

Ecology of Adolescent Risk and Protective Factors that
Contribute to Academic Success in Myanmar

by

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A Thesis Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Social Work

Approved March 2018 by the
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May 2018

ABSTRACT

School failure among children and adolescents has long been a serious issue in Myanmar. The recent statistics indicate that a large number of adolescents do not complete high school. As a consequence, they lose prosperous work opportunities and ability to earn an adequate income. These outcomes highlight a need to study the factors that hamper academic success of adolescents in Myanmar. Academic success is a complex concept and needs a multidimensional perspective to gain an accurate understanding of factors associated with it. Therefore, this study used an ecological risk/protective model and identified risk and protective factors that contribute to academic success of adolescents through five ecological systems of an adolescent: individual, family, peer, school, and community. This study was conducted at one government and monastic school in Myanmar. The data was collected from a sample of 50 high school students, parents and teachers through interviews and focus group discussions. This study reviewed and analyzed the data by using constant comparative method. A total of 27 distinctive ecological risk and protective factors that contribute to adolescents' academic success in Myanmar emerged from the study. The findings of this study provided important recommendations to inform policy and practice interventions for adolescents to improve their academic performance. The findings also highlighted the influence of schools, families and communities on academic success of adolescents and a need of school social work services in Myanmar to address school failure of adolescents. Last but not least, this study contributed to the local literature by expanding the knowledge base on the concepts of ecological model and strengths-based perspective which are very new for educators and social workers in Myanmar.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

School failure among children and adolescents has long been a serious issue in Myanmar. Although education is highly valued among Myanmar families, low enrolment, poor attendance, and high school dropout rates suggest poor quality education, bad school experiences and negative academic outcomes (Save the Children, 2017). According to a comprehensive education sector review, only one in five Myanmar youths completes high school (Becker, 2015). More than 75% of students fell below a basic Myanmar language proficiency and 79% of students did not earn a pass score on Mathematics in Myanmar language and Mathematics learning achievement test according to a child-friendly school baseline study, comparing students countrywide (UNICEF, 2012).

Therefore, enhancing the academic performance of students is an important topic on the agenda for government and educational administrators in Myanmar. In order to help children and youth to thrive academically, the government and educational administrators emphasize education system reform. Recently, many efforts have been made to improve curriculum, pedagogy, and education policy. It is without doubt that an effective education system can produce positive academic outcomes for children and youth. However, academic success is a complex concept, and there is no single pathway towards academic success. According to Wang et al. (1997), other support systems (i.e., family, peer, school, and community) are as important as the capacity of an individual student and an effective education system in shaping academic success in children and youth.

Undesirably, many adolescents in Myanmar do not have an ample balance of support from these resource systems, resulting from low level of parental and community involvement in schools and their education (Burnet Institute & Monastic Education Development Group [MEDG], 2014). In a study conducted by the Department of Basic Education and UNICEF, no respondents assumed that there is responsibility at the community level to ensure that all children are in primary school. Correspondingly, local authorities, community leaders, and religious leaders are not involved in schools in Myanmar (Bentzen, 1997).

What is worse, it has been observed that educational administrators in Myanmar pay little attention to these support systems in addressing the issue of school failure. For instance, school principals and teachers in Myanmar care about school enrollment of students but fail to identify at-risk students and to work with their families to help them remain in school (Bentzen, 1997). As a result, promoting parental involvement and community participation in children's education in Myanmar falls behind the education system reform (Brooke & Patrick, 2013). Therefore, it is important to find ways to retain children and youth in school and promote their academic success through a sufficient balance of resources within individual, family, peer, school, and community.

Statement of the Problem

Despite recent improvements in school enrollment in Myanmar, only 63.5% of children of middle school age were enrolled in middle school and only 32.1% of children of high school age were attending high school as of the 2013-14 academic year (Ministry of Education [MOE], 2014). Either a large number of children dropped out school or they were behind in their studies and were not promoted to high school. Only 74.2% of

students who attended the last year of middle school completed middle school and 31% of students who attended the last year of high school completed high school in the 2013-14 academic year (MOE, 2014).

There are also huge regional and socioeconomic disparities in access to education in Myanmar. According to the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, the secondary school attendance rate in rural areas is 52%, compared with 76% in urban areas. Only 28.2% of children from the poorest families attended secondary school, compared to 85.5% of children from the richest families (UNICEF, 2012). All of the above numbers show that a large number of children do not accomplish a complete cycle of basic education (from Grade 1 to Grade 11), as stipulated by the Ministry of Education in Myanmar and the majority of children withdraw from formal education during or after the completion of middle school. This raises the issue of the deprivation of children's right to education in Myanmar.

Basic education is a minimum prerequisite for youth to secure stable employment in Myanmar. A dearth of basic education limits youth's employment prospects and ability to earn an adequate income. With restricted prospects and income, many youth in Myanmar struggle with a successful transition to adulthood. These consequences are well documented in a research study conducted by Women and Child Rights Project. As recorded by Women and Child Rights Project (WCRP, 2015), many interviewed students who dropped out school before high school ended up engaging in agricultural work, low-paying jobs, domestic chores, and monastic life. At the same time, this is also a serious loss of human capital for Myanmar. Therefore, the cost of school failure falls not only on those who exit school, but also on the country at large. Therefore, these outcomes

highlight a need to study the factors that hinder academic success among adolescents in Myanmar in order to help them complete their basic education, and then successfully perform adult work and family functions.

To gain an accurate understanding of factors related to the academic failure of adolescents, Winfield (1991) points out the importance of examining adolescents from a multidimensional perspective (i.e., individual, family, school, and community). However, existing local research focuses more on system and policy issues through an educational perspective, rather than internal and external factors that hamper academic success through a student perspective. Furthermore, current indigenous studies have examined risk factors associated with school success among adolescents, with a lack of attention to protective factors. Therefore, this is an obvious omission in the local literature.

Overall, this reflects a need to study adolescents' academic success through an ecological lens and by incorporating protective factors and youth perspective in the study. To have a better understanding of the context for this study, the following sections include a country profile of Myanmar and its recent development, as well as the history of education in Myanmar and an overview of the basic education system through two main frameworks: legal and policy framework and institutional framework.

Country Profile

Myanmar is the second largest country in Southeast Asia with a total land area of 676,577 square kilometers. The country borders with China to the north, Laos to the east, Thailand to the east and south, and Bangladesh and India to the west. Myanmar is abundant in natural resources with arable land, forests, gems, metals, oil, natural gas, and marine resources. The major economic activity of the country is agriculture and farming

which constitutes 36% of gross domestic product (GDP) and 60-70% of employment (ADB) (Myanmar Information Management Unit [MIMU], 2016).

Myanmar is also one of the world’s most diverse nations that is composed of 135 different ethnic groups. Bamar is the largest group, and the country’s official language is Myanmar. Administratively, the country is divided into seven states, seven regions, and one union territory. The states are largely inhabited by national ethnic communities whereas the regions are largely populated by Bamar (MIMU, 2016). The Map of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar is shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Map of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Source: Myanmar Information Management Unit (2016)

Based on the 2014 Myanmar Census, the total population was over 51 million with 51.8% female and 48.2% male population, and 28.6% children of 0-14 years. The country's population growth rate is 0.89%, and life expectancy is 66.8 years. The percentage of urban population is 30% (Department of Population, 2015). Despite richness in natural resources, poverty is a leading challenge for the country. According to the Integrated Household Living Conditions Survey in Myanmar in 2009-2010, 26% of the population fell under the national poverty line (UNICEF, 2012). As stated by the data from a recent survey, monthly cost of living in Myanmar is 627,150 kyats for a family of five to get a decent life. Then it is challenging for working class families to meet this standard of living because a laborer gets 3,500 kyats per day and a factory worker makes a monthly income of approximately 40,000-45,000 kyats in Myanmar (Myanmar Insider, 2014). The Human Development Report 2013 also shows that the country's Human Development Index (HDI) in 2011 and 2012 was 0.498 with the ranking of 149 among 187 countries (Malik, 2013). Long-lasting internal ethnic conflicts are claimed to be the biggest obstacle for the country's development.

Myanmar is a patriarchal society in which men are the main income-earners and decision-makers. The majority of the country's population believes in Buddhism, and attitudes towards women are sturdily influenced by the religious belief of males' dominance over females. Attitudes towards children make little room for children's participation in decision-making, and children are expected to follow adults' orders. Children are also expected to play less but study and work hard. These social norms are observed in schools with a heavy emphasis on rote learning and discipline (UNICEF, 2012).

In addition, these social norms result in physical and verbal abuse of children in Myanmar. According to a 2008 study by UNICEF, 82% of surveyed children reported that they were beaten for wrongdoing (Save the Children & UNICEF, 2014). Added to this situation, physical punishment of children is legal at home and in school in Myanmar due to lack of a clear legal definition on physical punishment of children. Article 66 of the Child Law (1993) tolerates a practice of “admonition by a parent, teacher, or other person having the right to control the child, which is for the benefit of the child.”

Child labor is widespread in Myanmar. The 2014 Myanmar Census reported that 39% of children aged 14-17 (29.2% in urban and 44.5% in rural areas) are economically active in Myanmar (Ministry of Labor, Immigration and Population & UNFPA, 2017). Teen marriage and parenting is also prevalent in Myanmar. According to the 2014 Myanmar Census, nearly 300,000 Myanmar teenage girls (13%) have been married and 89,000 of these have experienced childbirth (Ministry of Labor, Immigration and Population & UNFPA, 2017).

The Development Context of the Country

Myanmar has been in the process of transition to a democratic society since the repressive military regime handed over control to a civilian government in 2010. The country has initiated four key reforms across various sectors: political, economic and social, public administrative and management, and private sector development. In political reform, some of the major improvements included amnesty for most political prisoners, relaxation of censorship, and efforts towards a nationwide ceasefire with ethnic armed groups. There were remarkable economic and social reforms on taxation, health, education, rural development, poverty alleviation, food security, transparency, mobile

phones, internet, and infrastructure. As public administrative and management reforms, the central control has been lessened through improving local government's capacities and encouraging local participation in public administrative systems. In regards to private sector development reform, liberalization of trade and investment, tourism, and banking sector development have improved (Center for Economic and Social Development, 2013).

The History of Education in Myanmar

Myanmar education system experienced a deterioration under 50 years of military government with centralized administration and underfunding. By 2010, the government expenditure on education had dropped below one percent of the country's GDP (WCRP, 2015). By and large, the education system is described as rote learning, absence of critical thinking, outdated teaching and curriculum, low capacities of teachers, inadequate resources, and lack of access to education for children from low-income, conflict-affected, and remote areas (WCRP, 2015).

Exam-based assessment requiring students to recall their memorized facts rather than to think critically has long been the standard in the country's basic education system, and exam marks determine promotion to the next grade for students (Bentzen, 1997). This leads most people in Myanmar assume that matriculation exam (Grade 11 exam) is a turning point for adolescents' future because the marks they obtain in this exam determine university admissions. Therefore, it is common that all students and parents in Myanmar expect to pass the matriculation and earn the best marks (Win, 2017).

At the same time, the basic education system in Myanmar only has a standardized exam and lacks alternative education such as vocational or technology education (Nyunt,

as cited in Wang, 2016), and students and parents in Myanmar have accepted that passing the matriculation exam is the only option to enter university and to get a better future (Wang, 2016).

Legal and Policy Framework for Basic Education

Several corresponding international and national policies regulate basic education in Myanmar. The Basic Education Law of 1973 is the main policy guiding primary and secondary education, specifying the administration and structure of the basic education system, as well as the major responsibilities of the Ministry of Education. Another important national policy related to education is the Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar of 2008. The Constitution of 2008 is a current constitution that made a major amendment from the previous constitution, and provides an underpinning legal framework for moving to democracy under the civilian government. The Constitution of 2008 holds constitutional powers over education and lays the foundation for the current education reform. Article 28 of the Constitution of 2008 assures “free and compulsory primary education” and Article 366 protects every citizen’s right to education.

Internationally, the government is bound to two legal instruments for education: 1) United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) for fulfilling children’s rights to education and protecting children against all forms of discrimination and punishment, and 2) United Nations Millennium Declaration for meeting millennium development goals of universal primary education and equality in education.

In addition, other policy documents, outlining the government’s responsibilities for universal basic education, were derived from the Child Law of 1993, stipulated to implement the UNCRC, Education for All National Action Plan of 2003, adopted to meet

millennium development goals, and the Thirty-Year Long-Term Education Plan 2001-2031. According to the Child Law of 1993, every child has the right to a free basic education at a government school. The Ministry of Education is responsible to not only design and implement special measures on regular school attendance and reduction of school dropout rates, but also for providing special arrangements for children who cannot attend government schools, namely children with disabilities, children in conflict with the law, children living with HIV/AIDS, and orphans to name a few. The law also states that every child has the right to preserve their own cultural identity, including language, literature and religion at school. The Education for All National Action Plan of 2003 was formulated on the following six key activities for universal primary education and equality in education, including: i) early childhood care and education, ii) universal basic education, iii) life skills-based education, iv) literacy and continuing education, v) gender parity, and vi) education quality.

Under the framework of EFA National Action Plan of 2003, the Thirty-Year Long-Term Education Plan 2001-2031 was developed. This long-term plan targets the completion of basic education by all citizens with the sub-goals of universal primary education by the end of the first five years, universal middle school education by the end of the third five years, and universal high school education by the end of the long-term plan. In short, the legal and policy framework for basic education in Myanmar is established with international conventions such as UNCRC and United Nations Millennium Declaration as well as national policies such as the Basic Education Law of 1973, the Constitution of 2008, the Child Law of 1993, Education for All National Action Plan of 2003, and Thirty-Year Long-Term Education Plan 2001-2031.

Institutional Framework for Basic Education

There are three types of institutions from which children receive basic education in Myanmar. These are public schools or government basic education schools, private schools, and religious-run schools or monastic schools. As private schools are targeted for children from wealthier families with very low school dropout rates, this study will only look into government schools and monastic schools.

Government Basic Education Schools. The Ministry of Education is a centralized body with responsibility for the basic education system in Myanmar. The Ministry of Education administers and operates all government primary, middle and high schools across the country. The formal basic education in Myanmar is structured with 11 years of schooling: 5 years of primary school which include grades 1-5, 4 years of middle school which include grades 6-9, and 2 years of high school which include grades 10-11. The primary school entrance age in Myanmar is 5 years, and the primary school education is free and compulsory in principle. The academic year in Myanmar starts in June and ends in March (Ministry of Education, 2013).

According to MOE (2014), the required student-teacher ratio is 29:1 at primary school level and 35:1 at middle school level. The average class size is 34 students per classroom in primary schools, however, the size can be up to 60 students per classroom in rural areas of the country. Over 90% of students at the primary school level live within a walking distance of 1.23 miles, whereas only 60% of pupils from urban areas and 24% of pupils from rural areas reside within this distance at the middle and high school levels (Japan International Cooperation Agency [JICA], 2013).

In theory, all government schools are mandated to form Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) which consist of a school principal, selected teachers, and elected parents (UNESCO, 2010). Government schools in Myanmar are not designed to meet the needs of students with disabilities, nor do they deliver extra services for children with disabilities. Therefore, only a small number of children with disabilities are mainstreamed into government schools. Due to the highly centralized education system, it is challenging for schools to run activities and programs to fulfill local needs (UNICEF, 2012).

Monastic Schools. In Myanmar, Buddhist monasteries have been playing a crucial part in providing education since the 11th century (Cheesman, 2003). Under British colonization from 1842 to 1948, monastic education occupied a subordinate position as the British operated a competing education system. Since the end of British rule, monastic schools have continued in a subordinate role to offer free education (Myanmar Education Consortium [MEC], 2016). In 1992, monastic education was eventually formalized by the government, and all registered monastic schools have since followed the national curriculum as set by the Ministry of Education (Burnet Institute & MEDG, 2014). Until recently, monastic schools did not receive any government support. With current education reform efforts, monastic schools now receive some government support and increasing recognition of their significance in supplementing government education (MEC, 2016).

According to the data of 2014-15 from the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the monastic school system now runs 1,512 schools, serving 278,273 students nationally (MEC, 2016). The monastic education system is operated under the administration of the

Ministry of Religious Affairs with support from the Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Religious Affairs is responsible for registration of monastic schools, management issues, and policy advocacy to the government. The Ministry of Education is responsible for prescribing the curriculum and national exams, providing textbooks, data management for student numbers and enrollment, and managing government funding to monastic schools (MEC, 2016).

Monastic schools are an alternative to government schools. Monastic schools primarily provide free education to poor children in the communities where monasteries are situated, but they also accept children from remote areas and orphans to whom they provide room and board (UNESCO, 2010). A head monk or nun governs each monastic school by assuming the role of school principal. Head monks or nuns run schools autonomously with little or no central management (MEC, 2016). Technically, the principal is in charge of overall management and administration, but a small number of schools assign a clerical staff or dedicated teachers to share administrative work with the principal (Burnet Institute & MEDG, 2014). Funding in monastic schools is predominantly ad hoc and usually emanates from a variety of sources including individual donations, community and non-governmental organizations, and income generation projects (Burnet Institute & MEDG, 2014). The teacher recruitment process is informal with nomination by current teachers or a school committee, or enquires through the school principal. The minimum requirement for a teacher is high school graduation (Burnet Institute & MEDG, 2014). The major challenge in monastic schools is insufficient funding which contributes to uncompetitive teacher salaries compared to government schools, and further causes low staff retention (MEC, 2016).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study is to identify risk and protective factors that contribute to the academic success of adolescents in government and monastic schools in Myanmar from an ecological perspective. It is anticipated that the findings of this study will be useful for future development of practices and programs that support academic growth for adolescents. In this current period of education reform in Myanmar, it is crucial for key players from the education sector to understand the influences of ecological factors on adolescents' educational success. Therefore, the researcher expects that this study will provide a platform for social workers to collaborate with educational professionals and reinforce the home-school-community network in order to deliver comprehensive services for adolescents and their families to promote academic success of adolescents. Most importantly, this study will expand the knowledge base on the concepts of the ecological perspective and protective factors which are very new for educators and social workers in Myanmar.

Summary

As discussed above, there is no research on the protective factors of adolescents' academic success in Myanmar while many international studies have highlighted the importance of studying and fostering educational resilience in adolescents. Furthermore, previous local studies have focused on the relationship between education system and school failure rather than focusing on the relationship between ecological risk and protective factors and academic success. The next chapter presents the theoretical framework that guides this study, followed by a description of existing international

studies on risk and protective factors in relation to academic achievement, as well as a summary of existing indigenous literature on risks related to school failure.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter is organized into three main sections. The first section begins with an overview of the theoretical framework for this study. The second section provides a theoretical base with discussion of the emergence of the risk-focused and protective-focused approach and the ecological risk/protective model, along with a collection of previous international studies on common risk and protective factors associated with academic success of adolescents. The last section concludes with a summary of the existing research on children and education in Myanmar.

Theoretical Framework

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological theory includes four systems: micro, meso, exo, and macro. The study will use a risk and protective framework within the context of Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory to identify risk and protective factors that contribute to the academic success of adolescents in Myanmar across five domains: individual, family, peer, school, and community.

Therefore, the ecological risk/protective model was selected for this study because the model provides a wide scope of variables within adolescents and their social milieu to explore not only individual but also contextual factors. In other words, the model guides the researcher to go beyond individual level to the external environment (family, peer, school, and community) that might also influence the academic performance of adolescents.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory of Human Development

Ecological theory has gained widespread recognition and is extensively applied in social work and many disciplines in order to understand childhood and adolescent problems including school failure (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Fraser, 1997; Germain, 1991). According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), child development is deeply rooted in an ecological context. Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory posits that child development is a product of ongoing reciprocal interactions between the individual and multiple layers of his or her social environment, each having the capacity to influence his or her development. According to ecological theory, the environment includes four layers, each defined from a concept of their proximity to or increasing distance from the individual and classified as the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exostyem, and the macrosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Microsystem. The microsystem is the first and closest layer to the child, and consists of the immediate environment in which the child directly interacts and participates. The immediate environment in this system is comprised of family, peer, school, and neighborhood. In this layer, the relationships are likely to be reciprocal with strong bi-directional effects between the child and his or her microsystems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Bronfenbrenner underscores three major functions of a child's microsystems: activities (i.e., daily activities of a child), relationships (i.e., the quality of interactions that a child makes with his or her microsystems), and roles (i.e., multiple social functions that a child performs in the microsystem). To illustrate, a child's father may have the most aspiration for his son's education success, and gives up smoking for the sake of school expenses; through this the child believes in his father's expectations

and sacrifice for his education. This produces positive outcomes such as improved parental participation in school, positive parent-child relationship, and good behaviors and better performance in the role of son as well as student. Since the microsystem is predominant in the child's life, these experiences can enrich or impoverish the child's development (Garbarino, 1992).

Mesosystem. The second layer from the child is the mesosystem. The mesosystem produces interactions, relationships, and processes between two or more microsystems such as the connections between home and school, between family and peer or between school and neighborhood (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). A key mesosystem for adolescents is the linkage between parents and teachers or between parents and peers. Many studies support that a good relationship among these microsystems is a contributor for academic achievement whereas a negative relationship puts adolescents at risk for problem behaviors (Epstein, 1983; Richman, Bowen, & Woolley, 2004).

Exosystem. Exosystem is the third layer from the child. Unlike the two systems mentioned above, this system is made up of relations and processes that occur between two settings in which the child does not directly and actively participate; however, events that happen in these settings impact the development of a child (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Some examples of exosystems are parents' working conditions, parents' economic situation, school boards, and social welfare services. For example, long working hours of a child's parents may affect the academic outcomes of the child through less parental supervision on homework. Similarly, low income of a child's parents brings financial insecurity and stress to the parents; hence, this might have an impact on the child's development through malnutrition and poor parenting practices.

Marcosystem. The farthest layer from the child is the macrosystem, representing broad political, economic, ideological, institutional, and cultural variables of a particular society that have an overarching influence on all other layers of the ecological system. In other words, the macrosystem consists of law, regulations, policies, rules, cultural values, customs, and norms within the community and nation (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). For instance, some social norms or traditional practices discriminate particular groups of the society to attain equal educational opportunities. Furthermore, weak education laws or policies can have negative effects on the academic outcomes of children.

Summary of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory. Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory focuses on contextual conditions as instruments of child development. Bronfenbrenner also recognized that a child's unique personal attributes (biological and genetic variables) interact with his or her environment, and which produces developmental outcomes across the lifespan (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Therefore, the factors occurring at each layer of an adolescent's ecology must be taken into account to get a complete and accurate understanding of child development. The ecological theory also fits well with the ecological risk/protective model since risk factors known as vulnerabilities negatively impact development while protective factors known as resilience positively impact development within each system of an adolescent's ecology – individual, family, peer, school, and community (Fraser, 1997). Thus, the next section will discuss the emergence of the risk-based and protective-based approach, followed by the ecological risk/protective model to show the connection between ecological theory and the risk/protective framework.

The Emergence of the Risk-Focused and the Protective-Focused Approach

The risk-focused approach originally emerged from medicine, and this approach identifies risk factors of disease and strives to eliminate them (Hawkins, Catalano, & Miller, 1992). For example, the risks for heart disease may include family history, obesity, physical inactivity, smoking, and poor diet. A doctor may educate a patient about these risk factors and suggest methods of healthy living to reduce the incidence of cardiac disease (Shader, 2003). This public health paradigm was then adopted in the field of child development with an acceptance that human development, similar to heart problems, is affected by a variety of risk factors (Garbarino, 1994).

The protective-focused approach emerged in the search for factors related to why some children are successfully able to endure and triumph over life's hardships. Although poverty is a risk factor for school failure, not all poor students actually experience school failure (Furstenberg, 1999). This finding guided researchers to turn from their lines of thought on deficits into questioning: What is working well for these poor students? What safeguards them from academic failure? Whatever great adversities in the most difficult life circumstances, it is uncommon for severe mental disorders to appear in half of the children (Rutter, 1985), and something minimizes the risks and fosters resilience in these children (Bowen, Bowen, & Cook, 2000). Therefore, these findings highlight that it is significant to concentrate on the positive characteristics of children and youth that shield them against problem behaviors. In addition, this protective-focused approach is consistent with social work practice principles of empowerment and the strengths perspective.

The Ecological Risk/Protective Model

Only considering risk and protective factors might not provide complete information about the problem since Fraser, Kirby, and Smokowski (2004) identified that there are contextual effects in adolescents' milieu which also yield vulnerability or resilience. Therefore, Bogenschneider (1996), Fraser (1997), Fraser, Richman, and Galinsky (1999) adapted Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory and consolidated risk and protective factors into multiple ecological systems, and labeled it as the "ecological risk/protective model." This ecological risk/protective model studies risk and protective factors that impact children and adolescents through five system-related domains: 1) individual, 2) family, 3) peer, 4) school, and 5) community. The ecological risk/protective model intertwined in these five-system related domains is illustrated in Figure 2.

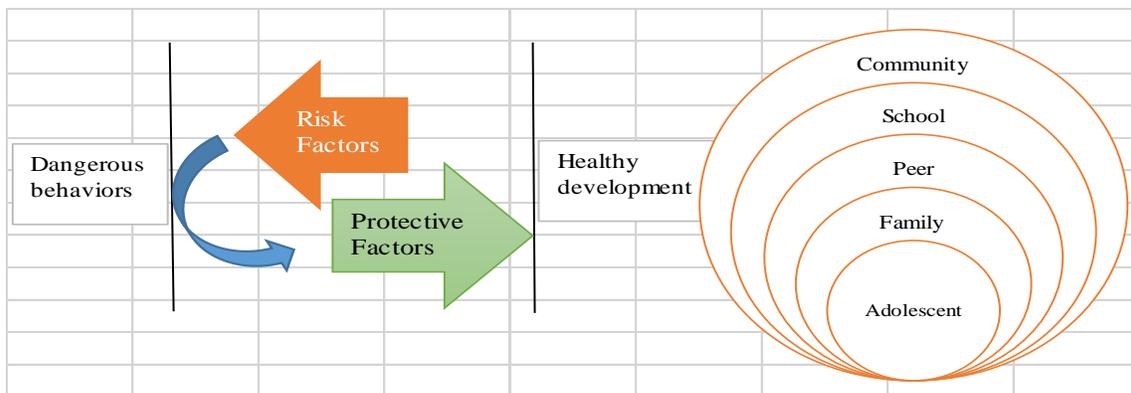


Figure 2. The Ecological Risk/Protective Model
Source: Bogenschneider, K. (1996)

In general, resilience and protective factors are the opposite of vulnerability and risk factors (Fraser, Kirby, & Smokowski, 2004; Rutter, 1987), and it is conceptualized that risk and protective factors are two extreme ends of the continuum (Fraser, Kirby, &

Smokowski, 2004). For instance, positive parent-child relationship predicts good outcomes, whereas negative parent-child relationship predicts poor outcomes. Then positive parent-child relationship is characterized as a protective factor, and negative parent-child relationship as a risk factor. In fact, a large body of research has also identified that risk and protective factors are negatively correlated (Jessor et al., 1995).

However, risk and protective factors are not always merely inverse of each other. For example, long working hours is a risk factor but short working hours is not reversely a protective factor (Bogenschneider, 1998). Risk factors intensify stressful life events that produce vulnerability; protective factors moderate these events and result in resilience (Laser & Nicotera, 2011). Therefore, “risk factors directly lead to disorder while protective factors operate only when a risk is present” (Rutter, as cited in Bogenschneider, Small, & Riley, 1990, p. 2). “That means a good relationship with at least one parent made little difference in predicting conduct behaviors for families without conflict, compared to families in conflict where a good relationship with at least one parent attenuated children’s engagement in conduct behaviors” (Rutter, as cited in Bogenschneider, 1998, p. 3).

Academic Risk Factors in the Ecological Risk/Protective Model

This section will first explain the definition of risk factors and then look into common risk factors associated with academic success of children and youth in the ecological risk/protective model. A large body of empirical research has identified academic risk factors in the five system-related domains: individual, family, peer, school, and community.

Definition of Risk Factors. The term “risk factor” is commonly defined as any factor or influence that increases the likelihood of a negative outcome either by aggravating or retaining the problem condition (Fraser, Kirby, & Smokowski, 2004). Risk factors may be a source of biological complications or environmental conditions or a combination of both; as a result, risk factors are described as individual attributes or contextual factors within the environment (Fraser, Kirby, & Smokowski, 2004). Fraser, Kirby, and Smokowski (2004) discuss that risk factors have accumulative effects with an example that low grades reduce school connectedness, which then enhance the risk of getting low grades. A number of researchers also argue that risk factors come collectively or cluster (Fraser, Kirby, & Smokowski, 2004). To illustrate, poverty characterizes a bunch of risk factors such as low maternal education, low-status parental employment, large family size, and lack of one parent (Luthar, as cited in Fraser, Kirby, & Smokowski, 2004).

Individual and Academic Risk. There are numerous academic risk factors in the individual domain, identified by empirical studies. Some of these include lack of interest, less satisfaction and effort, lower participation in extracurricular activities, value work over school, poor self-concept and self-discipline, lower educational aspirations, poor performance in schools, poor interpersonal relations, discipline problems such as coming school late or absence, engagement in behavior problems, and encounters with police or criminal justice system (Ekstrom, 1986). Cognitive deficits or lower IQ (Finkelman, Ferrarese, & Garmezy, 1989), medical problems such as chronic illness (Nokes, 1996) and malnutrition (Grantham-McGregor, 1995) are also academic risk factors for children and adolescents.

Family and Academic Risk. Many scholars have stressed several familial predictors that place children and youth at academic risk. Low socioeconomic status is one of the prominent predictors of academic failure. For example, an adolescent from a poor family is more likely to exit high school before the completion, compared to his or her peers from wealthier families (Ekstrom, 1986). Besides, low-income level of families directly minimizes students' access to quality resources, social and health services such as health care, nutrition and educational materials, and students from poor families are more prone to attend under-resourced schools that fail to offer sufficient academic skills and lead them to repeat a grade (National Commission on Children, 1991).

Household composition is also associated with academic outcomes of children. Large family size puts children at a disadvantaged position since family resources are required to spread among siblings (Werner, 2000), and children who are from low-income families with many siblings are most likely to leave school (Earle, Roach, & Fraser, 1987). In comparison to children who live with two-parents, children from single-parent families have greater probability of exposure to academic risk. For example, children from single-parent homes are more likely to: engage in absenteeism and conduct behaviors (Dornbusch et al., 1985); get lower scores (Dornbusch et al., 1987); and get less parental supervision which is linked to lower school performance (National Commission on Children, 1991).

Peer and Academic Risk. A number of studies have pointed out that negative peer influence is the most prominent risk factor for academic failure among students. Making friends with those who display behavior problems or school problems predispose adolescents at academic risk (Ekstrom, 1986; Marjoribanks, 1985). Negative attitudes

and aspirations of peers disturb adolescents' academic effort and success in school (Marjoribanks, 1985). Friendless is another predictor for school problems such as discipline, low academic achievement, and less prosocial behaviors (Wentzel, Barry, & Caldwell, 2004).

School and Academic Risk. Ample research documentation has provided school-related academic risks among children and youth. For instance, lack of school commitment and connectedness with teachers and students decreases students' motivation and participation, and leads to academic failure (Dryfoos, 1991). According to Durlak's study (1998), low quality schools, resulting from easy curriculum, bad management, loose relationship between teachers and parents tend to increase the risk of school dropout, teen pregnancy and behavior problems. Moreover, negative expectations and reactions of teachers towards students at risk are strongly associated with poor academic outcomes (Babad, 1993).

Community and Academic Risk. An extensive review of the literature has revealed the influence of community on many indicators of educational functioning in children and adolescents. For example, many studies highlight that living in communities not only with extreme social and economic disadvantage but also with high population density is a predictor of school failure, as well as higher rates of child abuse, crime and delinquency (Dryfoos, 1991; Levanthal & Brooks-Gunn, 2000). In addition, poor relation among residents in the community and weak expressed community norms such as curfew, use of alcohol and tobacco or dating put children at risk for behavior problems (Bogenschneider, Small, & Riley, 1990).

Academic Protective Factors in the Ecological Risk/Protective Model

This section will first provide the definition of protective factors and then look into common protective factors that attribute to academic success of children and youth in the ecological risk/protective model. A large body of empirical research has identified academic protective factors in the five system-related domains: individual, family, peer, school, and community.

Definition of Protective Factors. The term “protective factor” generally refers to any internal or external resources that contribute to human development. Protective factors serve not only as buffering function to risk exposure but also as positive forces that drive to positive adaptation, resilience, competence, and healthy coping in the face of risk (Garmezy, 1985; Rutter, 1983). There are three types of protective resources that develop resilience in children: (1) internal factors such as temperament and self-esteem, (2) familial attributes such as effective parenting and parental monitoring, and (3) external familial characteristics such as social support from friends and a caring teacher (Garmezy, 1985).

According to Antonovsky, the milieu must create three forms of protective characteristics which encourage the development of educational resilience for students. These are: (1) stability (i.e., stable, close, and caring parent-child relationship or caring relationship from others outside of the family which is referred as social capital by Coleman), (2) load balance (i.e., making a balance between environmental demands and abilities of the individual student), and (3) participation (i.e., creating opportunities of meaningful participation and contribution to their community for children and youths at risk) (as cited in Richman, Bowen, & Woolley, 2004).

Individual Protective Factors to Academic Success. Within individuals, a range of individual characteristics that operate as protective agents to academic risk have been studied by researchers. These include intellectual abilities, namely intelligence, good problem-solving skills and coping skills, particularly in peer pressure (Wachs, 2000; Werner & Smith, 1982), high self-esteem and self-efficacy (Rutter, 1987), positive self-concepts, self-perception and high sense of control (Wachs, 2000), and good social and interpersonal skills (Werner, 2000).

Family Protective Factors to Academic Success. Family provides a fundamental base for children to support their continuous growth and development. Many studies have pinpointed a number of familial attributes that foster academic resilience in children and adolescents. These attributes take account of safety and stability in the home (Richters & Martinez, 1993), authoritative parenting style, characterized by warmth and involvement along with consistent rules and limits (Dornbusch et al., 1987), positive parent-child relationship, characterized by parental closeness (Resnick, Harris, & Blum, 1993), high parental involvement with school matters, meaning participating in parent-teacher conferences, helping homework and encouraging extra-curriculum activities (Bogenschneider, 1997), setting high standards about education (Natriello & McDill, 1986), and expressing high aspirations about education (Davies & Kandel, 1981).

Peer Protective Factors to Academic Success. Peers are an important part of adolescence and play a crucial role in the development of adolescents. Therefore, researchers do numerous studies about the effects of peers and academic success. Some of the peer-related variables contributing to positive academic outcomes that the researchers have found are having one or more close friends (Werner, 2000), having

supportive relationships with peers (Bernard, 1993), having friends with positive attitudes and high aspirations towards school (Marjoribanks, 1985), and having friends with high expectations and standards on performance and homework (Natriello & McDill, 1986).

School Protective Factors to Academic Success. School is a critical institution for students. The outcomes schools grant to students are either plus or minus, relying on a number of school and classroom characteristics. This is reflected in the study conducted by Rutter and others that students from “more effective” schools had higher attendance rates, fewer behavior problems, and better academic performance, compared with their peers from “less effective” schools (as cited in Ashford & LeCroy, 2009). This finding suggests that schools can make a difference in academic outcomes of students; therefore, it is very important to design effective schools.

Based on UNICEF’s Child-Friendly School Principles (2009), schools ensure effectiveness when (a) they are inclusive of all children; (b) they support gender sensitivity; (c) they have effective teaching and learning (i.e., teachers use a variety of activities to meet the needs of students with different learning styles); (d) they promote physical and emotional health of children; (f) they have a safe and protective learning environment; and (g) they build partnerships among schools, parents, communities and students.

Community Protective Factors to Academic Success. Similar to family and school, community can also provide a good platform for educational resilience in children. According to UNICEF (2011), various measures of community functioning for holistic development of children encompass (a) opportunities for play and recreation (i.e., safe play and leisure places for children and children’s participation in festivals or

cultural events), (b) high expectations for citizenship along with opportunities for children to participate in community planning and activities, (c) safety and protection (i.e., children's safety of movement within the community, children's safety from abuse, violence and bullying, existence of community network which helps children in danger or at risk and protects children from crime and drugs), (d) availability of health and social services (i.e., health care facilities, child care services, other social services and counseling services that contribute to whole person development), (e) educational resources (i.e., access to school from preschool to high school education, access to library in the community and school, and availability of vocational training), and (f) housing (i.e., access to affordable and adequately spacious housing, safe water for drinking and use, air quality, heat, electricity, and resources for children not living in homes).

Summary of Ecological Risk/Protective Model. As discussed by Clark (1995), protective factors are similar to vehicular air bags which are always accessible but work only in accidents. Although protective factors operate only in accidents, they need to be installed in advance to use when needed. In other words, preventing or minimizing risk factors only is not adequate and it is important to develop protective factors among adolescents, so that they are well prepared for positive functioning in the face of risk. All in all, the ecological risk/protective model is useful because it consolidates both protective and risk factors in a single conceptual framework through a balanced understanding of all the systems of an adolescent's ecology. Studying risk and protective factors through the ecological risk/protective model also enhances understanding of childhood and adolescent problems.

Prior Research related to Children and Youth Education in Myanmar

To gain a better understanding on the two concepts of this study (risk and protective factors and academic success) in the local context as well as to identify research gaps, the researcher conducted an extensive prior research review on children and youth education in Myanmar. A small body of indigenous research has studied factors associated with academic failure. The following factors are the most prominent variables related to school failure among children and youth in Myanmar in previous research studies, and these factors were compiled and categorized in Table 1.

Table 1

Compilation of Academic Risk Factors from Previous Local Studies

Individual factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not being happy at school, loss of interest in learning, inability to catch up with courses, failing exams, and illness (Myanmar Education Research Bureau [MERB], 1992; MOE, 2014)
Income-related family factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Family income problem (MERB, 1992; WCRP, 2015) - Working obligations for income supplementation and inability of parents to meet education costs (MERB, 1992; MOE, 2014; UNICEF, 2012; WCRP, 2015) - Household obligations and caring for siblings while both parents are working (MERB, 1992; UNICEF, 2012; WCRP, 2015)
Structure-related family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Family disruptions, specifically large family, parental

factors	illness, death, remarriage and family migration (JICA, 2013; WCRP, 2015)
Other family factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Low parental interest in education (JICA, 2013; UNICEF, 2012; WCRP, 2015) - Low level of mother's education (UNICEF, 2012)
School factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Classroom disciplinary issues, to be exact use of corporal punishment and teacher verbal abuse (WCRP, 2015) - Poor home-school relationship (UNICEF, 2012)
Other pedagogic factors related to structural issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Resource constraints (WCRP, 2015) - Poor quality of education services (MOE, 2004; UNESCO, 2010; UNICEF, 2012) - Limited investment in the education sector and weak education policy and development (UNICEF, 2012)
Community factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of community resources, explicitly lack of child care centers (UNICEF, 2012) - Difficult access to secondary schools through long walking distance to school, unreliable public transports, and flooded roads (JICA, 2013; UNICEF, 2012; WCRP, 2015) - Security concerns on the way to school (WCRP, 2015)

The above table guides the researcher to recognize that the previous local research looked into the issue of school failure through educational perspective and focused more

on single-factor approach. Therefore, earlier studies did not use the ecological risk/protective model to understand the issue of school failure, and failed to connect between school success and ecology of adolescents (i.e., individual, family, peer, school, and community). As a result, the recommendations and interventions followed by these studies were more connected to structural aspects of schools such as teaching, curriculum, and education policy.

On top of that, all previous local research applied a deficit-based model studying risk factors rather than a strengths-based model studying protective factors that facilitate school success among children and youth. Developing resilience and protective factors is a new concept to Myanmar, so little is known about protective factors in the area of children and youth education.

Summary

This chapter has reviewed theoretical concepts and framework that explain the ecology of adolescent risk and protective factors that contribute to academic success. The literature has also examined common risk and protective factors associated with adolescents' school success through existing international research body. Additionally, this chapter has given a prior research review on children and youth education in Myanmar, and the review has revealed that academic risk factors among adolescents were not explored from the ecological framework as well as academic protective factors among adolescents were not understood. Therefore, exploring academic protective and risk factors in the ecology of adolescents has become a focus of this research study. The next chapter provides the research methodology of this study.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter explains the methodology to be used in the research study. In detail, this chapter presents research questions, research design, data collection tools, sampling methods, data collection procedure, data analysis and reporting, ethical considerations, and steps to establish the trustworthiness of the study.

Research Questions

The purpose of this research study was to identify risk and protective factors within individual, family, peer, school, and community that encourage adolescents to continue to high school in Myanmar. Main components of this study were experiences and opinions of adolescents, parents and teachers on the ecological factors that impact continuation or promotion to high school among adolescents in Myanmar. Therefore, the researcher collected information from high school students, parents and teachers to answer the following general research question: “What do participants report as risk and protective factors to continuation or promotion to high school among adolescents in Myanmar?” More specifically, the study was designed to explore risk and protective factors by answering the following research questions:

- 1) What individual characteristics do participants report as risk and protective factors to continuation or promotion to high school among adolescents in Myanmar?
- 2) What family factors do participants report as risk and protective factors to continuation or promotion to high school among adolescents in Myanmar?

- 3) What peer-related factors do participants report as risk and protective factors to continuation or promotion to high school among adolescents in Myanmar?
- 4) What school factors do participants report as risk and protective factors to continuation or promotion to high school among adolescents in Myanmar?
- 5) What community factors do participants report as risk and protective factors to continuation or promotion to high school among adolescents in Myanmar?

Research Design

The research design for this study was qualitative and exploratory in nature because data collection was conducted through semi-structured interviews with high school students, parents, and teachers by exploring their experiences and opinions on the risk and protective factors related to academic success of adolescents. A qualitative approach is the most appropriate when little is known about a problem, and a problem requires to be explored for further understanding (Krysik & Finn, 2013). At present, little is known about risk and protective factors that impact the academic success of adolescents in Myanmar through an ecological perspective. Thus qualitative interviews with high school students, parents and teachers created an opportunity to explore more about the study topic and develop a better understanding.

Data Collection Tools

Qualitative individual interviews with high school teachers and focus group discussions with high school students and parents were selected as the primary method of data collection.

Qualitative Interview. According to Rubin and Rubin (1995), qualitative interviews are divergent from everyday conversation because they are specially

predetermined to learn about a phenomenon from participants' perspectives through their personal experiences, thoughts and feelings. In this study, the researcher conducted individual interviews with high school teachers (Grade 10) at the selected government and monastic school. The interviews with Grade 10 teachers were able to divulge a number of ecological academic risk and protective factors that are relevant to their daily experiences. As interviews with high school students and parents included more than one participant, the researcher chose focus groups to collect information.

Focus Group Discussion. The main objective of focus group discussions is to seek participants' experiences and opinions through a social setting in which they listen and react to one another's opinions (Patton, 2002). Therefore, the use of focus group interviews enables researchers to gather data from many perspectives on an issue affecting all participants (Glesne, 1999). A focus group discussion is typically composed of a small group of participants to discuss in-depth on a particular topic. The normal size of a focus group is 6-12 people who have similar experience or background with 1-3 hours in length (Berg, 2007).

In this study, participants in student focus groups were high school students (Grade 10) from the selected government and monastic school, whereas participants in parent focus groups were parents of high school students (Grade 10) from the selected government and monastic school. Each focus group was composed of approximately six participants. As focus group participants of this study were Grade 10 students and parents who came from similar experience and background, the focus group discussions facilitated a greater understanding about the ecological factors related to the academic

success of adolescents in Myanmar through the experiences and opinions of the participants.

Interview Questions. The researcher developed a series of semi-structured interview questions that guided both individual and focus group interviews (See Appendix C for the interview schedule for teachers and focus group questionnaires for students and parents). Interview questions were reviewed and approved by the research committee members before data collection. The interview questions were constructed based on the two major themes of the study (risk and protective factors and academic success) in an ecological framework, as mentioned in the literature review. Therefore, the semi-structured interview questions identified risk and protective factors that contribute to continuation or promotion to high school in the ecology of adolescents in Myanmar.

The interview questions were open-ended; therefore they did not allow simple yes or no answers but were designed to prompt participants to provide descriptive answers to gain rich information about the study topic. Thus, these pre-determined, open-ended questions afforded not only focus and structure but also flexibility and space to the researcher to elicit more in-depth responses upon unexpected participant answers (Patton, 2002). In addition to individual teacher interviews as well as student and parent focus groups, the researcher collected demographic information from all participants through a demographic questionnaire (See Appendix B).

Sampling Methods

The study sites of this study were a suburban government and monastic school, located in Hlaing Thar Yar Township which belongs to the North District of Yangon. Schools in Hlaing Thar Yar Township were chosen as study sites because Hlaing Thar

Yar township has the biggest industrial zone in Yangon with a high prevalence of social issues such as child abuse, neglect, exploitation, lack of social cohesion, and human mobility (International Labor Organization, 2015). To sample one government school and one monastic school for this study among schools in Hlaing Thar Yar Township, the researcher referred to the schools' passing rate of Grade 9 students, provided by the Hlaing Thar Yar Township Education Office. The researcher selected the two schools with the lowest pass rate of Grade 9 students in the previous academic year.

As this study was qualitative, it employed a small sample rather than a large one. As stated by Patton (2002), although the sample size is small in a qualitative study, it provides the likelihood of opening up thoughts and revealing opportunities for further research. Therefore, this study gained in-depth insights into the ecological risk and protective factors that impact school success of adolescents from a sample of participants.

For the teacher participants, a sample of Grade 10 teachers was selected through convenience sampling based on their willingness and availability to participate in the study. The researcher announced the recruitment in the selected government and monastic school by using flyers requesting interested teachers to contact the researcher. The researcher used the saturation approach to determine the final number of teacher participants. The saturation method refers to collecting data until the research does not collect any new information from research participants (Krysiak & Finn, 2013). The researcher conducted interviews with seven teacher participants at the government school and three teachers at the monastic school.

Student participant selection was done through a convenience sampling

method upon the participants' willingness and availability for participation. The researcher used flyers to announce recruitment in selected schools. Students who were interested in the study contacted the researcher. The researcher received a reply from 15 male students and 18 female students from the government school. The first six male students and six female students to contact the researcher were selected to participate in the student focus group discussions at the government school. From the monastic school, the researcher received a response from 21 male students and seven female students. The first six male students who contacted the researcher and all female students were invited to participate in the student focus group discussions at the monastic school.

Parent participant selection was done by employing a convenience sampling approach based on easy access to the participants, their interest and availability. The researcher distributed the flyers to parents through students, and parents who were interested to participate in the study contacted the researcher. From the government school, seven mothers and one father contacted the researcher. Therefore, the researcher formed one parent focus group with seven females and one male at the government school. From the monastic school, the researcher received a reply from seven mothers, so one parent focus group with seven females was conducted at the monastic school.

Data Collection Procedure

Permission from the Arizona State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) was sought prior to carrying out the data collection. Upon IRB approval, the researcher started the recruitment process at the gatekeeper level in order to gain access to target participants. Krysik and Finn (2013) suggested that the researcher needs to identify gatekeepers who can provide access to research participants and plan a strategy on how to

approach gatekeepers and which messages to convey to them. In this case, the principals of the selected government and monastic school were gatekeepers; therefore, the researcher approached the school principals. The researcher expressed his interest in conducting a research study with Grade 10 teachers, students and their parents, and tried to convince the gatekeepers that the research would be prepared for the participants' needs and preferences without violating their rights and by giving more benefit than harm to the participants (Krysik & Finn, 2013).

After the gatekeepers had granted their approval to the researcher, the researcher started the recruitment. To recruit participants, the researcher used the flyers which provided the information about the purpose of the study and the researcher's contact (See Appendix D), and interested participants contacted the researcher through the contact information on the flyer. The researcher also used the principle of reciprocity, one of Cialdini's recruitment strategies in order to encourage participation in this study. At the same time, the researcher tried to ensure that the incentive was not large to avoid coercion (Krysik & Finn, 2013). In this study, the researcher therefore gave a pen to all participants as a token of appreciation.

Once the researcher had recruited participants to participate in individual interviews and focus group discussions, the researcher scheduled the meeting time and location. The researcher made sure that the location was easily accessible and considered safe by the participants, and the researcher also determined a convenient meeting time for participants (Krysik & Finn, 2013). The researcher facilitated both individual teacher interviews and parent/student focus group discussions. Both individual interviews and focus group discussions lasted 60-90 minutes, and were administered in an empty

classroom of the selected government and monastic school at the most convenient time for all participants.

Data Analysis and Data Reporting

As this study employed a qualitative approach, the individual and focus group interviews were voice recorded and transcribed verbatim in order to interpret and analyze the data. After transcribing audio recordings, the researcher translated all transcribed texts into English and used the constant comparative method to analyze the translated data. The constant comparative method includes three stages: open coding, axial coding and selective coding. According to Strauss and Corbin (1997), open coding is used to thoroughly review and code a body of data for similarities and differences. The themes emerge from the data coding and are categorized upon similarities. Axial coding, the second stage of the constant comparative method, detects relationships between codes and sub-codes and includes them into new groups. Selective coding, the last stage of the constant comparative method, organizes the themes and groups to form theoretical concepts which try to answer the research questions of the study.

Following the steps of the constant comparative data analysis method, the researcher analyzed the data. First, the researcher coded transcribed data by using the ATLAS.ti software and identified key themes from coded texts. Then the researcher categorized key words or sentences that bring similar meanings under relevant emergent key themes. After that, the transcribed data were again coded and sub-coded to develop new themes. Finally, emergent themes were organized and reported into theme-related categories that explain the theoretical concepts of this study by answering the research questions.

Ethical Considerations

This research study adheres to ethical standards of Arizona State University Institutional Review Board (IRB). Besides, this research study follows three fundamental ethical principles for research involving human participants, set by the Belmont Report, and these ethical principles are respect of persons, beneficence and justice, which means that researchers are ethically bound to respect, treat participants with dignity, and respect their rights to choose and consent on their own in research which contain human participants (Krysiak & Finn, 2013). Therefore, this research study applied the principle of informed consent through which potential research participants were fully informed of information about the study in detail in local language such as objectives and methods of the study, length of the study, confidentiality, the rights of research participants, contact information of the researcher and the research committee for any further questions, and risks and benefits of the study in order to provide consent whether or not to participate in the study. The researcher also translated informed consent form for teacher and parent participants and informed assent form for student participants into Myanmar. Each teacher and parent participant was required to sign translated version of informed consent form prior to the study as an acknowledgement of their understanding on the implications of the study and their voluntary participation. As Grade 10 students are minors under 18 years of age, the researcher also asked for parental permission through parental permission form which was translated into Myanmar in addition to student youth participants' assent (See Appendix A).

Establishing Trustworthiness of the Study

Trustworthiness, a theoretical framework proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985) is used to evaluate qualitative research studies. The trustworthiness involves four criteria which are similar to the standards of quantitative studies that researchers need to achieve. These four criteria are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. The researcher used multiple strategies in this qualitative study in order to meet these four criteria and guarantee trustworthiness of the study.

Credibility. Credibility means the degree to which qualitative research can depict an accurate picture of research context and participants' experiences (Shenton, 2004). Researchers use a number of methods to accomplish credibility in qualitative research such as prolonged engagement with participants; persistent observation in the field, peer debriefing, member-checking, researcher's reflective note, triangulation, negative case analyses, thick description, and investigation of previous research findings (Shenton, 2004). To achieve the criterion of credibility in this qualitative study, the researcher primarily applied the method of triangulation. Triangulation is done by using one or more of the types such as methods triangulation which refers to applying multiple data collection methods; data triangulation which refers to employing different participants or data sources in the same study; investigator triangulation which refers to utilizing different analysts in the data analysis; or theory triangulation which refers to using different perspectives in interpreting the data (Denzin, 1970). The current study used methods triangulation and data triangulation by collecting the information from different participants, namely teachers, students and parents in two types of data collection methods - individual interviews and focus group discussions. The second method the

researcher used to meet the credibility criterion was investigation of previous research studies, and the researcher has conducted an in-depth international and local research review related to the study topic.

Transferability. Transferability means an extent to which the findings of a qualitative research can be generalized or transferred to other environments or settings (Gasson, 2004). The qualitative research is generally hard to conclude that the results can be generalized due to a small sample size and lack of statistical analysis. However, the transferability can be achieved through a technique of “thick description” of the research context and a phenomenon in qualitative research because this technique helps the readers to determine whether the context and participants’ experiences in the research are similar to theirs (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In order to meet the standard of transferability, the researcher therefore provided detailed descriptions of participants’ responses to allow readers and other researchers to evaluate transferability of this study results to other settings and contexts.

Dependability. Dependability means the manner in which the results of the study are consistent across time (Bitsch, 2005). Researchers adopt multiple strategies in order to establish the criterion of dependability, namely an audit trail, code-recode strategy, stepwise replication and peer examination (Krefting, 1991). In this qualitative research, an audit trial was established for dependability of the study. An audit trial makes researchers responsible to display the way data were gathered, recorded, and analyzed for the inquiry process and data validation (Bowen, 2009); therefore researchers need to keep the following documents such as raw data, interview records, field notes and other documents gleaned from the field for an audit trial and data cross-checking (Guba &

Lincoln, 1982). The current study has kept demographic questionnaires, audio interview records, transcribed texts, and ATLAS.ti software analysis to enhance the dependability of the study.

Confirmability. Confirmability means the degree to which the information in the study is objective (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). According to previous studies, confirmability is established by using an audit trial, reflective journal and triangulation (Bowen, 2009; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This study utilized an audit trial and triangulation to achieve the criterion of conformability. By using the above strategies, this qualitative study accomplished the four criteria of trustworthiness.

Summary

This chapter discussed the methodology of the research study. This chapter further explained research design, data collection methods, and sampling procedures. Besides, this chapter presented data analysis and reporting, research ethics, and trustworthiness of the study. The next chapter provides a presentation of findings of the research study.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

This chapter presents qualitative findings of the current study. Specifically, this chapter includes demographic information of the study participants, thematic analysis of transcripts, and presentation of the results of analysis.

Description of the Study Participants

This section describes demographic information of the study participants. The demographic characteristics of the participants are outlined in terms of sex, ethnicity, level of education and occupation status. As shown in Table 2, the study sample of teachers ($n = 7$) at the government school were made up of six females and one male, and the study sample of teachers ($n = 3$) at the monastic school was comprised with three males. The age of teacher participants ranged from 21 to 58 years with a mean of 33.8 years. All teacher participants ($n = 10$) hold a bachelor's degree. Of all teacher participants, the average number of years the participants have been working in the current school was three, while the average number of years the participants had been working as a teacher was 13.5.

In regards to student participants, four focus groups were conducted. The first focus group with male students ($n = 6$) and the second focus group with female students ($n = 6$) were selected from the government school. The third focus group with male students ($n = 6$) and the fourth focus group with female students ($n = 7$) were selected from the monastic school. The age of student participants ranged from 14 to 17 years with a mean of 14.76 years. Only 20% ($n = 5$) of mothers of student participants reached

beyond high school, and only 12% (n = 3) of fathers of student participants achieved beyond high school.

For parent participants, two focus groups were conducted. The first focus group of parents (n = 8) at the government school consisted of seven females and one male, and the second focus group of parents (n = 7) at the monastic school included seven females. The age of parent participants ranged from 22 to 51 years with a mean of 42.06 years. Among total parent participants, only two participants (13%) reached beyond high school.

Table 2
Demographic Data of Participants

Teacher Participants (n = 10)			Student Participants (n = 25)			Parent Participants (n = 15)		
Characteristics	N	% or M	Characteristics	N	% or M	Characteristics	N	% or M
Age 21	1	M = 33.8	Age 14	11	M = 14.76	Age 22	1	M = 42.06
23	2		15	11		37	2	
24	1		16	1		38	1	
30	1		17	2		39	1	
34	1		Sex Male	13	52%	40	1	
37	1		Female	12	48%	42	1	
41	1		Ethnicity			44	2	
47	1		Bamar	23	92%	45	2	
58	1		Kayin	2	8%	48	1	
Sex Male	4	40%	Education level of mothers			49	1	
Female	6	60%	Primary	6	24%	50	1	
Ethnicity			Middle	4	16%	51	1	
Bamar	9	90%	High	7	28%	Sex Male	0	0
Rakhine	1	10%	College	2	8%	Female	15	100%
Highest level of education			Bachelor	3	12%	Ethnicity		
Bachelor	10	100%	Do not know	1	4%	Bamar	13	86.6%
# of years teaching in this school			Do not answer	2	8%	Kayin	2	13.3%
1	2	M = 3	Education level of fathers			Highest level of education		
2	4		Primary	4	16%	Primary	4	26.6%
3	2		Middle	3	12%	Middle	3	20%
4	1		High	11	44%	High	6	40%
10	1		College	2	8%	College	1	6.6%
# of years working as a teacher			Bachelor	1	4%	Bachelor	1	6.6%
1	1	M = 13.5	Do not know	2	8%			
2	2		Do not answer	2	8%			
3	1							
10	1							
17	1							
18	1							
20	1							
28	1							
34	1							

Analysis of Transcripts

The researcher tried to identify ecological risk and protective factors that contribute to academic success of adolescents in Myanmar from experiences and opinions of high school teachers, students and parents. All participants reported a variety of experiences and perceptions on risk and protective factors associated with academic success, which provided a rich information and reliable responses to answer the research questions of this qualitative study.

The research data were audio recorded and transcribed by the researcher. Then the transcriptions were translated into English, reviewed and analyzed by the researcher using the constant comparative method as presented in Chapter Three. The transcribed data were coded and sub-coded in the ATLAS.ti software, and the codes and sub-codes were defined to develop themes. Finally, emergent themes were organized and categorized into groups, and these thematic groups were presented by using original quotations of the participants from the transcriptions. Although the data was gleaned from high school teachers, students and parents at both the government and monastic school, the data were not compared across types of participants, schools, and gender, but aggregated together.

Presentation of the Results of Analysis

This section presents emergent themes and subthemes from the thematic analysis of transcripts. The results of analysis are structured and presented in the following categories: (1) themes related to protective and risk factors in the individual student domain, (2) themes related to protective and risk factors in the family domain, (3) themes related to protective and risk factors in the peer domain, (4) themes related to protective

and risk factors in the school domain, and (5) themes related to protective and risk factors in the community domain.

Individual Protective Factors. For the question about individual protective factors, participants provided various experiences and perceptions. In reviewing these experiences and perceptions, two main themes were developed. These themes were then categorized into (a) having a sense of purpose and (b) students' positive traits.

Having a Sense of Purpose. Of all participants, 78% believed that having a sense of purpose for attending school predicts academic success of adolescents in Myanmar. The participants mentioned three forms of adolescents' sense of purpose which maintain them in schools. The first one was having a specific ambition in the future (44%): the second was studying hard for parents in order to support them after adolescents have graduated from a university (28%): the third was using education as an escape from poverty (6%).

In regards to having a specific ambition in the future, one participant shared his dream that he will try to become a doctor to run a clinic in his village because the clinic in his village is expensive, so poor people cannot go to that clinic. Another participant talked about the reason why he is in school and disclosed that he will try to become a teacher and go back to his village to teach children because he is interested in teaching, and he would also like to support his parents as they are already old. The other participant spoke about his future plans that he will try to pass high school, get a university degree, improve English and become a sailor.

In relation to studying hard for parents, one participant assumed that some students study hard in order to provide support to their parents when they complete

school. Another participant said that he is motivated to study hard in order to support his parents who send him to school to become a graduate. So he would like to support them in turn when he becomes a graduate. He continued the discussion that with that purpose, he is trying to pass Grade 10 and 11, and graduate from a university. One participant also said, “I want to pay my gratitude to my parents. My mother works at the factory and my father works as a guard at the factory. So I feel sorry for them. If they can send me to school among struggles, why can’t I try to become a graduate? I will support my parents when I become a university graduate. Therefore, I continue high school.”

Concerning using education as an escape from poverty, one participant discussed that some students continue school because their parents are poor, and they perceived that education is an escape from poverty. One participant made a similar opinion that some students know their poor life, and they are motivated to study hard to be educated in order to escape from their current life. Another participant also stated that some students continue school as they would like to stand on their own feet as they are poor or do not have parents to support them.

Students’ Positive Traits. Of all participants, 22% assumed that students’ positive traits contribute to educational success of adolescents in Myanmar. The participants talked about four positive traits of students: diligence (12%), intelligence (4%), self-confidence (4%), and trouble avoidance (2%). One participant believed that academic success depends on students’ diligence, and students cannot succeed if they do not put effort although they receive much support from parents and teachers. Another participant perceived that students should be intelligent to be outstanding at school. One participant reported that students must believe in themselves, and they must perceive themselves that

they can do well at school and will be able to pass exams. One participant spoke about a student who does not sit at the back of the classroom as he is worried that he would be distracted by his classmates or he would make fun of students with other classmates.

Individual Risk Factors

For the question related to individual risk factors, participants delivered an array of experiences and opinions. From these opinions and experiences, four leading themes emerged. These four themes were grouped into (a) behavioral problems, (b) difficulties with academic work, (c) value money and work over education, and (d) school disengagement.

Behavioral Problems. All participants believed that behavioral problems of adolescents limit their academic achievement in Myanmar. The participants mentioned various behavioral problems associated with academic failure. Table 3 shows the types of behavioral problems and number of times each type of behavioral problem was mentioned during the interviews and focus groups with all participants.

Table 3

Types and Frequency of Behavioral Problems reported by All Participants

Behavioral Problems	<i>f</i>	Behavioral Problems	<i>f</i>
Classroom misbehaviors	11	Substance use issues	14
- Talking back, arguing with teachers	5	- Using drug	5
- Not paying attention in class	4	- Smoking cigar	5
- Not doing homework	1	- Chewing betel nuts	3
- Disturbing other students	1	- Drinking alcohol	1

Conduct problems	27	Relationship nature	15
- Fighting	12	- Romantic issues, dating	7
- Running away from home	6	- Early marriage	6
- Stealing	5	- Eloping with boyfriend	2
- Truancy	4		

Classroom misbehaviors. One participant believed that there are some students who do not pay attention in class, and it is not possible for these students to pass the exam. Another participant spoke about some students who are not obedient and do not care about what teachers say and do in class, and then that participant assumed that these students cannot learn at school and are likely to be out of school eventually. One participant noted that some students disturb other students in the classroom as they are not interested in lessons, and teachers suspended them from the classroom in order to stop their behaviors. These students then have reduced learning time at school, which further results in not knowing school lessons and dropping out of school.

Conduct problems. One participant discussed that there are some students who are expelled from school due to truancy, and another participant similarly reported that some students leave school, resulting from running away from home and truancy. One participant talked about a student who ran away from home, “He left school as he was scolded by his parents. He was in Grade 9. He left home for three days. Parents make a quite good business. He sold a ring and left home. Parents knew about that one day later, so they reported it to the police. Then the police identified that he was going to Myawaddy, Thai-border area. Finally, the police could catch him before he crossed the

border to Thailand.” Another participant also shared about a student who ran away from home, and how it interfered the student’s learning:

“His father beat him and he left home as he was upset with his parents. He was absent from school for so long, and then showed up and told us that he would leave school. When we asked him, we knew that he left home, so he would have to work in order to survive on his own.”

One participant talked about a friend who stole things from other people’s home and she was expelled from school when she got caught for stealing. One participant remarked that there are fighting cases among students if they dislike each other, and when teachers find out, they receive warnings, and then they are expelled from school if they keep fighting. One participant shared about a student who fought and was expelled from school, and that student’s fight was based on an argument between his younger brother and another student. He wanted the student to apologize to his younger brother, but when the student did not accept to apologize, he fought. The principal decided to expel him from school as he received warnings a few times before. One participant also talked about her own experience with a student who got into a fight:

“He also fights outside. I have heard that he fights with other teens in the football field. The fight happened on Friday after school was dismissed. He called me on weekend and told me that those who fought with him brought a knife. All who involved in this fight were not students except him. At first, they fought, and as they brought a knife, he had to run away. When they reached in front of his house, they threatened him that they would kill him if he went out. So he was scared and asked me how he could come to school on

Monday. As I was also worried, I discussed with other teachers and school principal. Then school principal reported it to the police. They were all detained in jail for a night. As the case was involved with the police, the school principal did not allow him to continue school.”

Substance use issues. The participants also spoke about substance use issues among adolescents, and how it impacts their academic learning. One participant assumed that some students, particularly male students use drugs and become delinquent. Neither their parents nor the students themselves could control it, and then they left school. One participant said that they can see students who smoke cigars and wander the streets on the way to school without coming to school, and another participant added that some students, especially male students are on the streets as they want to drink alcohol, chew betel nuts and smoke cigars, and they do not come to school as they cannot use these substances in school. One participant also said that there are students who have to leave school as they use drugs and get caught by teachers, and another participant spoke about a student who was expelled from school due to smoking a lot.

Romantic nature. One participant had an opinion that if students are interested in romantic relationships, they can fail the exam. Another participant believed that there are cases of students having boyfriends or girlfriends, which lead to expulsion. One participant mentioned about some female students who he met in school with romantic nature:

“There are some students who are caught by teachers for dating and we give harsh punishment. The head monk does not indulge them in this case like watching movies. He beats them 40-50 times with a big stick but there are girls who don’t

care about being beaten like that. There was a girl who couldn't be controlled, so the head monk did not allow her to stay with other girls and sent her to stay with nuns. She was beaten today but she met her boyfriend the next day. She dated her boyfriend outside the school entrance. We expelled her from school as we couldn't control at all."

One participant estimated that female students are more likely to have a problem of romantic nature, compared to male students. One participant also noted that there were a few cases of female students eloping with their boyfriends after dating.

One participant observed that some students have a boyfriend/ girlfriend, and talked about a friend from her school who did not continue high school, as he married and left school. Another participant commented based on her own experience that a Grade 9 student could not continue high school this year as he got married over the summer, and there were 1-2 students per academic year who dropped out school due to marriage. One participant spoke about her niece who was married when she was 15, and expressed her opinion that it is not an age to marry but to learn at school. Another participant highlighted a traditional practice of early marriage in some local areas that children get married when they reach 14-15.

Difficulties with Academic Work. Sixty-six percent of the sample assumed that there is a negative relationship between difficulties with academic work and adolescents' academic success in Myanmar. The participants mentioned that not being able to catch up with school lessons (40%) and lack of basic competency (26%) mainly lead to school dropouts among adolescents in Myanmar. To illustrate, one participant observed that students are not interested in school lessons when they cannot catch up with them, so the

main factor is not being able to catch up with school lessons, and that makes students lose their interest in school work. Another participant remarked that students are not able to catch up with lessons, and they miss classes as they are afraid that they would be asked about lessons at school. The other participant discussed that students gradually get bored at school when they do not understand lessons. One participant perceived that students who do not understand any lessons cannot sit in the classroom for so long. He gave the following example of students:

“Last week, 4 students wanted to leave school as they were afraid that they would be beaten as they did not perform well in the test. They don’t know lessons and also they can’t study. So they just decided to leave school. The reason why they want to leave is they don’t know the lessons.”

The participants noted about lack of basic competency, and one participant commented that some students do not have basic competencies that they should have learned since they were young, and they find it difficult to catch up with school lessons in high school if they do not get these basic competencies. Another participant noted:

“Some students don’t even know lessons they should have known in Grade 7 or 8. So they can’t catch up with lessons in Grade 10 as these are related with lessons from middle school. Then they are not interested in school. Five students out of ten who leave school are not able to catch up with lessons, and out of five, three students didn’t learn well in their childhood.”

Value Money and Work over Education. Fifty-four percent of all participants supposed that adolescents’ value money and work over education which restricts academic achievement in Myanmar. One participant perceived that some students want

education but have to work outside as their parents have financial problems, and then they want money more than education. Another participant gave a similar perception that students who do not continue high school are already into workplace and realize the taste of money through working, so they no longer want to come back to school. One participant discussed that a majority of students who do not continue high school think that they can make money if they work outside. For example, they get 5,000 kyats per day by working, and they give 3,000 to parents and take 2,000 kyats. They are satisfied with that. Another participant also observed that some children enjoy working as a trishaw driver or a waiter at teashop and making money. One participant also talked about his friend:

“Some students do not attend school after they have realized that they can get money by working outside. I have seen a friend. He attended school in Grade 7 and he was an outstanding student, but he worked outside over the summer. Next year, he left school in order to work after he had attended school for 1-2 days.”

School Disengagement. From interview and focus group responses, 26% of all participants viewed that school disengagement is adversely related with academic achievement of adolescents in Myanmar. One participant perceived that some students are not interested in school lessons, and another participant assumed that the main factor of leaving school is some students do not enjoy learning, and if they enjoy at school, they will come to school. One participant noted:

“If students are not happy to learn at school, they will leave school. They are bored to study in high school. There is no fun thing. They sit in the class and

listen to what teachers teach. So they are bored and don't want to attend.

School reopened last month, and some students start to lose motivation to come to school. If they don't come to school in Grade 10, it is not sure for them to continue Grade 11. So it affects the number of high school graduates.”

One participant also commented that some students perceived school as ‘useless’ or ‘attending school is nothing’, and then they leave school. Another participant also made a related observation with his students, “If I learned from children who dropped out school, some left school as they thought they did not learn anything from school.”

Family Protective Factors. The contents of participants’ responses related to the question about family protective factors yielded two key themes. The emerged two themes were grouped into (a) family education support and (b) parental aspiration and expectation for education.

Family Education Support. Of all participants, 46% considered family education support as a crucial factor for academic success of adolescents in Myanmar. The participants mentioned about four types of family education support: older siblings’ financial and psychological support (12%), parents’ guidance and encouragement (20%), supervision of homework (10%), and monitoring use of computer game and television (4%).

For older siblings’ financial and psychological support, one participant stated that some elder siblings have to leave school as their family is poor but they provide not only moneterial support but also psychological support to younger siblings to be able to continue school. Another participant shared, “My elder brother works and sends money

to me. So I am here.” The other participant also noted, “My elder sister has passed Grade 11 and she tells me to continue school in order not to be looked down by others. She is now in 2nd year in university and provides money for me by working.” One participant disclosed that his elder brothers and sisters tell him not to think of leaving school even if parents ask him to do so and encourage him to become educated.

Related to parents’ guidance and encouragement, one participant said that parental guidance can support a child to attend school and study well. One participant believed that parents are responsible to bring their children from wrong directions to the right ones, and another participant continued that some adolescents discuss with their parents about their activities, and their parents guide them to the right directions. One participant discussed that some parents show examples of how children can live if they get a university degree.

One participant observed that children continue school if they receive parental encouragement. Another participant spoke about her mother, “My mother tells me that she will try her best for us to pass Grade 11 exam. My mother’s words are great vitamins. My mother tells me that she will try her best and fulfill what I need.” One participant thanked her mother for encouraging her to attend school again, and another participant said, “When my mother comes to me, she always tells me to try hard.”

For supervision of homework, one participant believed that children will not have any problem with school lessons and will perform better in school if parents supervise children’s homework and help them with homework they do not know. Another participant talked about her friend who only has a mother, but her friend’s mother supervised her homework, and her friend is now in university and going to graduate soon.

Related to monitoring use of computer game and television, one participant shared her personal experience with her son:

“My son is so addicted to computer game. Then I have to monitor him not to use excessively. If he plays computer game too much, he does not want to study. Then I have to tell him to reduce playing computer game or not to play at all if he can in order to get what he wants. I have to guide him like that. He envies people around him. So I tell him to try hard if he envies. But when he plays computer game, he becomes addicted again and can't focus on studying. So I have to control.”

One participant also said that he always has to make sure that television is turned off while his son is studying.

Parental Aspiration and Expectation for Education. Of all participants, 36% believed that parental aspirations and expectations predict a positive outcome of adolescents' education in Myanmar, and students whose parents have high educational expectations do not leave school. One participant responded that parents want their children to improve their future and they believe that education can shape a better future for their children, so they send their children to school with that expectation. One participant talked about her husband that both of them are illiterate and they could not attend school, so they want their son to be educated. Two participants provided similar opinions: the first participant said that she wants her children to be educated for their future and expects them to get university degrees no matter how difficult their lives are, and the second one assumed that some parents do not expect their children's labor and are fine to have meals with what they have, and it is enough if their children's lives are

improved, so they send their children to school and there are such parents at school. One participant commented that parents want their children to work in the shade with a pen instead of working in the heat like them, so parents fulfill their children's education needs as much as they can to help children complete high school. One participant spoke about her father, "My father wants me to become educated. My father works hard on the farm with animals and sends us to school." Another participant talked about his own experience by comparing with parents who he knows:

"There are such parents. When I ask, some children's parents are poor but they want education and they want their children to continue school no matter how difficult their struggle is. So children of those parents can continue education. Those parents who think that nothing can do even if children are educated bring their children back if their children fail the exam one time. Let me tell you about myself. I have four siblings. When I was in Grade 11, we had to worry about dinner after we had had lunch. After we had had dinner, we had to worry about breakfast. Among this hardship, my mother sent all of us to school until we graduated from the university. If parents want their children to be educated, they will try their best. I see like that."

Family Risk Factors. For the question on family risk factors that hinder school success of adolescents in Myanmar, participants provided a range of various responses and experiences. Among a variety of their responses and experiences, three important themes were developed. The themes were grouped into (a) low socioeconomic status, (b) family structure, and (c) parental discord.

Low Socioeconomic Status. All participants showed a negative relationship between low socioeconomic status and academic success of adolescents in Myanmar. Based on participants' responses, low socioeconomic status associated with school failure was defined in three forms: as parents are poor and ask them to work outside, as parents are poor and help household chores, and as parents are poor and cannot afford school cost.

For example, one participant mentioned that some students leave school as their families are poor and they are asked to work or help household chores. One participant discussed that as parents cannot afford, they ask children to work and therefore, children leave school. Another participant commented that some children have to work at factories in the township to support family income, and another participant said that the reason why children stop school is their parents cannot continue to support due to financial constraints and they ask children to work and make money. One participant also reported that parents expect children's labor and income. One participant talked about her own experience with one student who tells her that he has to go and work at a factory due to his family's financial difficulty. Another participant depicted a Grade 10 student who has to help his family business and how it affects his education in words:

“He has to sell things with his mother at pagoda festivals. He has to sell at places where pagoda festival is held, so he has to travel to other towns if the festival is not in Yangon. He has to accompany his mother. If the festival is held in Yangon, they sell in Yangon. He is in Grade 10. He comes back home at 12 or 1 am, so he can't get up early in the morning and misses school and lessons. Later, he can't catch up with lessons and is not interested in school.

So he has to stop school. He tells us that he will stop school for a year to work. After one year, he would attend school again. One year later, he comes and tells us that he is no longer interested in school and his brothers are also working. So he decides to work. He leaves school permanently.”

The participants also mentioned about students who have to help household chores as their families are poor. One participant noted, “Some parents are financially struggling outside and there are only children at home. So older siblings have to take care of younger ones and cook for their families. Four out of ten students come from such family.” Another participant also shared a similar response that some children have to drop out school to help cook at home while their mothers work outside with their fathers.

One participant discussed that the government school now does not cost school fees and textbooks but students still need money for other general cost such as books, school supplies, school uniform, etc. and parents cannot afford them. One participant added that students need to take tuition if they cannot catch up with school lessons and in this case, it is a problem for poor families.

Family Structure. Fifty-two percent of all participants assumed that family structure is negatively associated with academic achievement of adolescents in Myanmar. The participants talked about five negative types of family structure that impedes academic success of adolescents: death of a parent (12 times), parental divorce (6 times), many children (4 times), living with a stepparent (2 times), and illness and disability of a parent (2 times).

One participant stated that some children whose either father or mother die leaves school. Another participant spoke about an adolescent near her home that a student’s

father passed away when he is in Grade 10, and he has to leave school to help his mother in earning money as he is the eldest child in the family. He continued that he makes money by working as a waiter at teashop. One participant said, “Children stop school mainly if either their father or mother passes away because both parents in this township work. So it is not possible to support for children’s education with an income of a parent. Elder siblings have to sacrifice for their younger ones. If it is a girl, she has to work at a factory. That’s what I see around me.”

In relation to parental divorce, one participant reported that some parents are divorced and cannot send their children to school. Another participant commented that some children have a broken family and they cannot have a stable family; then they cannot attend school. The participants also continued about unstable life of children that results from parental divorce. One participant discussed about a child who is not happy at home as their parents are divorced skips school and even runs away from home. One participant stated:

“Some children have divorced parents. Both parents are in second marriage. Then the child is in custody of his father and lives with parental grandparents. When parents face the court, the child has to live with maternal grandparents temporarily. So the child is absent from school very often because school is far from where maternal grandparents live. The child is not stable.”

In regards to many children, one participant mentioned that some families have so many children, and older siblings have to leave school in order to send younger ones to school when they reach school age. Another participant also explained that a majority of households in the township has four to six children, and it is common in the

neighborhood that older children are told by parents to leave school and work at a factory when they pass middle school as parents need to enroll younger ones in school. One participant added that elder siblings have to sacrifice for younger ones when they reach high school as they are old enough to work. One participant also said, “It is impossible for parents to send four children to school at the same time even if both parents work in this township. So parents tell older children to leave school as they want to educate younger ones and older children lose their right to education due to this situation although they want education.”

Concerning living with a stepparent, one participant spoke about abuse and unfair treatment by a stepparent compared to biological children, and which makes students unhappy at home and they lose interest in school. Another participant talked about a student whose father died of a snake bite, and said that his mother remarried for family’s financial security and he did not get along with his stepfather. Later he lost interest in school lessons and left school. For a family with sickness or disability of a parent, one participant stated that for a family which hugely depends on a father’s income, if a father is sick or physically disabled, students have to share family responsibilities by discontinuing school, and a few such cases happened at the school. Another participant discussed that students leave monastic school and go back home when their mother or father is sick at home. One participant shared about his friend’s experience, “It is my friend’s father. His face was hit by a fan used in farming. He was sent to hospital. She has a 5 year old sister. There is no one at home as her mother has passed away. So she can’t continue school and has to drop out school.”

Parental Discord. Twenty-two percent of all participants believed that parental discord handicaps academic performance of adolescents in Myanmar. One participant discussed that if parents have conflicts, children feel sad, and another participant responded that when parents do not get along, children are not happy at home as well as in school. One participant remarked that some parents argue all the time due to family's financial problems and children are unhappy. They do not do school lessons seriously or play truant. Another participant also commented a similar thing that some parents fight a lot, and children are not interested in school lessons and work outside as they are frustrated with the conflicts at home. One participant spoke about how children take advantage of parental conflicts and how it effects their education. The participant said that some parents fight a lot and cannot supervise their children, so children come to school but do not do homework. The participant continued that some children steal money from their parents and go to amusement parks because their parents are arguing at all times and fail to supervise their activities.

Peer Protective Factors. The interviews and focus group discussions with participants provided two important themes for the question related to peer protective factors that contribute to school success of adolescents in Myanmar. These two themes were categorized into (a) peer social support and (b) resistance to peer pressure.

Peer Social Support. Of all participants, 18% assumed that peer social support is conducive to academic achievement of adolescents in Myanmar. For example, one participant said that his friends told him that he has to do low wage jobs if he leaves high school when he really wanted to go back home as soon as he arrived at monastic school and encouraged him to study hard. Another participant disclosed that he has received

social support from his friend by encouraging him to attend school and study regularly. Another participant described how his friend helped him, “If we don’t study, he reports to our parents. On the exam day I was sick and my friend sent me to clinic.” One participant also spoke about importance of warmth provided by peers, and peers’ warmth motivates students to go to school and to be happy at school. Three participants discussed that disclosing problems to friends lessens their bad feelings. One of them remarked that her friends can provide console and emotional comfort to her in school and she feels very much better after receiving it. Another one noted, “Friends discuss together about whatever things. We can discuss with friends about those that we can’t do with parents. Some discuss with friends as they do not have parents or siblings. Friends can also motivate them to pass the exam. Friends bring success to them.” The other participant stated:

“I have friends whose parents are also divorced. So they encourage me that we are the same. They also said that if other students are outstanding, we also have to be outstanding. We are the same; our parents are divorced; we both don’t have a person who will encourage. Sometimes we tell ourselves that we are shining stars of the country. We make jokes like that but these motivate us a lot.”

Resistance to Peer Pressure. Twelve percent of all participants believed that resistance to peer pressure is a protective factor for academic success of adolescents in Myanmar. One participant perceived that there is no reason for students to leave school if they can control themselves no matter how friends spoil them. Three participants shared how they respond to peer pressure. The first participant said, “There are also friends who

guide us bad directions. I accept what they say but do not follow what they do.” The second participant stated, “My friend who has been suspended for smoking comes and persuades me to smoke. But I don’t listen to him. I have to remember my parents because my parents tell me that I would be looked down by other people if I am uneducated as we are poor. Therefore, I continue school.” The third one mentioned, “I refuse to do so even if my friend asks me whether I would like to smoke, chew betel nuts or drink alcohol.” One participant talked about reading and following guidance of adults which can help students to resist peer pressure, and said, “Those who have read since Grade 6 can resist the pressure no matter how much they are spoiled by their friends because of a combination of their knowledge gained from books and guidance provided by their parents and teachers.”

Peer Risk Factors

In regards to the question about peer risk factors, one central theme emerged from responses provided by participants. The only theme related to peer risk factors that contribute to academic achievement of adolescents in Myanmar is association with peers who have problem behaviors.

Association with Peers who have Problem Behaviors. Of all participants, 74% perceived that association with peers who have problem behaviors interfere academic success of adolescents in Myanmar, and the participants discussed about peers with different problem behaviors. Table 4 presents description of peer problem behaviors and the number of times each type of peer problem behavior mentioned during interviews and focus groups with all participants.

Table 4

Types and Frequency of Peer Problem Behaviors reported by All Participants

Peer Problem Behaviors	<i>f</i>	Peer Problem Behaviors	<i>f</i>
Peers who wander the streets and do not study	7	Peers with negative attitude towards education	2
Peers who go to computer game station	5	Peers who fight	1
Peers who smoke	5	Peers who drink alcohol	1
Peers who chew betel nuts	4	Peers who go to billiard station	1
Peers who use drug	3	Peers who spend time at teashop	1
Peers with romantic issues	3	Peers who violate rules	1
Peers who skip school	2	Peers who have no ambition	1

Materialized from the discussion, one participant remarked that friends who play computer games in school persuade other students, particularly boys to skip school and go to game station, and these friends mainly spoil students. Another participant also talked about some friends who miss classes and wander the streets, and if students continue to maintain friendship with them, they are also likely to follow these friends and to be out of school eventually. One participant spoke about one female friend who was outstanding but lost interest in school after developing friendship with students who are interested in romantic relationships, and later she failed the exam. Another participant described about male students, “Male students smoke with friends and try to test new risk. Then they are not interested in school lessons. A majority of them are like that.”

School Protective Factors. Related to the question about school protective factors that impact academic success of adolescents in Myanmar, contents of participants’

responses make an emergence of four key themes. The themes were grouped into (a) teachers' social support, (b) teachers' learning support, (c) availability of monastic schools, and (d) grant available at government school.

Teachers' social support. Forty percent of all participants mentioned about the significance of teachers' social support in academic performance of adolescents in Myanmar. Teachers' encouragement and warmth (28%), and teachers' readiness to listen to students' problems and understanding them as individuals (12%) were defined as social support by the participants.

Fourteen participants assumed that teachers' encouragement and warmth is an important motivation for students to stay in school. For example, one participant discussed that students need teacher's warmth and encouragement and these two things make them motivated to come to school. This participant also said that students want to attend or are happy at school if they have teachers who provide warmth and encouragement. One participant believed that students will learn more if they are treated warmly by teachers. Another participant also described how teachers provide warmth to students and how it affects students, "A majority of teachers here ask children if they are okay with school supplies, pocket money, and even health. They also provide care. That's why children improve their academics." One participant also shared how teachers' encouragement helped her to continue school and get motivated to study hard:

"I thank Teacher A and Teacher B for encouraging me to study hard. Last year, I felt depressed as I didn't want to attend school together with my juniors. They told me that this too shall pass, and we would regret for not going to school when we enter into adulthood and struggle in the heat while

others are graduated from high school and are working in the shade.”

Six participants believed that students continue school or improve their academic performance if teachers are willing to listen to students’ problems and understand them as individuals. To illustrate, one participant remarked that teachers tell students to disclose if students have any difficulties and that they will help as much as they can, and the participant continued that he, therefore, shares his difficulties with teachers. One participant also noted that teachers convince students not to leave if students tell teachers that they are going to leave school and teachers ask them for reasons. If students don’t want to study, teachers encourage them to study and tell them to come and ask for lessons which they do not understand. Another participant added that if the reason is related with family problems, teachers invite parents, and explain parents that education is important for students and teachers will help resolve the problems together with parents.

Teachers’ learning support. One fifth of all participants noted that learning support provided by teachers plays an essential role to determine academic success of adolescents in Myanmar. The participants talked about four types of learning support, provided by teachers: creating a channel for students to ask lessons, providing supplementary class, school supplies, and financial assistance. One participant stated that students were told to come to office and ask teachers about lessons which they are confused during recess time. Another participant commented that students are provided an opportunity to go and ask teachers about school lessons anytime, and that motivates students to stay in school and study hard.

One participant commented that he is motivated to study hard as his teacher provides supplementary class for them, and another participant added his experience to

the previous comment that they passed the exam as they learned a lot from the extra class provided by teachers. One participant also discussed how teachers provide support to students for their learning and how it is important for students' academic success:

“Through school principal, we invite parents and discuss how we should provide support to these children. If parents can't afford money, school teachers give extra time to students who have a potential to pass Grade 11 exam. We, our high school teachers also support tuition fees together to hardworking students.”

One participant reported that teachers provide school supplies to students who cannot afford to buy, while other two participants brought up financial assistance and school uniforms provided by teachers to poor students.

Availability of Monastic Schools. Sixteen percent of the sample showed a relationship between availability of monastic schools and students' continuation of high school. For instance, one participant stressed that students who continue high school are due to having an access to monastic schools. Another participant noted, “Children can only attend up to middle school in the village. We have to send children to town if they continue high school. We can't afford as it costs more than 1,000,000 kyats. Therefore, we come to the monastic school.” Another participant said that parents do not need to worry much if they send their children to monastic schools because monastic schools provide free education and meals. One participant explained that the monk provides education for children as the monk is worried that children will work outside or collect plastic bottles if they do not receive education, and the monk wants to help them to

escape from the life of collecting plastic bottles. Another participant depicted how students academically succeed from receiving education at monastic schools:

“As there are monastic schools, orphans and children from conflict areas can come and attend at such schools. I have met some children who really tried hard and became graduates. I have met some children who got distinctions in Grade 11. They came from conflict affected areas. Both parents have passed away and there are children who stay at and attend monastic school. There are such students.”

Grant Available at Government School. Of the sample, 14% highlighted that grant available at government schools for poor students and outstanding students maintains students in school. One participant reported that it is a government program and provides monthly grant to poor and outstanding students. Another participant explained that Grade 10 and Grade 11 students receive 10,000 kyats and middle school students get 8,000 kyats monthly until they complete high school. Teachers recommend outstanding but poor students. Although the grant amount is small, it is still a support for poor students. One participant also shared her experience that her eldest daughter had received the grant for 2 years in Grade 9 and 10. Another participant added his experience as well:

“In the present moment, regardless of ethnicity, religion, wealth, not only private schools but also government schools have scholarship programs. I am also attending school on grant. So there is an opportunity to continue school.”

School Risk Factors. Participants provided a variety of experiences and perceptions to the question associated with school risk factors. The range of the participants' various responses developed five principal themes, and the researcher categorized these themes into (a) school discipline practices, (b) school safety, (c) class size, (d) teachers' qualifications and skills, and (e) basic education system.

School Discipline Practices. Of all participants, 62% reported that school discipline practices negatively contribute to academic achievement of adolescents. Related to school discipline practices, 52% of participants indicated three types of discipline methods used by teachers – corporal punishment, verbal reprimands and making negative comments.

Out of three types of discipline methods used by teachers, 20% of all participants spoke about corporal punishment, and teachers beat students if students do not know school lessons or misbehave in the classroom. The participants also believed that corporal punishment discourages children to stay in school. Two participants described that students are scared of teachers because they are severely beaten and are worried that they would be beaten again if they do not know lessons next time, then decided to leave school. Two participants added that students are unhappy at school or frustrated with teachers for being beaten, and that makes them leave school. One participant also depicted her own experience of how corporal punishment leads to school dropouts:

“Some teachers are really bad. Bad means it is my own experience. If two students fight, they don't ask students for the reason of fighting. They beat both students. It is true that we don't have time. We don't have time to listen to where the problem comes from. But we have to resolve the case as much as we can.

Some are not like that. I have experienced that. We don't ask the reasons. It is fault for both students if they fight. If so, it emotionally affects students. Then they become afraid of school. They think that school is not a happy place. It becomes a scary place for them gradually and they don't want to go. They have many excuses for being absent from school. For example, they ask their mother to report to school for sickness. Next day, they continue to be sick. Gradually they are distant from school.”

Another type of discipline methods used by teachers is verbal reprimands, and 20% of all participants noted that teachers scold students in the class as a verbal reprimand for students' misbehaviors, and that grows embarrassment and increase the risk of school dropout. For instance, one participant expressed that there were students who leave school due to being embarrassed after they were scolded by teachers in front of other students. Another participant spoke about a teenage girl who was caught for romantic relationships in school. Teachers scolded her in front of class, and she felt embarrassed, frustrated with teachers, and did not want to meet her friends and come to school. One participant also stated that verbal reprimands of teachers lead to truancy and school dropout:

“Teachers scold for them to be good but they think that teachers scold a lot and do not understand what they say. They also think that teachers beat them all the time. Scold them. They do not want to be home. When they come to school, they are also scolded. Then they do not attend school regularly and also do not go back home regularly. Then they leave school. Later, they are absent from school for many days and teachers invite parents to school and expel them from school.”

One participant raised a point that verbal reprimand in front of the class reinforces bad behaviors which lead a visit to the principal's office and suspension by commenting "Children repeat bad behaviors if teachers always scold them in front of the class. Later, they have to visit the principal's office and they are suspended. I have seen those children." Two participants shared a similar perception and talked about addressing behavior problems by punishing in class which leads aggression and dropout. The participants stated that some students become rebellious or act perversely and stop school as they dislike that teachers scold them.

The last type of discipline methods used by teachers is making negative comments, and 12% of all participants observed that teachers' negative comments hamper academic achievement of adolescents in Myanmar. One participant said, "My friend does not get school lessons and is told by his teacher to leave school if he doesn't know lessons. Then my friend is depressed and leaves school." Another participant spoke about her own experience that they were blamed by teachers if they could not answer lessons. One participant mentioned about a student who was labeled by a teacher as 'useless' due to failing the exam, and that discouraged the student to attend school.

In regards to school discipline practices, 6% of all participants discussed that educators perceive punishment, expulsion and suspension are the best corrective approach for students' problem behaviors. For example, one participant observed that some teachers hold negative attitude towards students with problem behaviors, and they assume that punishment is the best punitive approach, and students are responsible for their misbehaviors and violations of classroom and school rules. This participant shared her own experience to support the observation:

“I want to help delinquent students and guide them not to leave school but some teachers disagree about that. They say that schools are not like jails which accept bad people and supervise them. So this is teachers’ attitude. I am told not to try to maintain students who will find problems at school. So this is opposite to my opinion.”

Another participant reported that they tried to convince school principal one time when she expelled a student, but the school principal did not accept and wanted to use the expulsion as an example for other students. Another participant similarly reported that school principal just expels students as an example.

In relation to school discipline practices, 4% of all participants disclosed that teachers have difficulties in managing delinquent students. One participant shared that she does not have any difficulty in teaching, but it is a challenge for her to control students and she has some technical hitches in addressing student problem behaviors. One participant remarked that many students recklessly gather at betel nut and cigar shops near school when school dismisses, but teachers have to neglect as they do not know how to stop these students.

School Safety. Almost half of all participants mentioned about issues related to school safety, and how school safety issues have constraints on school success of adolescents in Myanmar. School safety issues mentioned by the participants were fighting (6 times), stealing (6 times), verbal abuse (5 times), bullying (4 times), substance use (2 times), and emotional safety of teachers (1 time).

One participant observed that there are cases of students’ fighting at school, and students fight if they do not get along with each other. Another participant shared her

own experience that they have witnessed fighting in school, and the reasons of fighting come from having boyfriend/ girlfriend or pushing against each other at school canteen. One participant remarked that high school students fight a lot at school, “Sometimes Grade 10 students fight with Grade 11 students; sometimes Grade 11 students fight with Grade 9 students; and sometimes Grade 10 students fight with Grade 9 students.”

Another participant also talked about background of students and her safety concerns:

“At this school, a majority of children are from poor families who work as hand-to-mouth. Only a few students are rich. So children are rude and misbehave. It doesn’t mean that there is no child who is clever. There are clever students but children who misbehave more than those who are well-mannered. So it is very challenging for teachers to manage these children. They talk back to teachers. They punch each other if they dislike. They hit with motorbike. I have heard of such cases. I am worried about my safety as well but it is not a good solution to neglect them as I am worried about my safety. We have to scold them to be clever as much as we can.”

One participant shared a similar experience that she beat a Grade 10 student for misbehavior and then the student left the classroom, removed his shirt and swore.

The participants talked about students’ use of substance in school. One participant reported that there are some students who are expelled from school as they are caught using drug by teachers, and another participant also shared expulsion of a student who is caught smoking and chewing betel nuts in school. In addition, the participants discussed

that there are some bullying cases among students. One participant stated that some students bully those who are physically weaker in school.

Class Size. Thirty-eight percent of the sample indicated that class size is a predictor of adolescents' school failure in Myanmar. One participant observed that big class size limits teachers to take care of each student. Another participant added that as there are many students per class, teachers cannot pay attention to individual students. Teachers teach in front of class and do not know what students are doing behind the class. The participants also mentioned about consequences of overcrowded classes. One participant supposed that teachers cannot check students' homework carefully and monitor students' performance closely, so some students are promoted to the next grade without learning well. One participant discussed that some classrooms have 80 students, so teaching is not effective and teachers are exhausted as they have to speak very loudly. If teachers pay attention to individual students, they do not have enough instructional time. Another participant pointed out a similar response that if teachers draw an individual student's attention, school lessons are late and teachers can't finish the course on time. One participant also shared her own experience, "We can manage a classroom if there are only 50 students per class, but now the class has 80-90 students. Classes in some schools even have more than 100 students. So we can't manage alone."

Teachers' Qualifications and Skills. Twenty-four percent of all participants assumed that teachers' qualifications and skills have an effect on academic achievement of adolescents in Myanmar. The participants discussed that students do not learn much and lose confidence if teachers do not teach or explain school lessons well, and that increases the likelihood of leaving school for adolescents in Myanmar. One participant

shared that some teachers write lessons on the blackboard but do not explain them, so students do not understand. Another participant added that some teachers ask students to copy from the blackboard all the time, so students get bored and are not interested in school at all. This also reveals in one participant's experience sharing: "Some teachers do not explain history lessons and ask students to memorize the text. I have experienced that. As students have to memorize all the time, they are afraid of lessons. They are afraid when they think about school lessons. They are not happy at all. So they decide to leave school and choose to work."

One participant described about the importance of teaching mathematics carefully as students cannot learn on their own and observed that some teachers do not explain mathematics very well. The other participant agreed by saying, "Some teachers teach mathematics but students do not understand, so students don't want to do mathematics and are afraid of the subject. They don't want to learn anymore." One participant talked about teachers who are teaching subjects they are not trained on, and the participant gave an example of a biology teacher who has to teach economics as there is no economics teacher in school. As economics is not a biology teacher's expertise, students do not learn very much.

Basic Education System. One fifth of the sample perceived that government basic education system negatively effects educational success among adolescents in Myanmar. Of the sample, 14% spoke about all pass system and the participants believed that all pass system obstructs educational success of adolescents in Myanmar. One participant commented that students don't digest lessons but they are promoted to the next grade because of all pass system. One participant discussed that teachers cannot break this

system because if they fail students who do not perform well, government education officers will ask teachers about the reason, so teachers do not want to face this situation and let every student pass the grade. One participant remarked that some children are promoted to the next level every year although they do not perform well due to all pass system, and they struggle a lot when they reach high school. One participant perceived that it is a system fault and students are victims of this poor system.

In addition to all pass system, 6% of the sample indicated lack of specialized education programs for children in mainstreamed schools in Myanmar. One participant talked about children who have a degree of cognitive disability. The participant said that these children are not useless and they can earn money because they have other strengths but the education system does not have alternative education programs for those students. Another participant noted:

“I have met students with low IQ. Let me give you a student as an example. He cannot catch up with school lessons in a formal school but he has other strengths. He will be fine if there is a program for him to join based on his strengths. Another problem comes from parents. Parents blame him that he does not study hard. Parents compare him with his elder siblings. Parents tell that he is not useful like his elder brother and sister, so they will drop him out of school. We explain parents to understand his limitations but they can't accept as they see their children this way. It depends on parents' knowledge.”

Community Protective Factors. Participants' responses to the question related to community protective factors produced two major themes which were then grouped into (a) neighbors' support and (b) education level of the community. For neighbors' support

that contributes to academic success of adolescents in Myanmar, contents of participants' responses were sub grouped into social support and material support.

Neighbors' support. Fifty-eight percent of all participants believed that there were two types of support from community – social support (38%) and material support (20%) that adolescents in Myanmar receive, and these are helpful for their academic achievement. For social support, six participants mentioned that community members are interested in welfare of students, and the community members report to school, ward authority or parents if they find students walking around the neighborhood in school uniform or sitting at teashop. One participant said that some community members admonish students who they think would accept their words to go to school and they indirectly admonish students who they don't think would accept their words by reporting it to the ward authority. According to two participants, ward authority in their neighborhood was interested in students' affairs. One participant observed that ward authority patrols around school in the morning and in the afternoon while another participant said, "If students from this school fight in the ward, school principal invites ward authority to school and he comes. I have seen his interest in school and students' affairs."

Four participants discussed that neighbors are willing to help students for their education. For example, one participant spoke about a neighbor who brings a student to school when parents are busy. A student participant from the monastic school also mentioned about a community member who recommended him to go and attend at the monastic school as it does not cost very much, compared to government schools and also

encouraged him to continue school instead of leaving. Nine participants mentioned that some community members encourage students to study hard.

For material support, community members provide material support to students who cannot afford to buy in order to help them continue school. The participants mentioned that the material support includes not only school supplies but also financial assistance. One participant perceived that community members help students because they want to raise educated people in their community and they provide financial assistance as well as stationeries. Material support provided by the community is reflected in one participant's words, "There is a senior sister in the community. We are not relatives but this sister always supports me. She buys me a school bag every year and provides school supplies if I need. She gives me 15,000 kyats for 3 months as pocket money. She also gives me 3 sets of school uniform every year. Here at this school, as others said before, meals are not good as school provides meals for many students. So she sends me curries. So I mean this is a support from the community."

Education Level of Community. Eighteen percent of all participants observed that high education level of community members is positively associated with academic success of adolescents in Myanmar. The participants agreed that if adolescents are from the community where many university graduates live, they will get motivated by those university graduates and the percentage of adolescents who will complete high school would be high. One participant described his own experience of living in such a community: "I live in the environment where many university graduates are present, and they are friendly with me like a family. I attend at the tuition they also attended. They guide me. For example, they recommend me to the tuition they attended because it is

good. My parents also encourage me to look at seniors who are hard-working.” Another participant said, “It really depends on the education level of people living in the community. If adolescents see people working at high position, they will figure out what kind of qualifications they would need. Then they will try to get these qualifications.” One participant also spoke about how education level of community affects school success of students. This participant believed that if an adolescent’s environment has many university graduates, he will not choose wrong friends and then there is no reason for him to leave school.

Community Risk Factors. In regards to the question about community risk factors, two main themes emerged from interviews and focus group discussions with participants. Then based on these two themes, contents of participants’ responses were grouped into (a) easy availability of shops and places which are unfavorable to students in neighborhood and (b) youth problem behaviors in neighborhood.

Easy Availability of Shops and Places which are Unfavorable to Students in Neighborhood. Of all participants, 52% believed that there are shops and places in the community which hinder adolescents’ academic success in Myanmar. The participants mentioned about six types of unfavorable shops and places that adolescents can easily reach in the community. In participants’ responses, computer game stations were mentioned 7 times, easy availability of daily wage jobs for children 7 times, teashop 4 times, beer and alcohol stations 4 times, betel nut and cigar shops 3 times, and guest house 1 time.

One participant reported that computer game station is the main reason why students skip school, and students go and play computer game at game station without

coming to school. Another participant agreed by saying, “There are many game stations around this area and if we go inside, we will see many students in school uniform. There are many students who don’t go to school with an excuse of illness and see them at game station.”

The second unfavorable type of place for students in neighborhood, reported by the participants is availability of many places for students to work. The participants believed that as students can get daily wage jobs easily, they just leave school and work. One participant said that there are many blue-collar workers in the community such as those who collect plastics and work as mason, and students assume that they can also make money although they are not educated by seeing those people doing odd jobs. Another participant mentioned, “There are many job opportunities for students in this township and near their environment. There are many workers who go to factory. So even if they are young, they can still work at the factory. Then they are interested to make money if they don’t perform well at school. Instead of being at school, they go and work.”

Teashop is considered by the participants as a third unfavorable place that negatively affects students’ academic achievement. The participants believed that many people at teashop spend their time uselessly chatting and smoking. One participant said that the main reason why students are spoiled by teashops is friending with people who smoke there, and the participant believed that it is not good for students to spend a long time at a teashop. The fourth type of unfavorable place in the community for students is beer and alcohol stations. The participants discussed that beer and alcohol stations are rampant in their community. Two participants believed that beer and alcohol stations

make children more delinquent, and they are a force to bring students to a wrong direction.

The fifth unfavorable place, available for students in the community, mentioned by participants is betel nut and cigar shops. Two participants mentioned that there are shops near school that sell betel nuts and cigars to students, and many students recklessly gather at these shops when school dismisses. Another participant also added that drugs are included in the cigar and sold to students, so students enjoy using them, and they are not happy at school and leaves school eventually.

The last type of place, unfavorable to students in neighborhood is guesthouse. One participant reported that there are guesthouses in the community that lead students to the wrong direction. This participant continued that a student couple got caught in school uniform by the police, and ward authority felt bad as both of them are in school age, but the authorities cannot take effective preventive measures on this issue.

Youth Behaviors in Neighborhood. From responses of participants, 16% of all participants assumed that youth problem behaviors in neighborhood negatively impact academic success of adolescents in Myanmar. The participants described different types of youth problem behaviors that influence students to leave school. One participant considered a possibility of adolescents' being influenced by youth problem behaviors in the community: "If they see youth who collect plastics or marble or play truant or smoke a cigar in the community, 40% of children will be persuaded. No matter how parents control, children are more likely to be swayed by them." Another participant said that when they see adolescents or youth over 20 working and making money, drinking alcohol or doing gambling, they don't know whether it is good or bad but they will learn their

behaviors. The other participant also added that there are adolescents who wander the streets and play computer games, marbles and other types of games in some wards, and students are not interested in studying and want to leave school because they also want to enjoy these activities.

Summary

This chapter presented narrative findings of ecological risk and protective factors that contribute to academic success of adolescents in Myanmar, emerged from the thematic analysis of transcripts collected from interviews and focus group discussions with the participants. As a snapshot of the findings, all the risk and protective factors emerged from this study are illustrated in the ecological risk/protective model in Figure 3. The content of the Chapter Five is constructed with the discussion of implications of study results presented in this chapter and implications for social work practice, policy and research related to the study topic in Myanmar.

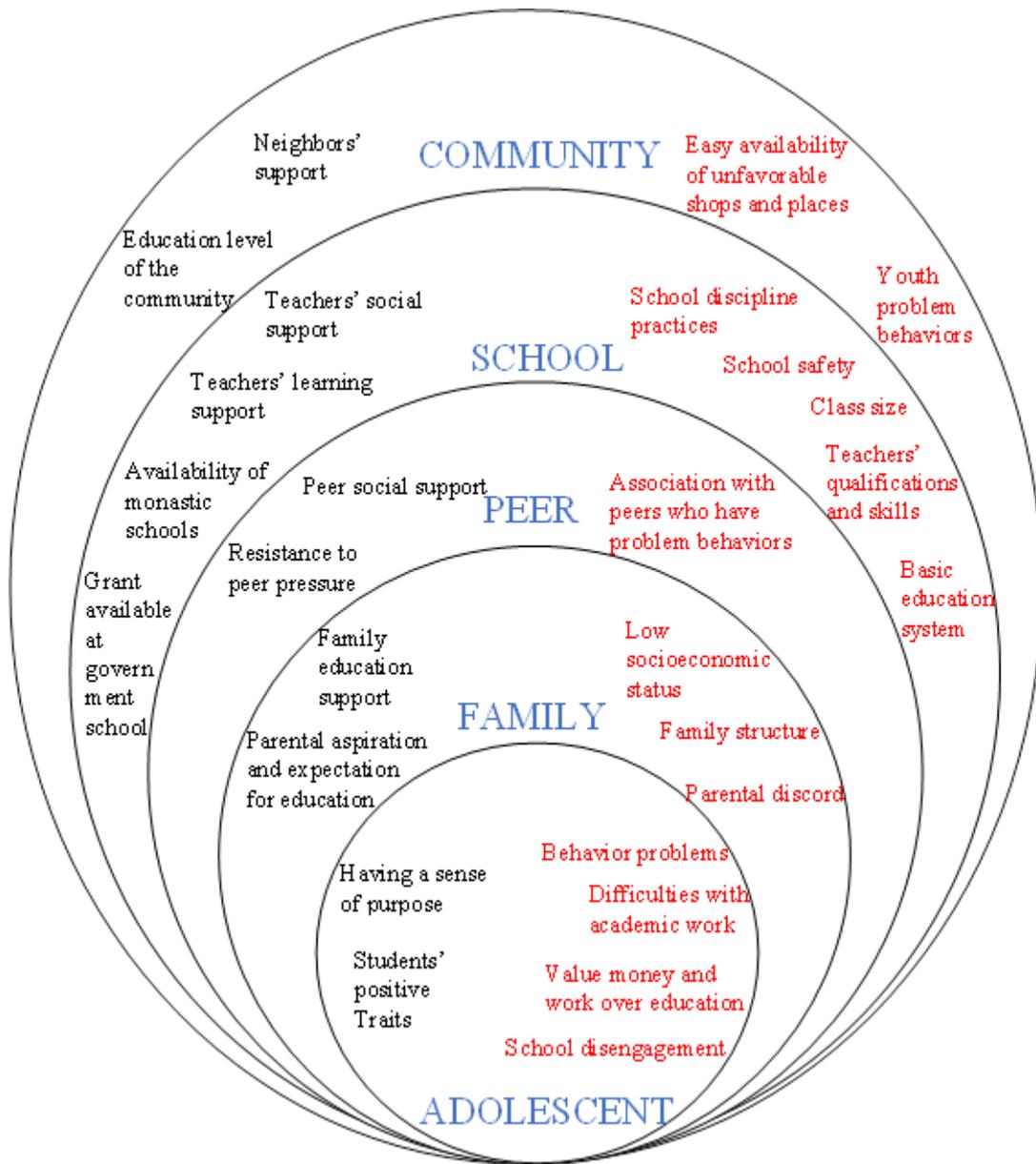


Figure 3. A Snapshot of All Emergent Risk and Protective Factors in the Ecological Risk/Protective Model

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter provides discussion and implications of the findings from the current qualitative study. The chapter begins with a summary of the findings presented in the previous chapter. The second section discusses implications of the qualitative findings through five domains of an adolescent's ecology. The third section presents methodological strengths and limitations of the study. The chapter concludes with implications of the study for social work practice, policy and research.

Overview of the Study Findings

The primary objective of this qualitative study was to identify ecological risk and protective factors that contribute to adolescents' academic success in Myanmar. As previously outlined, the current study used the ecological risk and protective model as a theoretical framework to achieve the study objective. Using the ecological risk/protective model as a theoretical framework, a total of 27 distinctive risk and protective factors which impact adolescents' academic success emerged from the interviews and focus groups with teachers, students and parent participants. The 27 emergent risk and protective factors are displayed in the ecological risk/protective model in Figure 3.

Implications of the Study Findings

This section discusses implications of the findings. The discussion of the implications is presented in the five domains of an adolescents' ecology that contribute to academic achievement of adolescents.

Implications of the Findings for the Individual Context. The findings of this study have important implications for adolescents in the individual context. It is apparent

from the findings that having a sense of purpose and students' positive traits are crucial ingredients to promote academic achievement among adolescents in Myanmar. On the other hand, it is obvious from the findings that not only adolescents' conduct problems but also substance use and romantic issues are associated with school dropout. It also appears evident from the findings that school disengagement and valuing work and money over education hamper adolescents to succeed in school in Myanmar.

A large body of research evidence has documented that responding to students' mental health needs in school is more likely to increase school engagement and school connectedness (Greenberg et al., 2005), decrease emotional and behavioral disorders (Hussey & Guo, 2003), and improve attendance (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2003) and graduation rates (Lehr et al., 2004). Therefore, the findings of the study in the individual context imply that providing school-based mental health services for adolescents in Myanmar could be effective to assist them not only to overcome their behavior problems, substance use and relationship issues but also to improve their school engagement and value education. At the same time, school-based mental health services can strengthen students' sense of purpose and positive traits, which are identified by the study as protective factors. Furthermore, this study has identified that difficulties with academic work is a risk factor for school dropout. To address this risk factor, it is suggested that schools in Myanmar provide extra classes for students with academic problems to improve their academic learning.

Implications of the Findings for the Family Context. The results of the study assert key implications for families. It is evident from the results that family education support, namely older siblings' financial and psychological support, parents' guidance

and encouragement, supervision of homework, and monitoring use of computer game and television, and parental aspiration and expectation for education alleviate the risk of school failure among adolescents in Myanmar. Thus, the researcher suggests schools in Myanmar to provide family education programs to strengthen positive familial characteristics which are critical for adolescents' education such as caring parent-child relationships, effective parenting and parental monitoring.

The results also reveal that low socioeconomic status, family structure such as death of a parent, parental divorce, many children, living with a stepparent, and illness and disability of a parent, and parental discord are the most prevalent risk factors for adolescents' academic achievement. Therefore, the researcher recommends schools in Myanmar to work directly with students and their families and help them to connect with resources at school and in the community when students are exposed to above familial risk factors.

Implications of the Findings for the Peer Context. The study suggests significant implications for peers. The findings of the study demonstrate that support from peers and resistance to peer pressure enables adolescents to succeed in school. The findings also make it evident that association with peers who have problem behaviors is a risk factor for adolescents' school success. Therefore, it is recommended for schools in Myanmar to provide life skills trainings for adolescents in order to develop their social and interpersonal skills.

Implications of the Findings for the School Context. The outcomes of the study provide clear implications for the school setting in Myanmar. The study attributes adolescent academic achievement to teachers' learning and social support, availability of

monastic schools, and grant available at government school. Thus, the results indicate the importance of promoting caring teacher-student relationship and teachers' support.

Moreover, it recommends schools in Myanmar to advocate the government on expansion of grant programs for poor students and outstanding students.

It is also manifest from the outcomes of the study that there are risk factors in the school setting in relation to school safety and school discipline practices. The research participants reported that students get involved in physical fights and substance use in schools. There is no denying that students' problem behaviors are interrupting school safety in Myanmar. Therefore, it is important for schools in Myanmar to create a positive school climate. Previous research studies have shown that a positive school climate is likely to reduce student discipline problems (Thapa et al., 2013), high school suspensions (Lee et al., 2011), and alcohol and drug consumption (LaRusso et al., 2008). For this rationale, school-wide evidence-based program that improves school climate such as positive behavioral interventions and supports, proposed by Sugai and Horner (2006), is recommended to implement in schools in Myanmar in order to reduce students' problem behaviors, promote mental health of students, and create a safe and protective learning environment.

In addition to school safety, the findings of the study indicate that schools in Myanmar use expulsion, suspension, physical and verbal punishment as school discipline methods, and these methods disturb academic outcomes of adolescents. The results of the study also imply that teachers in Myanmar lack specialized skills to address students' problem behaviors because teacher participants reported that they have challenges in managing delinquent students. Therefore, it is suggested that teachers in Myanmar be

provided with not only information such as effective classroom management, positive school discipline, and behavior management strategies to name a few but also direct support to effectively deal with students who display discipline and behavior problems.

The other school-related risk factors revealed from the study are poor qualifications and skills of teachers, overcrowded classrooms and weak basic education system, meaning all pass system and lack of specialized education programs. Related to teachers' qualifications and skills, the delivery of effective teacher training programs and the recruitment of teachers with appropriate degrees are critical. For the risk factors of class size and all pass system, effort is needed on advocacy work to reduce class size and eliminate all pass system. As the country is currently implementing education reform by referring back to the Chapter One, it is important to bring these risk factors to the agenda of education reform process.

In addition, advocacy is required to consider implementation of specialized education programs for children with special needs, so that schools in Myanmar are inclusive of all children. Accordingly, UNICEF's Child-Friendly School Principles, explained in the literature review, should be taken into account in order to address school-related risk and protective factors identified by this study.

Implications of the Findings for the Community Context. The study makes major implications for communities. The results show that neighbors' support and education level of the community make academic gains for adolescents, whereas youth problem behaviors in neighborhood interfere in adolescents' academic success. It also appears obvious from the results that there are shops and places which are unfavorable to students in the community such as computer game stations, betel nut and cigar shops,

teashops, beer and alcohol stations, guest houses, and easy availability of daily wage jobs.

Therefore, these findings suggest an advocacy action to enact minimum legal ages in order to prohibit adolescents from purchasing and consuming betel nuts, cigarettes and liquor, and gaining access to guesthouse rooms since there are no such age limits in Myanmar. The findings in the community domain also recommend community-based interventions that can help at-risk adolescents from committing crime and using substances and promote community resources that ensure academic gains for adolescents. In addition, community leaders are encouraged to create meaningful activities for adolescents to contribute to their community as well as to divert their attention from shops and places unfavorable to them.

Strengths and Limitations

This qualitative study has several strengths to be cited. The first significant strength is using ecological risk and protective model as a theoretical framework. No previous local research has studied the study topic through ecological perspective. Then, the study incorporated strengths-based concept and identified protective factors associated with adolescents' academic success, while strengths-based model is a new concept in Myanmar.

The second significant strength of this study is the size and target of the sample, and the selection of research sites. As the study collected the data from three types of stakeholders which are directly important for the study topic (teachers, students and parents) with a sample of 50 participants, the study generated more in-depth data from different perspectives of the participants. As the study took place at two low performing

schools in a township with high prevalence of social issues, the participants were more willing to share their perceptions and experiences about the topic because they have had some experiences or have been familiar with the phenomenon of the study around their environment.

The third significant strength of this study is taking into account the importance of children and youth participation. As stated in Chapter One, the level of children and youth participation is low in Myanmar due to social norms that expect children and youth to listen and obey adults. As this study collected the data from students, youth participation and their perspectives were valued in this study. The last but not least significant strength of this study is cultural sensitivity. As the researcher is a native Myanmar, it provided a room for the researcher to be culturally sensitive to the research participants and research context. For example, Myanmar people are usually concerned about providing wrong answers and contradictory points of view from the group. Therefore, the researcher helped all participants to engage in the study by letting participants know that there is no right or wrong answer to research questions and everyone can have different opinions on the study topic.

While there were aforementioned strengths in this study, this qualitative study also has some limitations to be outlined. The first limitation of the study is generalization of the results. This study is a qualitative research with only a sample of 50 participants from two schools which are located in the same township of the country. Therefore, the sample cannot represent other schools around the country and the results cannot generalize to the entire student population.

Added to this limitation, both schools are in an urban area, so the sample does not reflect both urban and rural parts of the country. As noted in Chapter One, the country is still struggling with internal ethnic conflicts, but the study failed to identify ethnic conflict as a risk factor for adolescent academic success. It was assumed that the study sites are urban areas of the country in which ethnic conflicts do not occur. Therefore, future studies are suggested to consider a wider selection of schools from both urban and rural areas.

Implications for Social Work Practice, Policy and Research

Findings of this study bring key implications for social work practice, policy and research. As presented in Chapter One, the government and educational administrators pay heed to improving teacher's qualifications and skills, and education system. As a result, current indigenous research body looks into issues related to adolescent school success from educational perspective. As revealed in this study, adolescent academic achievement is either positively or negatively influenced by all domains of an adolescent's ecology (i.e. individual, family, peer, school, and community). Therefore, this study highlights the first implication for social work practice that a multidimensional perspective is critical in assessing the needs of adolescents.

The second significant implication for social work practice is using protective factors in children and youth programs in Myanmar. As discussed earlier in Chapter One, protective factor is a new concept in the country, so this study is an initial step for the country's children and youth programs to incorporate protective factors in their work.

Another important implication for social work practice is a need of school social work services for adolescents in Myanmar. According to the School Social Work

Association of America (2006), the role of school social work is to identify and address systemic barriers that impede the ability to learn through connecting schools, families and communities. The findings of the current study indicate that schools in Myanmar are dealing with not only academic underachievement but also non-academic barriers that arise from an adolescent's environment. The findings also imply that teachers are alone and responsible for solving these barriers. It is the view from this study that initiating school social work program in Myanmar can alleviate barriers to learning and make a positive impact on adolescents' education.

At the policy level, there are several important implications. The first key policy implication is integrating social work programs in government and monastic schools in order to create a safe and supportive learning environment for adolescents. The results of the study indicate that schools in Myanmar are using corporal punishment, and that negatively affects academic achievement of adolescents. By referring back to Chapter One, physical punishment of children is legal in Myanmar because child law tolerates this practice. Therefore, the second crucial policy implication would be advocating for child law amendment to protect children from physical punishment.

Based on the findings of this study and discussions of the scholars in the literature review, low socioeconomic status of families is seen as a risk factor that comes collectively with another risk of child labor in Myanmar. Therefore, another major policy implication is proposing effective implementation of child labor laws in the country and considering formulation of compulsory school attendance laws in the current education reform. In addition, it requires policy attention in the current education reform to adopt

effective approaches to discourage adolescents and their families to enter the labor market before adolescents complete high school.

Although this study has identified several risk and protective factors that impact academic success in an ecology of adolescents in Myanmar, there are still recommendations for future social work research related to the study topic. To help students to maintain at school, it is crucial to identify students at risk of dropping out. By now, the study has provided an assessment framework and a knowledge base of existing risk and protective factors associated with academic success in Myanmar. With reference to risk and protective factors identified by this study, the next step will therefore be to design a quantitative assessment tool and conduct in-depth assessment which identifies students with the highest risk of school failure at the school level.

The second research area to expand based on the results of this thesis will be to look at school domain only and identify schools with high dropout rates. As a result, social workers and education administrators can reach out to those schools and implement dropout intervention programs at school level.

Conclusion

School failure among children and adolescents has long been a serious social and economic issue in Myanmar. The recent data indicate that a large number of adolescents do not complete high school. As a consequence, they lose prosperous work opportunities and ability to earn an adequate income. This further leads to human capital loss for the country. Therefore, the issue of school failure is costly not only for individuals who leave school but also for the country at large. The recent education statistics also suggest that Myanmar urgently needs to improve high school graduation rates. Therefore, the

government and educational administrators have put efforts on this agenda by studying the factors of school failure through educational perspective. However, school failure is an interweaving issue which needs a holistic view to accurately understand the factors behind it. Therefore, this study used an ecological perspective and looked at the issue of school failure via multiple systems in which adolescents involve. This study has explored and noted numerous risk and protective factors in the ecology of adolescents (i.e. individual, family, peer, school, and community) that impact adolescents' school success in Myanmar. It is anticipated that the findings of this study will serve as a starting point to inform policy and practice interventions at manifold ecological levels that can ameliorate adolescents' school failure in Myanmar.

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APPENDIX A
INFORMED CONSENT FORMS

Informed Consent Form for Teachers

Title of Project: Ecology of Adolescent Risk and Protective Factors that Contribute to Academic Success in Myanmar

Researcher: Zayar Lynn, Graduate Student
Arizona State University, School of Social Work

Email: xxxxx@asu.edu

Phone: XXX-XXX-XXXX

Address: XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Introduction:

My name is Zayar Lynn. I am a graduate student at Arizona State University. I am conducting a research study for requirement of the master degree. The research study is titled “Ecology of Adolescent Risk and Protective Factors that Contribute to Academic Success in Myanmar”.

You are invited to participate in the research study because you are a teacher of Grade 10 at XXX school. This consent form provides detailed information to help you decide if you want to participate in this research study.

Purpose of the Study:

The purpose of this research study is to investigate factors that contribute to the academic success of adolescents in government and monastic schools in Myanmar. Therefore, this study seeks to identify specific factors within individual, family, peer, school, and community that contribute to the academic success by understanding experiences and perceptions of students, parents, and teachers.

Significance of the Study:

The research is expected to provide a benefit to future development of interventions and programs that promote academic growth for adolescents. The research data may also be useful for various stakeholders, including educators and policymakers who are trying to improve academic outcomes for students.

Study Methods:

If you consent to participate, I will ask you to complete a demographic questionnaire which includes questions about age, sex, ethnicity, education, etc. and participate in 60-90 minute individual interview that contains 8 interview questions about your experiences and opinions related to factors that impact adolescents’ academic success.

Interviews will be audio taped to assist me record your answers. You feel free to ask me to turn off the recorder at any time if you feel uncomfortable. And please be aware that confidentiality will be maintained through the study.

Risks:

There are no anticipated risks for this study.

Confidentiality:

The identities of participants will be strictly preserved confidential. Participants' responses and the name of the school will be anonymous throughout the study. All research materials will be saved at the researcher's home in locked or password-protected files. Only the researcher will have access to these research materials, and they will be destroyed after the study is completed.

Incentives:

You will receive a pen as a token of appreciation for your participation.

Voluntary Participation:

Your Participation in this study is voluntary. There is no negative consequence for deciding not to participate in the study. You may withdraw from the study at any time without any penalty. If you decide to participate in the study, you have the right to refuse to answer any particular question during the interview.

Contacts and questions:

If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact the researcher named above or the researcher's faculty advisor, Dr. Judy Krysik at xxxxx@asu.edu or XXX-XXX-XXXX.

If you decide to participate in this research study, please indicate your consent by signing your name with the date below.

Signature of Participant

Name of Participant

Date

Informed Assent Form for Students

Title of Project: Ecology of Adolescent Risk and Protective Factors that Contribute to Academic Success in Myanmar

Researcher: Zayar Lynn, Graduate Student
Arizona State University, School of Social Work

Email: xxxxx@asu.edu

Phone: XXX-XXX-XXXX

Address: XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Hello,

My name is Zayar Lynn. I am a graduate student at Arizona State University. I am conducting a research study for requirement of the master degree. The research study is titled “Ecology of Adolescent Risk and Protective Factors that Contribute to Academic Success in Myanmar”.

This research study you are invited to participate will investigate factors that contribute to the academic success of adolescents in government and monastic schools in Myanmar. If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate together with other 5 students in 60-90 minute focus group interview. I will ask you to complete a demographic questionnaire which includes questions about age, sex, ethnicity, education, etc. prior to the interview and then I will ask you 8 interview questions about your experiences and opinions related to factors that impact adolescents’ academic success.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. There is no negative consequence for deciding not to participate in the study. You can withdraw from the study at any time without any penalty as well as to refuse to answer any particular question during the interview. You can still refuse to participate in the study even if your parent has provided permission for your participation.

Interviews will be audio taped to assist me record your answers. You can ask me to turn off the recorder at any time if you feel uncomfortable. And please be aware that confidentiality will be maintained through the study. That means no one will know your answers. All research materials will be saved at the researcher’s home in locked or password-protected files. Only the researcher will have access to these research materials, and they will be destroyed after the study is completed.

You will receive a pen as a token of appreciation for your participation. If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact the researcher named above or the researcher’s faculty advisor, Dr. Judy Krysik at xxxxx@asu.edu or XXX-XXX-XXXX.

If you understand the information above and decide to participate in the study, please write your name and sign with the date below.

Name of Child

Signature of Child

Date

Parental Permission Form

Title of Project: Ecology of Adolescent Risk and Protective Factors that Contribute to Academic Success in Myanmar

Researcher: Zayar Lynn, Graduate Student
Arizona State University, School of Social Work

Email: xxxxx@asu.edu

Phone: XXX-XXX-XXXX

Address: XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Dear Parent or Guardian,

My name is Zayar Lynn. I am a graduate student at Arizona State University. I am conducting a research study for requirement of the master degree. The research study is titled “Ecology of Adolescent Risk and Protective Factors that Contribute to Academic Success in Myanmar”.

The purpose of this research study is to investigate factors that contribute to the academic success of adolescents in government and monastic schools in Myanmar. Therefore, this study seeks to identify specific factors within individual, family, peer, school, and community that contribute to the academic success by understanding experiences and perceptions of students, parents, and teachers.

If you give permission to your child to participate in this study, your child will get a chance to participate together with other 5 students in 60-90 minute focus group interview. The researcher will ask each student 8 interview questions about their experiences and opinions related to factors that impact adolescents’ academic success.

Your child participation in this study is voluntary. There is no negative consequence for deciding not to let your child participate in the study. Your child will be told to withdraw from the study at any time without any penalty as well as to refuse to answer any particular question during the interview. Your child can also refuse to participate in the study even if you consent to their participation.

Interviews will be audio taped to assist me record interview answers. Your child can ask me to turn off the recorder at any time if he/she feels uncomfortable. And please be aware that confidentiality will be maintained through the study. The identities of participants

will be strictly preserved confidential. Participants' responses and the name of the school will be anonymous throughout the study. All research materials will be saved at the researcher's home in locked or password-protected files. Only the researcher will have access to these research materials, and they will be destroyed after the study is completed.

If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact me at the researcher named above or the researcher's faculty advisor, Dr. Judy Krysik at xxxxx@asu.edu or XXX-XXX-XXXX.

If you give approval to your child to participate in this study, please indicate your consent by providing the name of your child, signing your name with the date below.

Name of Child

Signature of Parent or Guardian

Date

Informed Consent Form for Parents/Guardians

Title of Project: Ecology of Adolescent Risk and Protective Factors that Contribute to Academic Success in Myanmar

Researcher: Zayar Lynn, Graduate Student
Arizona State University, School of Social Work

Email: xxxxx@asu.edu

Phone: XXX-XXX-XXXX

Address: XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Introduction:

My name is Zayar Lynn. I am a graduate student at Arizona State University. I am conducting a research study for requirement of the master degree. The research study is titled "Ecology of Adolescent Risk and Protective Factors that Contribute to Academic Success in Myanmar".

You are invited to participate in the research study because you are a parent/guardian of a Grade 10 student at XXX school. This consent form provides detailed information to help you decide if you want to participate in this research study.

Purpose of the Study:

The purpose of this research study is to investigate factors that contribute to the academic success of adolescents in government and monastic schools in Myanmar. Therefore, this study seeks to identify specific factors within individual, family, peer, school, and

community that contribute to the academic success by understanding experiences and perceptions of students, parents, and teachers.

Significance of the Study:

The research is expected to provide a benefit to future development of interventions and programs that promote academic growth for adolescents. The research data may also be useful for various stakeholders, including educators and policymakers who are trying to improve academic outcomes for students.

Study Methods:

If you consent to participate, I will ask you to complete a demographic questionnaire which includes questions about age, sex, ethnicity, education, etc. and participate in 60-90 minute focus group interview that contains 8 interview questions about your experiences and opinions related to factors that impact adolescents' academic success.

Interviews will be audio taped to assist me record your answers. You feel free to ask me to turn off the recorder at any time if you feel uncomfortable. And please be aware that confidentiality will be maintained through the study.

Risks:

There are no anticipated risks for this study.

Confidentiality:

The identities of participants will be strictly preserved confidential. Participants' responses and the name of the school will be anonymous throughout the study. All research materials will be saved at the researcher's home in locked or password-protected files. Only the researcher will have access to these research materials, and they will be destroyed after the study is completed.

Incentives:

You will receive a pen as a token of appreciation for your participation.

Voluntary Participation:

Your Participation in this study is voluntary. There is no negative consequence for deciding not to participate in the study. You may withdraw from the study at any time without any penalty. If you decide to participate in the study, you have the right to refuse to answer any particular question during the interview.

Contacts and questions:

If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact the researcher named above or the researcher's faculty advisor, Dr. Judy Krysik at xxxxx@asu.edu or XXX-XXX-XXXX.

If you decide to participate in this research study, please indicate your consent by signing your name with the date below.

Signature of Participant

Name of Participant

Date

APPENDIX B
DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

Demographic Questionnaire for Teachers

Please answer the following questions. Your answers will be maintained strictly confidential.

Personal Information

1. Age: _____
2. Sex: _____
3. Ethnicity: _____
4. Education (highest degree received): Please select one below.
 - a. High School Diploma
 - b. Bachelors Degree
 - c. Masters Degree
 - d. Doctorate Degree
5. What is your current occupational status? Please select one below.
 - a. Working part time
 - b. Working full time
6. Number of years you have been teaching in this school: _____
7. Number of years you have been working as a teacher: _____

Demographic Questionnaire for Parents/Guardians

Please answer the following questions. Your answers will be strictly maintained confidential.

Personal Information

1. Age: _____
2. Sex: _____
3. Ethnicity: _____
4. Education (highest degree received): Please select one below.
 - a. None
 - b. Primary School
 - c. Middle School
 - d. High School

- e. High School Diploma
- f. Bachelors Degree
- g. Masters Degree
- h. Doctorate Degree

Child Information

- 5. Which school does your child attend? _____
- 6. Which grade did your child get in his or her Grade IX exam last year? _____
- 7. Any awards your child has received from Grade I to the present:

Demographic Questionnaire for Students

Please answer the following questions. Your answers will be strictly maintained confidential.

Personal Information

- 1. Age: _____
- 2. Sex: _____
- 3. Ethnicity: _____
- 4. What is your current occupational status? Please select one below.
 - a. Not Working
 - b. Working part time
 - c. Working full time

Educational Information

- 5. Which school do you attend? _____
- 6. Which grade did you get in your Grade IX exam last year? _____
- 7. Any awards you have received from Grade I to the present:

Parental Information

8a. Education of Mother (highest degree received): Please select one below.

- a. Unknown
- b. None
- c. Primary School
- d. Middle School
- e. High School
- f. High School Diploma
- g. Bachelors Degree
- h. Masters Degree
- i. Doctorate Degree

8b. Occupation of Mother: _____

9a. Education of Father (highest degree received): Please select one below.

- a. Unknown
- b. None
- c. Primary School
- d. Middle School
- e. High School
- f. High School Diploma
- g. Bachelors Degree
- h. Masters Degree
- i. Doctorate Degree

9b. Occupation of Father: _____

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE AND FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONNAIRE

Interview Schedule for Teachers

1. *Tell me about yourself as a teacher at XXX school.*
2. What **individual characteristics**, in your experience or opinion, **encourage/ discourage** adolescents **continue or get promoted to** high school in Myanmar?
3. In your experience or opinion, what **family characteristics** do you believe **encourage/ discourage** adolescents **continue or get promoted to** high school in Myanmar?
4. In your experience or opinion, what **peer characteristics** do you think **encourage/ discourage** adolescents **continue or get promoted to** high school in Myanmar?
5. In your experience or opinion, what are **the roles of teacher** that **encourage/ discourage** adolescents **continue or get promoted to** high school in Myanmar?
6. In your experience or opinion, what **school characteristics** do you believe **encourage/ discourage** adolescents **continue or get promoted to** high school in Myanmar?
7. In your experience or opinion, what are **the roles of community** that **encourage/ discourage** adolescents **continue or get promoted to** high school in Myanmar?
8. Is there anything else that you would like to tell me that could be important and useful for my study?

Focus Group Questionnaire for Students

1. *Tell me about yourself as a student at this school.*
2. What **individual student characteristics**, in your experience or opinion, **encourage/ discourage** adolescents **continue or get promoted to** high school in Myanmar?
3. In your experience or opinion, what **kinds of things in the family** do you believe **encourage/ discourage** adolescents **continue or get promoted to** high school in Myanmar?
4. In your experience or opinion, what **kinds of friends** do you think **encourage/ discourage** adolescents **continue or get promoted to** high school in Myanmar?
5. In your experience or opinion, what **kinds of teachers** do you think **encourage/ discourage** adolescents **continue or get promoted to** high school in Myanmar?
6. In your experience or opinion, what **kinds of schools** do you think **encourage/ discourage** adolescents **continue or get promoted to** high school in Myanmar?
7. In your experience or opinion, what **kinds of things in the community** do you think **encourage/ discourage** adolescents **continue or get promoted to** high school in Myanmar?
8. Is there anything else that you would like to tell me that could be important and useful for my study?

Focus Group Questionnaire for Parents

1. Tell me about yourselves as a parent and your child who is attending at this school.
2. What **individual characteristics**, in your experience or opinion, **encourage/ discourage** adolescents **continue or get promoted to** high school in Myanmar?
3. In your experience or opinion, what **family characteristics** do you believe **encourage/ discourage** adolescents **continue or get promoted to** high school in Myanmar?
4. In your experience or opinion, what **peer characteristics** do you think **encourage/ discourage** adolescents **continue or get promoted to** high school in Myanmar?
5. In your experience or opinion, what are **the roles of teacher** that **encourage/ discourage** adolescents **continue or get promoted to** high school in Myanmar?
6. In your experience or opinion, what **school characteristics** do you believe **encourage/ discourage** adolescents **continue or get promoted to** high school in Myanmar?
7. In your experience or opinion, what are **the roles of community** that **encourage/ discourage** adolescents **continue or get promoted to** high school in Myanmar?
8. Is there anything else that you would like to tell me that could be important and useful for my study?

APPENDIX D
RECRUITMENT FLYER

Ecology of Adolescent Risk and Protective Factors that Contribute to Academic Success in Myanmar

The following script/text will be printed on the flyer to announce the study and recruit participants.

Research study about Ecology of Adolescent Risk and Protective Factors that Contribute to Academic Success in Myanmar. Seeking Grade 10 teachers/ Grade 10 students/ parents/guardians of Grade 10 students from XXX school.

Participants will engage in a 60-90 minute interview/ a 60-90 minute focus group interview and share about their experiences and opinions related to factors that impact adolescents' academic success. Interviews will be audiotaped and responses will be coded to maintain confidentiality. Participants will receive a pen as a token of appreciation. Interested participants should call the researcher at 09-430-44723 or email zlynn1@asu.edu.

Zayar Lynn
MSW Student
Arizona State University
xxxxx@asu.edu
XX-XXX-XXXXX

APPENDIX E
IRB APPROVAL LETTER

APPROVAL: EXPEDITED REVIEW

Judy Krysik
 Child Welfare, Center for
 602/496-0086
 Judy.Krysik@asu.edu

Dear Judy Krysik:

On 7/4/2017 the ASU IRB reviewed the following protocol:

Type of Review:	Initial Study
Title:	Ecology of Adolescent Risk and Protective Factors that Contribute to Academic Success in Myanmar
Investigator:	Judy Krysik
IRB ID:	STUDY00006319
Category of review:	(6) Voice, video, digital, or image recordings, (7)(b) Social science methods, (7)(a) Behavioral research
Funding:	None
Grant Title:	None
Grant ID:	None
Documents Reviewed:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appendix C Interview Guide.pdf, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions); • Appendix A Informed Consent.pdf, Category: Consent Form; • Appendix B Demographic Questionnaire.pdf, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions); • IRB for Ecology of Adolescent Risk and Protective Factors that Contribute to Academic Success in Myanmar.docx, Category: IRB Protocol; • Appendix D Flyer.pdf, Category: Recruitment Materials;

The IRB approved the protocol from 7/4/2017 to 7/3/2018 inclusive. Three weeks before 7/3/2018 you are to submit a completed Continuing Review application and required attachments to request continuing approval or closure.

If continuing review approval is not granted before the expiration date of 7/3/2018 approval of this protocol expires on that date. When consent is appropriate, you must use final, watermarked versions available under the “Documents” tab in ERA-IRB.

In conducting this protocol you are required to follow the requirements listed in the INVESTIGATOR MANUAL (HRP-103).

Sincerely,

IRB Administrator

cc:

Zayar Lynn