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Integrating Ecological, Systems, Person-in-Environment, and Strengths Perspectives in School Social Work: The IES-PESB Framework

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ABSTRACT

Students' experiences of emotional and social problems in school are influenced not only by individual traits but also by relationships, institutions, communities, and macrosocial conditions. As such, school social work practice requires a unified conceptualisation of professional reasoning that links children lived experiences to the multiple contexts and systems that shape them. Though ecological, systems, Person-in-Environment (PIE), and strengths-based frameworks each inform school social work, their relative roles are seldom clearly specified within a singular formulation-to-action process. The present conceptual paper outlines the Integrated Ecological–Systems–Person- in-Environment–Strengths-Based (IES-PESB) Framework, an integrative architecture for professional reasoning designed to guide school social work practice. Locating ecological contexts, tracing systems, assessing person–environment transactions and student agency, and mobilising strengths are identified as discrete but related functions of ecological, systems, PIE, and strengths-based perspectives, respectively. These functions are operationalised through six iterative steps: Locate, Trace, Assess, Mobilise, Intervene, and Reassess. Existing practice approaches such as consultation, case management, family involvement, advocacy, solution-focused practice, and Multi- Tiered Systems of Support are conceptualised as intervention techniques that may be employed consistent with formulation. The paper generates theoretical propositions for future testing and posits that the primary contribution of the IES-PESB framework is its explicit linkage of ecological, systems, transactional, and strengths-based reasoning to intervention matching and iterative feedback. This framework may provide a helpful conceptual underpinning to organised school social work practice, especially within under-resourced schools.



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Introduction

Schools are increasingly viewed as critical systems for responding to the social, emotional, behavioural, and developmental needs of children and adolescents. Students' functioning in school is determined by a complex set of individuals, familial, peer, teacher, school, community, and societal factors, and therefore, problems in these areas should be considered in the context of multiple interrelated variables. For example, emotional, behavioural, attendance, academic, peer-related, and adjustment problems in school are complex issues that cut across systems and therefore require coordinated efforts and collaboration among social work professionals and other agencies. From an ecological perspective, human development takes place within an integrated framework of relationships between individuals and their social and physical environments (Bronfenbrenner, 1979;1994; Bronfenbrenner & Morris,2006). This perspective is especially relevant to school social work, as students' functioning is determined by many variables, ranging from students' own characteristics to those of their environment. Likewise, school social work focuses on students' educational, social, behavioural, and emotional adjustment, as well as the role of their families and communities and the importance of removing barriers to learning and promoting social change, social justice, and empowerment (Frey et al., 2012).

The complexity of students' needs requires school social workers to adopt a multidisciplinary approach to the understanding of their problems. The Person-in-Environment (PIE) perspective is an excellent framework for analysing individuals in their environment. It assumes that human behaviour can be understood only in the context in which it occurs (Kondrat, 2002). Systems perspectives, in turn, focus on the idea of interdependence,

which means that elements of social systems are related, communicate, and reciprocate with each other. According to Siporin (1980), such terms as boundaries, feedback, interactions, relations, and communication also should be taken into consideration when examining students' problems within the context of their environments. Another useful perspective is the strengths perspective, which encourages social workers to engage in deficit reduction and empowerment practice (Saleebey, 1996). Thus, PIE, systems, and strengths perspectives offer valuable approaches to the practice of school social workers, each focusing on different aspects of students' problems. The ecological perspective helps to understand where a student's life may be affecting his or her functioning; systems theory, in turn, explains how these areas are interconnected. The PIE perspective emphasises how students interact with their environments, while the strengths perspective concentrates on how students can utilise their strengths to address their challenges.

Although the availability of these contributions is useful, it raises further questions about how practitioners can use these different perspectives to guide their practice. The school social work field has seen the emergence of a number of practice approaches, including consultation, case management, family work, advocacy, mental-health based interventions, and multitiered systems of support. At the national level, recent efforts to define the field's core competencies recognize the importance of providing students with integrated services within the school, home, and community (Frey et al., 2012). With all these contributions, theorists and practitioners continue to debate the most effective ways to combine different approaches to guide their interventions. The problem is that theories and practice approaches are usually presented as separate realms. There is limited guidance about how a practitioner

can proceed from an ecological assessment to formulate a rationale for interventions at different levels of analysis and connect these rationales to specific interventions. The issue, in other words, is not theoretical fragmentation per se but how different theories can be connected by a set of principles that would allow one to convert knowledge about the context and mechanisms to actions.

This challenge can be exceptionally acute in the field of education, where psychosocial needs are significant, but school-based professional resources are limited. The evidence on the effectiveness of such services comes from Pakistan, where the need for and the availability of school-based psychosocial support services are both growing. Hamdani et al. (2021) conducted a study on the scaling of school mental-health services in low-resource public schools. It revealed that capacity development through training, supervision, collaboration, and implementation infrastructure was critical to attaining positive mental health service outcomes. Moreover, a trial conducted in public schools showed that a multi-component psychological intervention could be successfully delivered in such settings through non-specialist facilitators. Lastly, in another cluster-randomised trial, the researchers found that such an intervention could reduce adolescent students' psychosocial distress (Hamdani et al., 2024). In sum, the research evidence reveals the effectiveness of school-based psychosocial interventions in contexts with limited resources. Yet, the findings also suggest that there is a need for further conceptualisation of how best to respond to individual student needs, considering family, school, community, and system factors.

Against this background, this paper proposes the integrated ecological – systems – person in environment – strengths based (IES-PESB) framework as a conceptual reasoning model for school social work, in which the four

perspectives are used as an iterative practice process – not a mere laundry list of competing theories. Ecological reasoning is used to locate the issue in a system, while systems thinking traces relationships, reciprocity, linkages, and boundaries as well as the inflows and outflows of resources of the focal system. The person-in-environment perspective assesses the student's life, living patterns, living conditions, personal resources, fit, and role performance, and strengths-based reasoning mobilises strengths, assets, and opportunities at multiple levels of influence. In turn, these iterative processes inform intervention decision-making, after which the interventions can be re-examined as a basis for further decision-making. The framework thus conceptualises a process of Locate, Trace, Assess, Mobilise, Intervene, and Reassess as a bridge between theories and practice. Thus the framework is intended to provide a more explicit pathway for school social work to connect context, relationships, student experience, strengths, intervention and feedback within professional practice.

Theoretical Foundations of the Contributing Perspectives

The four perspectives that underlie the IES-PESB approach provide unique but related views of school social work. Ecological theory, developed by Bronfenbrenner (1979, 1994; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006), regards a child as a complex system of interactions with multiple environments, each of which can be viewed as a set of microsystems, mesosystems, ecosystem, microsystems, and chronosystems. Thus, the school social worker's practice is focused on understanding the student's problems within the frameworks of these systems (Tan et al., 2020; Poole, 2025). Systems theory, in turn, is also used to understand one's social, behavioural, and emotional issues by looking at the relationships between interconnected parts, and how these connections affect a student's life and functioning (Siporin, 1980).

In this perspective, a student, his or her family, classmates, the school system, and the community are regarded as interconnected and interdependent ecosystems.

The person-in-environment perspective is considered to be the social work's hallmark approach, as it emphasizes on how a person interacts with his immediate and broader environments, as well as how these relationships affect his behaviour and life circumstances (Kondrat, 2002; 2015). Thus, this theory helps the school social workers to assess students' lives in depth, considering possible role demands, behaviours, resources, and environmental demands and supports in order to understand the issues at hand (Romer & Heller, 1983). School climate studies often use the person-environment fit paradigm, which looks at students' functioning, as well as the quality and impact of their relationships with various systems they live with day by day.

Finally, the strengths perspective, pioneered by Saleebey (1996, 2008), encourages looking at students', families', schools', and communities' strengths, areas of potential, and assets, while addressing their social, emotional, and behavioural needs. Thus, the strengths approach views the student's environment and his or her personal qualities and resources as active agents of change. It emphasizes empowerment, as well as collaboration, with the students, their families, and the community in general. It states that people can work through their challenges and crises by overcoming them and learning from them, and all of them have some strengths, resources, and potential that are valuable and should be nurtured (Saleebey, 1996; University of Kansas School

of Social Welfare). Strengths approaches to school social work promote building solutions, rather than dwelling on the problems.

While all these perspectives are used by school social workers, they are often used in isolation or combined together in an eclectic manner. The IES-PESB approach, however, integrates these theoretical perspectives, while making sure that each has its own place in the student intervention cycle. It matches the problem-solving cycle and the intervention process.

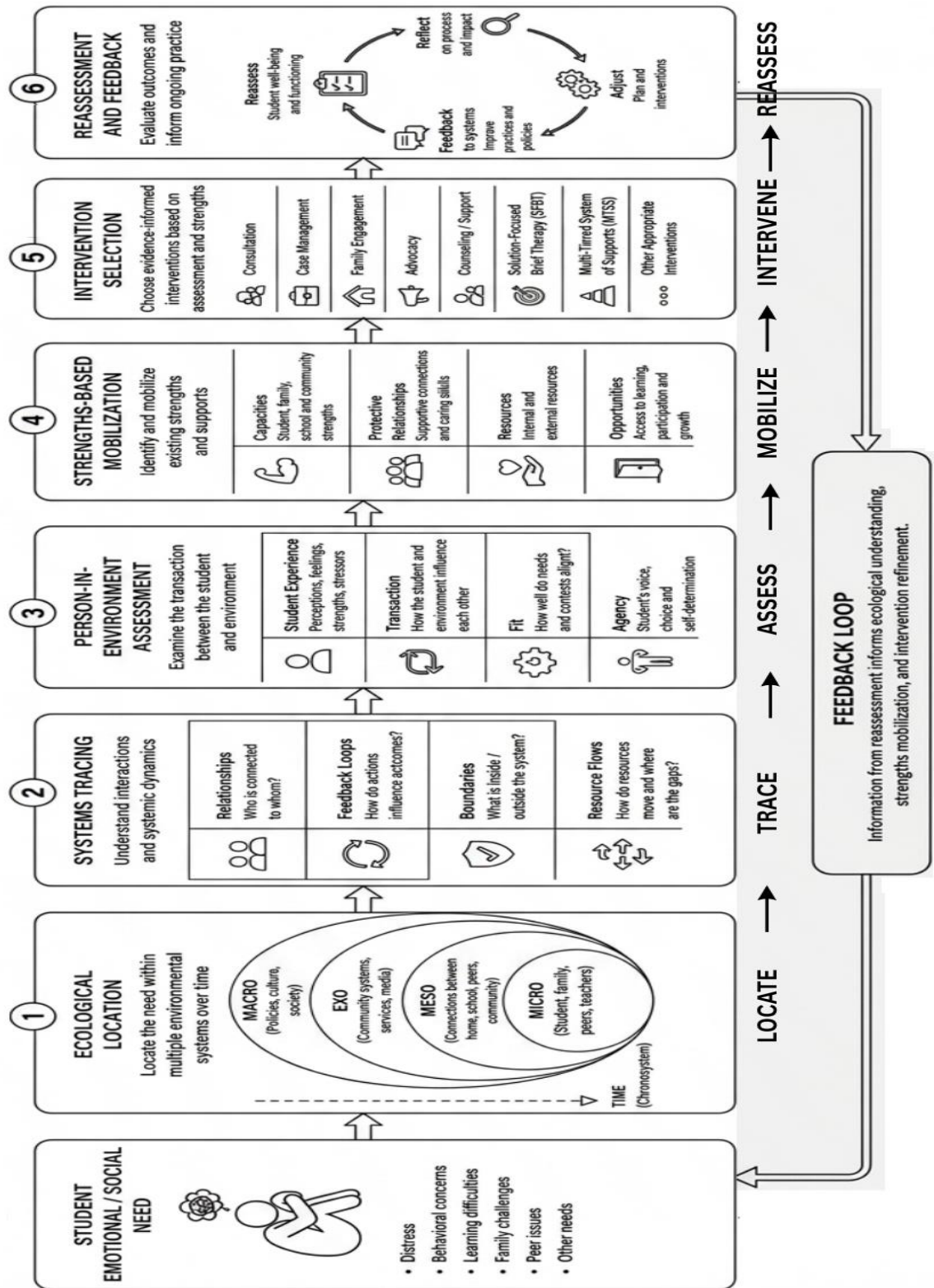
The IES-PESB Framework Overview

The first part is based on the IES-PESB Framework, which views professional reasoning as a cyclical transactional process that follows six interlocking processes or steps. These include Locate, Trace, Assess, Mobilise, Intervene, and Reassess. Ecological reasoning is primarily engaged during the first step, while systems reasoning is responsible for the second. PIE is involved in the third step, and strengths-based reasoning underlies the fourth. Finally, the last two steps turn the obtained formulation or agreement into action and further feedback, which influences the next round of the process.

The model is not designed to be linear, but instead, professionals can jump from one stage to another in case of new information. It can also be applied to the same case more than once. The framework is designed to be compatible with the challenges of a high caseload and a limited scope of resources, as described by Hamdani et al. (2021, 2024).

IES-PESB CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

An Integrated Eco-Systemic and Strengths-Based Model for School Social Work Practice



Source: From the Unpublished Research Thesis of the first author, submitted to Kohat University of Science & Technology, Pakistan, in partial fulfilment of the requirement of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Social Work (2026)

Operationalising the Six Steps

i. Locate (Ecological Function)

The practitioner begins the intervention by determining a student's ecological contexts within which his or her concerns or issues develop or originate. Thus, the intervention focuses on microsystem, mesosystem, ecosystem, and macrosystem. In the microsystem, the emphasis is on students, their siblings, parents, friends, teachers, and other school agents in relation to students' learning and social experiences within the classroom. In mesosystem, the focus is on the relations between different microsystems. Ecosystem includes indirect influences such as district personnel, referral resources, and agencies that provide services to the students and the family. Finally, the macrosystem incorporates such variables as culture, professional organisations, and policies at institutional and governmental levels. Thus, using Bronfenbrenner's bio ecological systems theory, the practitioner will generate an ecological map of the student's environment as opposed to identifying a diagnosis.

ii. Trace (System Function)

Having identified the problem, the practitioner then diagrams systemic relationships, reciprocal influences, feedback loops, boundary permeability and resource flows. For example, teacher-student interaction patterns, parental work schedules limiting supervision, and school referral pathways delaying support may contribute to maintaining a student's withdrawal. Tracing reveals leverage points, points where a small change in one subsystem can have cascading effects in others.

iii. Assess (Person in Environment Function and its formulation)

Here the student is the experiencing subject that contextualises the ecological and systemic information. The practitioner then tries to understand what a student perceives,

defining relationships, demands, fit, appraisal, coping methods and actions taken. PIE makes the system generation process less deterministic.

iv. Mobilize (Strengths-based Functions and their interpretation)

The practitioner identifies capacities and resources that can be mobilised from various levels of an ecosystem. These might include teachers, parents, peers, community agencies, administrators, cultural resources, students' skills, hopes and dreams, or existing practices within the school or program. The practitioner considers not only the question of "What is missing?" but also the assets that could be drawn upon and developed.

v. Intervene

Intervention selection follows from the intervention formulation. Consultation, case management, family engagement, advocacy, solution-focused brief practice, cognitive behaviour therapy, and Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) interventions fit into the preceding formulation based on their relevance to the key features in the ecological locations, systems, transactions, and strengths. The interventions are viewed as methods rather than distinct frameworks. That is, the interventions are considered interchangeable to varying degrees based on their application within the context of the problem and client strengths identified through the IES-PESB formulation. Interventions can be applied at different levels of intensity, including Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 interventions (Frey et al., 2012; Thompson & Cox, 2016).

vi. Reassess

Outcomes, process data, and new contextual events are evaluated, and the cycle is repeated, reconsidering strategies. The new information might suggest that a course of action has been largely ineffective, that new factors have arisen which relate to the issue, or that some actions need to be intensified,

redirected, or terminated altogether. The cycle can be useful to build professional learning and adaptability, especially in the case of limited resources in a school, where many actions may require revision.

Linking Formulation to Practice Approaches

The intervention approaches used in existing school social work frameworks fit into the IES-PESB formulation as follows. Consultation with teachers is likely to be most effective if it takes place after completing the Locate and Trace steps in order to build an understanding of the classroom microsystem and its mesosystem connections. Similarly, family engagement strategies are best informed by the PIE assessment of home-school fit and the identification of parental strengths for mobilisation. Advocacy efforts will address the ecosystem and microsystem factors located and traced through the first two steps. Finally, solution-focused and strength-based approaches will contribute to the Mobilise phase. MTSS is an appropriate organisational framework for school social work because it facilitates the graduated response to emerging needs consistent with the ecological and systems-informed approach of the IES-PESB model (Frey et al., 2012; Kelly et al., 2015).

The case study site represents a low-resource setting, and the focus on mobilising existing resources and the iterative approach to problem-solving are particularly relevant to the findings of the systematic review conducted in Pakistan. The review demonstrated that school-based multifaceted psychosocial programs implemented by non-specialists with adequate training and supervision can make a significant difference in reducing adolescent distress (Hamdani et al., 2021, 2024).

Theoretical Proposition

The framework allows for generating a few propositions for testing:

1. The emotional and social needs of students will be better understood and addressed when practitioners take into account relevant conditions at various levels or are looking at more than just individual factors.
2. Ecological assessment will be more informative if practitioners identify connections, cycles, boundaries, and flows of resources among relevant features.
3. Intervention planning will be more environmentally appropriate when ecological and systemic information is translated into an account of the particular student's person-environment transaction.
4. Formulations which identify capacities and protective resources as well as unmet needs will have a broader range of intervention options than formulations focusing solely on deficits.
5. Intervention which corresponds to the mechanism identified by an integrated formulation will be more conceptually coherent than interventions chosen based on presenting problems.
6. School social work assessment should be regarded as an iterative process because intervention may result in changes to the ecological and systemic factors identified.
7. If student difficulties persist across several ecological levels, interventions addressing more than one relevant level will be conceptually better aligned with the problem than interventions limited to the individual student.

They are not empirical facts; they are theoretical propositions for future empirical testing.

Implications for Practice, Education & Research

For practitioners, the IES-PESB framework is valuable because it provides a shared language and decision-making transparency

in action that can be used under the pressure of everyday practice. It also stores accountability documents linking context, stakeholder relationships, student experiences and strengths, and intervention that can be used for professional accountability and interprofessional communication. The framework helps to structure discussions during supervision and in team meetings by providing six steps in which the work on the case can be discussed.

For social work education, the value of the model is that it provides an overarching structure in which the four perspectives can be taught as processes in professional social work practice. Because the framework follows the logic of the case formulation, case examples, role-play exercises, and field seminars can be built around the IES-PESB framework.

For research, the model provides numerous possibilities to investigate social work interventions, including exploring decision-making algorithms in action, intervention choice, adaptation, and other factors. Studies can focus on specific aspects of the intervention process, such as the choice of a particular approach for similar contexts in low-and middle-income countries. Moreover, mixed-methodological designs could be used in investigations to both trace the logic of decision-making and intervention outcomes. Another avenue of research could look into whether the functions attributed to each of the four perspectives are relevant in different educational and professional contexts.

Implications for School Administration and Policy

The developed framework can be used by school administrators to assess student support systems at several levels, including the referral system, family, specialists, and community. The policy implication of the findings is that institutions can be involved in addressing the issue of students' psychosocial concerns through the provision

of resources, staff, referrals, and partnerships.

This is especially pertinent to Pakistan as cross-sector collaboration, consultation, supervision, and outcome monitoring were found to facilitate the scale-up of school mental health services (Hamdani et al., 2021). A feasibility trial by Hamdani et al. (2022) showed that a multicomponent group psychological intervention could be delivered in rural public schools by non-specialist providers under specialist supervision. In another study, a cluster-randomised trial of a school-based group psychological intervention for adolescents indicated that it could be effective in reducing psychosocial distress in Pakistan (Hamdani et al., 2024). These studies do not discuss the IES-PESB, but they highlight the need to involve schools in mental health services.

Theoretical Contribution & Novelty

The main theoretical innovation of the IES-PESB framework consists of reworking the four perspectives on practice, namely, ecological, systems, person-in-environment, and strengths, into a single framework for professional reasoning in school social work. The previous literature established the value of each perspective for school social work practice (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1994; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; Kondrat, 2002; Saleebey, 1996; Siporin, 1980; Frey et al., 2012). However, these were presented as separate approaches, with no particular attention paid to the sequence of their use. Thus, ecological principles were used to justify multi-level analysis, systems thinking was used to understand interdependence, the PIE perspective was presented as the profession's unique orientation to practice, and strengths-based approaches were advocated to overcome the limitations of the deficit-oriented perspectives. What the previous approaches lacked was the specification of the next step following the use of any of these perspectives. The IES-

PESB framework fills this gap by designating the unique contribution of each perspective (Locate, Trace, Assess, and Mobilise, respectively) and structuring them into a six-step sequence culminating in Intervene and Reassess. The framework explicitly defines the contribution of each perspective to professional reasoning and, therefore, intervention. In this respect, the main innovation of the IES-PESB framework is not in the concepts it introduces, but in the ways it incorporates existing ideas.

This innovation can be related to three aspects that differentiate the IES-PESB framework from previous similar approaches. First, the IES-PESB framework specifies the unique role of each perspective in professional reasoning, thereby distinguishing their contributions. This is important because, in the previous literature, these were often presented as equivalent options. Thus, for instance, ecological principles were sometimes used interchangeably with systems thinking, and strengths were sometimes mobilised even when a deficit-oriented PIE perspective was used. Second, the IES-PESB framework explicitly links the formulation-reasoning process to the intervention, thereby designating the fit between the two. In other words, the framework specifies the ways in which consultation, case management, family work, advocacy, solution-focused approaches, and Multi-Tiered Systems of Support can be used as interventions, depending on the preceding formulation. Third, the framework is iterative, with Reassess being the final step. This presupposes continuous feedback from intervention to the formulation, which is important for both school social work practice and the functioning of ecosystems. These three aspects of the IES-PESB framework have not been combined within a single approach in previous research.

The value of this innovation becomes even more evident when the context of application

is taken into account. The findings of Pakistan-based studies conducted by the author among teachers, school counsellors, and administrators, and published in Hamdani et al. (2021) and Hamdani et al. (2024), suggest that school-based psychosocial interventions can yield positive results when the appropriate procedures are used, even when they are delivered by non-specialists, as is often the case in low- and middle-income countries. These findings indicate the value of conceptual frameworks that help sort out the complexity of the multi-level system and guide the use of limited resources, focusing on the most pressing issues. IES-PESB framework supports this objective by emphasising the need to first locate the problems within the multi-level system, Trace the resources and their limitations, assess the person-environment fit, and mobilise the available strengths. This is important in contexts where the school social work specialist may not be available.

The IES-PESB framework also has significant implications for research. The theoretical innovations that underpin it open up a number of areas for investigation. First, the framework provides a set of theoretical assertions that can be tested in studies exploring the relationships between the use of the IES-PESB reasoning sequence and the characteristics of intervention plans, such as their level of multi-tieredness and degree of fit with the contributing factors. Second, the framework can be used to investigate the fit between the intervention and the contributing factors in terms of the outcomes achieved. Third, the value of iterative reassessments can be explored within the context of school social work practice. Fourth, the role of strengths mobilisation can be investigated, particularly in the context of limited resources. Fifth, the role of the IES-PESB framework can be examined in terms of the training and supervision of school social workers, particularly in low- and middle-income contexts. Finally, the framework can

be adapted and tested across a variety of contexts and populations, with subsequent comparative analyses. Beyond these theoretical and intervention-related implications, the IES-PESB framework can be used to conduct several process studies, such as those examining the ways school social workers actually use the six steps in practice. This can be achieved through think-aloud studies, case series analyses, or critical incident studies.

To sum up, the IES-PESB framework provides a valuable innovation in terms of conceptualising the multi-level, multi-perspective nature of school social work practice. It builds upon the existing literature by clarifying the role of the four perspectives in professional reasoning and intervention, specifying their sequence, and emphasising the need for iterative feedback. This, in turn, contributes to the development of practice in both resource-rich and resource-constrained contexts by enabling practitioners to navigate the complexity of the school ecosystem and respond to students' needs in a comprehensive, systematic manner.

Relevance to Under Resource Settings

The IES-PESB framework is highly relevant to school social work, specifically in educational contexts where psychosocial service needs are significant, but the human and material resources are limited, for example, in low- and middle-income countries. The need in such contexts, and particularly in public education, is acute, as recent studies conducted in Pakistan indicate, both in terms of the volume of the need and the potential effectiveness of the interventions (Hamdani et al., 2021, 2024). At the same time, the capacity of school social work to address students' needs is constrained by the reliance on generic, non-specialist personnel.

The focus of IES-PESB on the ecological location of problems and resources, mapping of the flow and potential leverage points, person-environment transactional assessment, and use of strengths and assets at multiple levels as a basis for intervention, fits this context of limited but diverse resources best. By explicitly focusing on these aspects in its core intervention cycle – Locate-trace-assess-mobilise-intervene-reassess – the framework allows school social workers to operate in the context of high demands and limited individual-level treatment capacity by targeting the interventions at multiple levels, including within and outside the school setting, in accordance with the students' needs and the available resources. In other words, the focus of IES-PESB on leveraging the existing resources to build on students', families', schools', and communities' strengths fits best the context of public education in low- and middle-income countries, which can be characterised by varying levels of client needs and limited human and material resources. It allows social workers to operate in this context by aligning their interventions with the available resources without overextending personal capacities (e.g., the number of hours dedicated to each student) needed for psychosocial support, for example, in the framework of multi-tiered systems of support.

The table below represents an overview of the established school social work models and approaches in relation to the IES-PESB framework with an emphasis on their main contributions, strengths, limitations, and applicability with regard to the integrative social work reasoning process advanced by this paper.

Table 1: *Comparison of Established School Social Work Models with IES-PESB*

Model / approach	Primary contribution	Pros	Cons / limitations	Relationship to IES-PESB
Ecological school social work	Maps student problems across environmental levels	Context-sensitive; multilevel; avoids individual blame	May not specify a complete formulation-to-intervention sequence	Complementary; foundation for Locate
Person-in-Environment / Life Model	Examines reciprocal person–environment transactions	Strong social work orientation; preserves lived experience	Does not by itself organize all school-level delivery mechanisms	Complementary; anchors Assess and Reassess
Systems / multisystem practice	Explains interdependence, feedback and cross-system processes	Useful for complex problems and coordination	Requires collaboration and organizational capacity	Complementary; informs Trace
Consultation	Changes conditions through teachers, parents and teams	Promotes collaboration and indirect systems influence	Depends on consultee readiness	Implementation mechanism after formulation
Case management	Coordinates services and resources	Practical; resource-oriented	Can become referral-driven if formulation is narrow	Supports Mobilise and Intervene
RtI / MTSS	Matches prevention and intervention to levels of need	Structured; preventive; supports monitoring	Service-delivery architecture rather than comprehensive theory	Provides intervention pathway
Strengths-based practice	Identifies capacities, resources and possibilities	Promotes agency; reduces deficit orientation	Can overlook structural constraints if applied narrowly	Cross-cutting orientation
Solution-Focused Brief Therapy	Uses goals, exceptions and preferred futures	Collaborative; future-oriented; efficient	Insufficient alone for complex structural problems	Possible intervention after formulation
National SSW practice model	Organizes professional functions	Supports identity, accountability and data-informed practice	Does not specify the four-theory integration sequence	Professional context for IES-PESB
IES-PESB Framework	Integrates contextual, systemic, transactional and strengths-based reasoning	Connects formulation, intervention congruence and feedback	Conceptual; not yet empirically validated	Integrative reasoning architecture, not replacement

Limitations

The paper presents a conceptual model, which has not been tested empirically, as the author only provides theoretical grounds and rationale for its use. Further research is required to determine whether the framework can actually be successfully applied in practice. The framework was designed with a specific setting in mind – school social work. Its applicability in other contexts, education settings, and for other populations requires empirical validation. It is not possible to assume that it would be universally compatible or fit all social work settings without evidence.

The four perspectives are closely intertwined, as the author notes that ecological theory already includes a temporal aspect and systems theory can be used to understand personal matters. Similarly, person-in-environment can be supplemented with a strengths perspective to affect broader policy and organisational changes. Therefore, it is not surprising that the boundaries between them are blurred, as each can be used as a tool to achieve greater goals. Finally, without proper personnel, training, and resources, the model will fail regardless of its theoretical advantages. The author does not address this limitation, which suggests that the IES-PESB framework's success critically depends on the setting and available resources.

Conclusions

The IES-PESB framework is an attempt to resolve one of the perennial challenges in school social work, namely, the need for an explicit heuristic that would bridge an understanding of multiple contexts and actions and their outcomes. By carving out a specific, but related, role for each of the ecological, systems, person-in-environment,

and strengths approaches, IES-PESB essentially transforms theoretical pluralism into a set of coherent guiding principles for professional practice. Most importantly, this framework explicitly prioritises the connection between formulation and intervention by building a feedback loop into the process. In my opinion, the value of such an approach is particularly evident when considering the realities of underserved communities, where the needs of the students far outweigh the available resources. The ability to explicitly define the leverage points within the system is essential to ensure that limited time and effort contribute to producing the most positive long-term outcomes. Of course, further theoretical development and empirical validation will be required to determine how to best utilise this conceptualisation, but I believe that the presented framework is a helpful starting point for engaging in this task.

For Pakistan and the low-resource context, the framework is potentially beneficial since the psychosocial needs of the schools are increasingly recognised, whereas the professional support system is fragmented. Indeed, there is evidence from Pakistan that school-based psychosocial interventions can be successfully designed and evaluated in the public-school setting. IES-PESB extends this implication by suggesting that effective and sustainable school social work should conceptualise students' distress in a way that transcends individual problems.

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