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**ASSIGNEMT QUESTION: PRINCIPLES AND TENETS OF ECOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE APPLICATION USING PRACTICAL EXAMPLES STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS**

Ecological theory is fundamentally concerned with the interaction and interdependence of organisms and their natural environment. In a bid to fully grasp the ecological concept it is key to unpack into the tenants of the theory. The theory categorises the environmental arena into five phases namely microsystem, mesosystem, ecosystem, macro system and chronosystem as they are essential in explaining the theory. Microsystems are institutions that directly influence a child’s growth, mesosystems are interaction between the child’s Microsystems. Ecosystem incorporates other formal and informal social structures which indirectly affects the child, microsystems is the general culture that influences a child as they develop and chronosystems is a pattern of major events and cultural shifts that occur and influences an individual. These themes have their strengths and limitations in trying to explain the ecological theory so for the strengths the theory deals with the living thing based on their natural environment instead in an artificial isolation hence relegation of bias. It provides a holistic approach which is inclusive of all the systems children and their family are involved in accurately reflecting the dynamic nature of actual family relationships. On the limitations, there is limited research examining the mesosystems mainly in the interactions between neighbourhoods and the family of the child, since the extent to which these systems can shape child development. Another limitation is that it is difficult to empirically test the theory, it can lead to assumptions that those who do not have strong and positive ecological. The essence of this essay is to unpack the tenets of ecological perspective how it is applicable and reveal the strength and limitations of its applicability.

Ecological perspectives it is the study of how individuals interact with and respond to the environment around them. It also involves how these interactions affect society and the environment. It was introduced by Murray Bookchin who argues that environmentalist are too focused on studying the individual symptoms of a problem rather than addressing the problem itself .In 1973 Carel Germaine borrowed the term and used it to explain the what sociologist and social workers should study the interactions of people and groups within social and cultural environments. It also known as human ecology theory or development in context. It examines how individual’s environment shape them into who they are. Likewise, the profession of social work was built upon an acknowledgement that individuals, families, groups and communities interact with their environments and are shaped by them. Scholars like Bronfenbrenner (1977) argue that individuals do not operate in isolation but they are influenced by their physical and social environments in which they live and interact.

To begin with the first phase of the ecological theory is called the microsystem phase as highlighted in the theory, this include family, teachers, peers, neighbours or religious institution. It is the first level of the ecological theory; it involves all the things that have direct contact with the child in their immediate environment and early stages such as parents, teachers and school peers. Relationships in a microsystem are bi-directional meaning the child can be influenced by other people in their environment and is also capable of changing the beliefs and actions of other people too. According to Teater (2014) she argues that the reactions of the child to individuals in their microsystem can influence how they treat them in return, a perfect example if a child has strong nurturing relationship with their parents this is said to have a positive effect on the child whereas distant and unaffectionate parents will have a negative effect on the child.

Apart from that the second phase is called the mesosystem; it encompasses the interactions between the child’s microsystems such as interactions between the child's parents and teachers or between school peers and siblings. According to Kitterman, (2009) posits that this phase is best explained as where a person’s individual microsystems do not function independently but are connected and assert influence upon one another , he likens this relationship as the horse and rider relationship. Mesosystem manifests itself when a child's parents communicate with the child's teachers this interaction may influence the child's development in both negative and positive way. Essentially the mesosystem is a system of microsystems taking for instance if a child is not getting enough attention or is dealing with abuse at home this may cause them to have difficulty with emotional development and interacting with their teachers and peers this will lead one to have challenges in having good social ques hence resulting them to be introverts. According to the study carried by Kitterman, and Germaine (2008) they argue that at this the demise of essential social que and interaction leads to social oblivion thus resulting to being an introvert. So it is clear how this phase is essential in relation to peer interaction and also person growth of an individual.

Furthermore, the third phase is called the Exosystem; it incorporates other formal and informal social structures which completely relegates the involvement of the child but rather indirectly influences and affect one of the microsystems. Scholars like Teater (2010) argue that in the ecosystem phase the child has no control over social settings but rather the child is just a mere recipient of the effects brought in, a perfect example to drive this point home is when a child is being affected by their parent’s work. Consider a scenario in which one parent suddenly receives more responsibility at work and must now travel frequently thus spending less time to interact and check child’s wellbeing and social interaction. According to Bronfenbrenner (1974) argues that this will profoundly change the child's interactions with the other parent whether their bond becomes stronger or there is increased conflict and tensions between them as the child will be lacking that support system back at home. The parent may come home and have a short temper with the child because of something which took place at work resulting in a negative effect on the child’s development due to the toxic environment now having a spill over effect to the child.

In additional to that the fourth stage is the macro system, it is the general culture that influences a child as they develop the microsystems and mesosystems within this system. In this phase factors like socioeconomic status ethnicity, race and geographic location play a critical role in shaping the child’s behaviour in each environmental setting. According to Hayes and Toole (2017) culture can influence individual’s beliefs and perceptions about events that transpired in life by giving a flashback of past events and their effects ,taking for instance a child living in a third world country would experience a different development than a child living in a wealthier country. This is an umbrella example as it tackles all aspects of socioeconomic status ethnicity, race, and geographic location. Upbringing, interaction, and behavioural change of the two children mentioned in the above example will definitely perform differently and their upbringing plays a critical role in shaping their behavioural patterns.

Moreover, the fifth and final phase is called the chronosystem, this phase is characterised with patterns of major events and cultural shifts that occur and influence an individual over the course of their lifetime. According to Henderson (1995) it consists of all of the environmental changes that occur over the lifetime which influence development including major life transitions and historical events, it has a 360o effect as it looks all the environmental changes. A critical example to take note at is when a child whose parents got divorced which has negative effects on the child in terms of interaction, emotional stability as well as personal performance, for the first one to two years before stabilizing. It is key to note that learning more about the events that shaped this individual’s personality and surroundings is essential in addressing the issues they are dealing with; this is where the ecological systems theory offers actionable insight in the context of social work.

The ecological theory has the following strengths regarding how effective it is in addressing key and pressing issues. The most noted strength of the ecological perspective is that it deals with the living thing based on their natural environment instead in an artificial isolation. According to Bronfenbrenner (1977) argues that it is key as it eliminates bias, and they take note of things as they unfolds in their natural setting , he gives a rather interesting assumption arguing that humans tend to change their behaviour if they realise that they are under investigation. Another strength is that this theory also provides a holistic approach which is inclusive of all the systems children and their family are involved in accurately reflecting the dynamic nature of actual family relationships it reveals how each institution play a given role a term coined common but differentiated role as argued by Hayes and Toole (2017) this theory suggest that immigrant children’s experiences in the various ecological systems are likely to be shaped by their cultural differences and understanding of these children’s ecology can aid in strengthening social work service delivery for those children as it is a useful framework for psychologist, sociologist and teachers to study child development thus the ecological perspective is an omnipotent framework.

However, it is crucial to note the limitations associated with the use of this theory. Taking for instance there is limited research examining the mesosystems mainly in the interactions between neighbourhood’s and the family of the child, therefore it is unclear and difficult to pinpoint the extent to which these systems can shape child development. According to Lee and Greene (2009) they argue that is difficult to empirically test the theory as the studies investigating the ecological systems may establish an effect but they cannot establish whether the systems are the direct cause of such effect and as a result which can lead to assumptions that those who do not have strong and positive ecological systems lack in development whilst this may be true in some cases, many people can still develop into well-rounded individuals without positive influences from their ecological systems a perfect example to drive this point home , it is not true to say that all people who grow up in poverty-stricken areas of the world will develop negatively. Similarly if a child’s teachers and parents do not get along, some children may not experience any kind of negative effect from this is it does not concern them as the child will mind his or her own business and stay in their lane.

In conclusion, the ecological system examines how individual’s environment shape them into who they are .It includes five systems which are namely microsystem, mesosystem, ecosystem, macro system and chronosystem, each phase was thoroughly explained on how they aide on child’s development and behaviour. Furthermore, the essay highlighted the strength and limitations of the approach towards social work and psychology as highlighted above.

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