

Resistances to Ethical Thinking: Relativism, Egoism, Legalism, Utilitarianism

WEEK 5

Understanding Barriers to Ethical Thinking

- ❑ In professional and counseling practice, ethical thinking is essential. However, several philosophical frameworks can unintentionally act as resistances or obstacles to sound ethical reasoning.

Understanding Barriers to Ethical Thinking

- ❑ These include:
 - Relativism
 - Egoism
 - Legalism
 - Utilitarianism

What Are Resistances to Ethical Thinking?

- ❑ These are attitudes, philosophies, or rationalizations that hinder clear, consistent ethical decision-making.

Purpose of Awareness:

- To avoid ethical pitfalls
- To understand the philosophical basis of reasoning errors
- To align decisions with professional codes and moral responsibility

Relativism Defined

- ❑ Relativism is the belief that moral standards are not absolute but rather shaped by cultural, individual, or societal perspectives.

Example:

- ❑ What's right for me may not be right for you.
- ❑ A counselor might excuse unethical conduct by saying, In my culture, this is acceptable.

Why It's a Resistance?

- ❑ It can lead to tolerance of harmful practices under the guise of cultural acceptance. It prevents establishing universal ethical standards.

Egoism Defined

- ❑ Egoism is the ethical theory that treats self-interest as the foundation of morality.

Types:

- ❑ **Psychological Egoism:** People always act in their own self-interest.
- ❑ **Ethical Egoism:** People ought to act in their own self-interest.

Example:

- ❑ A counselor prioritizes reputation over client welfare to avoid conflict.

Why It's a Resistance:

- ❑ It undermines the altruistic, client-centered nature of helping professions.

Legalism Defined

- ❑ Legalism is the belief that following the law is sufficient to determine what is morally right.

Example:

- ❑ It's legal, so it must be okay.
- ❑ A counselor discloses client information because the law permits it without considering ethical implications

Legalism Defined

Why It's a Resistance:

- ❑ Not everything legal is ethical. Rigid reliance on the law may lead to actions that violate human dignity or moral responsibility.

Utilitarianism Defined

- ❑ Utilitarianism is the ethical theory that actions are right if they promote the greatest happiness for the greatest number.

Types:

- ❑ **Act Utilitarianism:** Evaluates individual actions.
- ❑ **Rule Utilitarianism:** Evaluates rules that lead to the greatest good.

Utilitarianism Defined

Example:

- ❑ A school counselor keeps bullying hidden to preserve the school's image, believing it benefits the majority.

Why It's a Resistance:

- ❑ It can justify unethical actions if they benefit the majority even at the cost of harming individuals.

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QUIZ NO. 5