Applying Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory to Explore the **Role of Mentoring for Vulnerable Rural Adolescent Males**

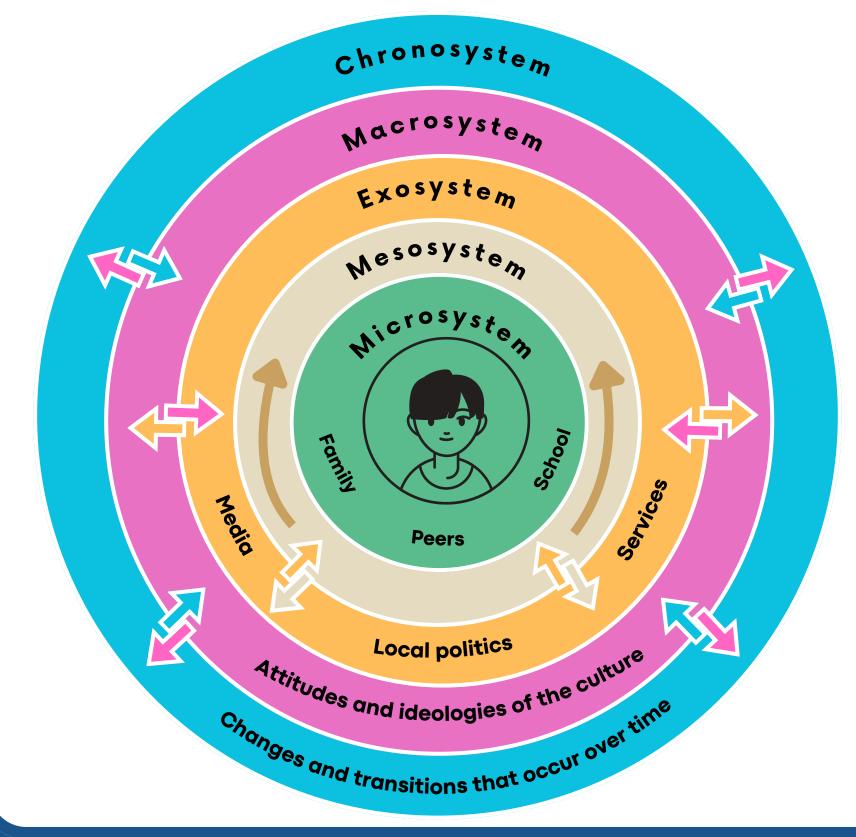
Boys to the Bush MENtoring initiative supports vulnerable adolescent males in rural areas by offering positive role models, fostering community engagement, and providing experiences in natural environments. This study applies Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (EST) to analyse the complex influences on adolescent development, particularly for those facing unique challenges in rural and regional areas. According to EST, adolescent development is shaped by immediate relationships and broader societal and cultural factors.



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includes immediate environments like family and school, where parenting, sibling relationships, and emotional climate shape social and emotional growth. Paternal presence, teacher-student connections, and peer relationships significantly influence resilience, school performance and bullying (Fitzgerald, 2022; Rodriguez & Margolin, 2014).

involves interactions between microsystems, such as the connections between home and school. Parental involvement in education plays a critical role in shaping adolescents' academic performance and peer relationships. These interactions highlight the interconnectedness of environments and their collective influence on social, emotional, and academic development (Devaramane et al., 2018; Garbacz et al., 2018).



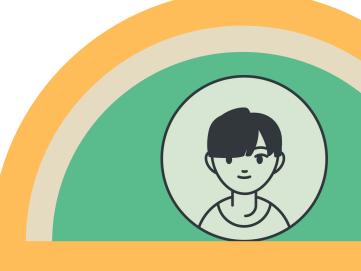
An analysis of each environmental layer within the EST framework provides a comprehensive understanding of the interplay between proximal relationships, community resources, cultural norms, and life transitions in shaping the social and emotional well-being of rural adolescent males. Using the EST Framework, this study aims to Microsystem: Explore the direct impacts of close relationships, such as family and mentors, on adolescents' perception of resilience and coping strategies. Mesosystem: Explore how interactions between home, school, and mentoring programs reinforce or challenge positive developmental outcomes. Exosystem: Assess the role of broader community supports, including local services and employment conditions, in shaping access to resources. Macrosystem: Examine the influence of societal norms and values—particularly around masculinity and vulnerability—on mental health and behaviour. Chronosystem: Consider how life transitions and broader social changes impact adolescent development over time, providing insights for sustainable support.







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includes external factors that indirectly influence adolescent development, such as parental employment, local policies, and community services. These factors affect home dynamics, access to social services, and the availability of essential resources like healthcare and education, which play an important role in supporting adolescent wellbeing (Elgar et al., 2015; Turkmani, 2023).

Applying the Ecological Systems Theory Lens

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encompasses cultural and societal influences, including norms, values, and laws, that shape adolescents' development. Expectations around masculinity, for example, can affect selfesteem and mental health, influencing whether young males seek support when needed. Legal and policy frameworks also play a role in shaping experiences in areas like education and juvenile justice (Kagesten, 2016; Rice et al., 2020).





reflects the influence of time, including life changes like family structure changes, and historical events that reshape norms and behaviours. Societal shifts, such as gender equality movements or social media changes, are key to understanding how these transitions affect young males' development and opportunities over time (McDowell, 2019; Palffy et al., 2023; Trivelli & Morel, 2020).

References