually moving up, row by row, until your nose is almost pressed against the screen. Gradually the stars’ faces dissolve into dancing grain; tiny details assume grotesque proportions; the illusion dissolves or rather, it becomes clear that the illusion itself is reality…

(Rushdie, 2008, p. 229)
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DECLARATION

I declare that this is my unaided work and has not been submitted to another university for any degree.

___________________      _______________
Junaid Hassim         Date
ABSTRACT

This study aimed to collate and analyse academic literature with regards to possible African perspectives on psychological distress. The purpose of conducting the literature review was to explore thirty years of critical arguments supporting and refuting an African perspective on psychopathology. Literature (e.g. Bhugra & Bhui, 1997) appeared to suggest that some of the relatively recent views regarding psychopathology fail to adequately address psychological distress as it presents in Africa. A systematic literature review was selected as the methodology for this study, and the specific method of the review was research synthesis (Gough, 2004; Popay, 2005). Reviewed literature was sourced between the years 1980 and 2010. The theoretical point of departure was integrative theory, thus falling within the post-postmodern framework. As such, literature regarding psychological theory formed a substantial part of the research, including literature relating to psychodynamic theory, cognitive-behavioural theory, postmodernism, phenomenology, existentialism, critical theory, and systemic patterning (Becvar & Becvar, 1996). These theories formed part of the analysis, thereby allowing contextual analysis as the interpretive method. The review’s themes highlighted the following outcomes: current psychiatric nosology employed a universalistic approach to diagnosis and intervention, thus limiting cultural conceptions of mental illness; holistic intervention requires the inclusion of traditional epistemological tenets; collaboration between modern practitioners and traditional healers would probably better meet the patient’s needs; and that culture-fit assessment and treatment often indicated improved prognosis. The outcomes evidenced the operation of an African perspective on psychopathology. In fact, much of the reviewed literature also suggested culture-contextual perspectives on psychopathology. Furthermore, the way in which lack of cultural coherence appears to exist between patients and some clinicians suggested that diagnostic flaws may be a relatively frequent occurrence. Potential benefits of the investigation include increased awareness that culture-related conceptualisation be further explored in the clinical field; that future researchers use the current review as a foundational reference for primary investigations; that contemporary clinical classificatory systems be reviewed in terms of cultural applicability; and that clinicians reconsider the diagnostic process in terms of culture-fit manifestations of psychopathology.
Keywords

African perspective; clinical psychology; psychopathology; post-postmodern; systematic literature review; integrative theory; culture-bound syndrome; traditional healing; multiculturalism; South Africa.
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