Mongolian Social Workers' Perceptions of Protective Factors against Child Maltreatment

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Abbreviations

CPS	Child Protection System
CCS	Council of Civil Service
ISPCAN	International Society for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect
LPCR	Law on the Protection of Children Rights
MPDSP	Ministry of Population Development and Social Protection
NAC	National Authority for Children
NCC	National Council for Children
NSC	National Security Council
SC	Save the Children
UNCRC	United Nations' Convention of the Rights of the Child
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

Glossary

Aimag	Largest administrative unit of the state, equivalent to a province and capital city. Administratively, Mongolia is divided into twenty-one provinces and one capital city of Ulaanbaatar.
Bag	Smallest administrative unit in the provinces of Mongolia
District	District is a subdivision of the city of Ulaanbaatar. Ulaanbaatar city has 11 districts as of 2013.
Child maltreatment	A range of abusive and neglectful acts perpetrated by adults or older youth against children. Child maltreatment involves physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect and emotional maltreatment (Trocme 2008).
Ger	Traditional dwelling of Mongolians. It is portable and easy to transport and maintain. The key components of ger include: wooden frames, felt covers, two columns that hold a smoke hole on the top of ger and door. The size of ger depends on number of wooden frames.
People's hural	The people's hural is a meeting of the representatives elected by local residents. The people's hural approves policies and strategic directions and budget of the local government and monitors local government.

Khoroo	Smallest administrative unit of Ulaanbaatar, capital city of Mongolia. Ulaanbaatar had 152 khoroo in 2013.
Legislation	Legislative acts including the laws, orders and policies released to enforce the implementation of the laws.
Soum	Soum is a subdivision of aimag, may be equivalent to a village. Each soum is further divided into bags, representing the smallest administrative unit in the province.

Abstract

Social work is a relatively new profession in Mongolia. Over the 15 years of its existence, Mongolian social workers have made significant achievements as well faced challenges in terms of establishing social work schools and introducing social work practice in different sectors. Social workers have advocated for their own niches in different sectors and have set up social work services in several public sectors such as in schools, social welfare agencies, primary health clinics, and correctional facilities in Mongolia. Following the same pattern of development as the profession, a decade ago the positions of social workers and welfare officers were created at the smallest administrative units of Ulaanbaatar known as a khoroo. Over the decade, khoroo social workers and welfare officers have gained acceptance and been legally recognized as important players in addressing various social issues such as domestic violence, child abuse and poverty etc.

The child protection system is underdeveloped and is a new phenomenon in Mongolia as in other developing countries. The Government of Mongolia ratified the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child in the early 90s and adopted a number of legislative documents in compliance with the requirements of the convention. As arms of the government agencies at the community level, khoroo social workers and welfare officers play key roles in delivering social services at the community level. However, due to the newness of the profession and child protection services, social workers at the khoroo level encounter challenges in delivering social work services and addressing complex social issues such as child maltreatment.

This study aims to examine Mongolian social workers' perceptions of protective factors for children under 6 years of age. Using mixed methods, the study was conducted in Ulaanbaatar, the capital city of Mongolia. There were 254 participants who worked as social workers and welfare officers. They held positions as coordinators or members of multi-disciplinary teams at the smallest administrative units of Ulaanbaatar, a khoroo. Ecological and phenomenological perspectives offered an opportunity to analyse data collected via survey and

interview, with a view to understanding relationships between social workers' background and their perceptions about protective factors at various levels of the human ecology. The findings revealed that from a list of twenty protective factors, factors that were the most agreed upon by the participants were parental and family related. These included the existence of a happy relationship between parents, maternal warmth, and the quality of child rearing conditions. In addition to these protective factors, preserving the cultural values of protecting children was highly regarded. Their application of protective factors to their practice appeared more often informed by their own social and family contexts rather than by their education in social work and welfare. The research findings also provided insight into social workers' lived experiences regarding understanding and using protective factors in their daily practice, which might reflect the strengths and challenges of the newly developing profession of social work in Mongolia. Therefore, the findings are important for the future development of social work education and practice for working with children, families and communities in Mongolia.

Keyword: social work, prevention, protective factors, children and families.

Declaration

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

Batkhishig Adilbish Date 03/06/2015

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CHAPTER 1: Introduction

Statement of the problem

Protecting children from child abuse and neglect is one of the responsibilities of the State Parties who ratified the United Nation's Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC). The Government of Mongolia was one of the first ten of 194 countries to ratify the convention when it was introduced in 1990. Although nearly all countries across the world have ratified the UNCRC and expressed their commitment to protect the child from different types of child maltreatment, the incidence of child abuse and neglect remain prevalent in each. The International Society for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (ISPCAN) conducted a survey conducted of 73 countries of which 40 countries responded to questions about the prevalence of child maltreatment prevalence. More than half of the responding countries advised that "child maltreatment had increased over the past four years" reflecting "increases in physical, sexual, emotional abuse and neglect" (ISPCAN, 2014). The survey concluded that on a global level many parents and caregivers who supposedly protect the child from different types of child maltreatment use violent physical punishment and psychological aggression to discipline their children (UNICEF, 2014b). What this indicated is that practices in relation to child protection were not necessarily similar across countries that have subscribed to the same moral ideals informing the rights of the child.

If one looks at the available figures from Mongolia, and compares these figures with other countries in terms of child maltreatment, the total percentage of the use of violent discipline among parents in Mongolia stands at 46, disaggregated by gender of parents at 48% and 43% for female and male parents respectively (UNICEF, 2014b). In comparison to the other countries of the region, this Mongolian figure is relatively low (UNICEF, 2014c), but it does not indicate that Mongolian children are in a better situation. Instead, this figure indicates that almost half of the Mongolian respondents who participated in the study see it as acceptable to use harsh physical punishment and psychological abuse to correct children's behavior, which is a violation of children's human rights (UNICEF, 2014c).

A child protection system that includes statutory child protection services is a relatively new phenomenon in Mongolia. The Government of Mongolia, international human rights organisations and national nongovernment agencies collaborated to introduce child welfare and protection initiatives by contributing their support to build a child protection system that would be able to prevent and respond effectively to child maltreatment. The formulation of legal responsibilities and roles of newly introduced social workers in the response to domestic violence and the protection of children's rights was a part of these initiatives. Social workers' involvement in developing multidisciplinary approaches towards child maltreatment was another initiative supported by both government and nongovernment agencies. However, the responses by these agencies and the social services provided to cases of known child maltreatment are somewhat ad hoc rather than characterised by a systemic approach that is responsive and preventative, informed by theory and evidence, and seamless.

When child protection system and its components are underdeveloped, it is helpful for social workers to have knowledge and practice of using various protective factors in preventing and protecting children from different forms of child maltreatment. Studies indicate that services delivered by trained professionals are one of the key elements of prevention of child maltreatment (ISPCAN, 2014). In addition, formal and informal supports that complement the existing available resources for families and communities to strengthen their protective environments have been suggested as the most effective and preventative resources for the protection of children. There is a rich literature available globally which focuses on child protective factors and on understanding perceptions of different child protection elements, but only a limited literature exists in terms of child protective environments in the context of Mongolia. At the same time increasing concerns related to the recruitment of non social work practitioners in the positions of social workers in Mongolia raise questions of whether social worker's educational and demographic background has affect on her understanding about protective environment of children and families. Although the profession of social work and its education are relatively new in Mongolia, the Standard of High Education on Social Work (2010) requires the inclusion child of protection course in both bachelor and master programs on

social work that should be covering theoretical and practical knowledge and skills to protect children from different forms of child abuse. Therefore, it was assumed that qualified social workers would be more frequently agreeing with protective factors than nonqualified social workers. The rationale for the second assumption was based on that social workers' formal knowledge and experience in social work contribute to their better understanding about child protection concepts.

Based on the literature reviews on the protective factors of children under 6 years of age, and the studies on social workers' perceptions and social work, the researcher of the current study formed the following assumptions for examination in the current study:

1. Qualified social workers more frequently agree with protective factors than nonqualified social workers.

2. Social workers' education and experience in social work practice are more likely associated with their agreement with protective factors than their age or gender.

As the first of its kind, the current study seeks to understand Mongolian workers' perceptions about child protective factors. In seeking to find ways to protect children from maltreatment, it is expected that the findings of the current study will contribute to the development of a workforce that has the capacity to contribute towards building a safe and child friendly environment for children in Mongolia.

Research aims and questions

The research aims to examine social workers' perceptions of the protective factors of children under six years of age in the light of social workers' demographic, educational and professional background. The research addressed the following main research question: "In what ways are social workers' perceptions of child protective factors associated with their background?"

To respond to this main question, the researcher addressed four research sub-questions. These questions were as follows:

- What are the most agreed and least agreed protective factors?
- What are the associations between demographic, educational and occupational characteristics of social workers and their perceptions of protective factors?
- How do social workers describe the most and least agreed protective factors?
- What explanations can be found to indicate why some protective factors are agreed as more frequently than others?

To achieve the research aims and respond to the research main and sub-questions, the following four objectives were addressed:

1. To define distributions of perceived factors that protect young children from maltreatment;

2. To examine associations among frequencies and distributions of commonly perceived protective factors and the demographic and educational characteristics of social workers;

3. To understand social workers' rationale for agreeing with certain factors as more protective than others;

4. To develop recommendations for further development of child protection research, social work education and practice.

Significance of the study

In the context of Mongolia

Upon ratifying the UNCRC in 1990, the Government of Mongolia expressed a willingness to promote children's rights and build a safe, child friendly environment in collaboration with international and national child rights agencies. As a country with young population, Mongolia has 907,000 of children under 18 years of age, which is around 30 per cent of the total population (UNICEF, 2014b). Mongolia has guaranteed the protection of children and their families in its Constitution by providing the article of 16 that states, "the State shall protect

the interest of the family, motherhood and the child (Constitution of Mongolia, 1992). In addition, child protection and rights issues are regulated by over 300 state laws in Mongolia (Olonbayar et al., 2010) such as: the Law on Protection of the Rights of the Child, the Law on Social Welfare, the Law on Health, the Law on Labour, the Law on Family, the Law on Criminal Procedure and the Law on Prevention and Protection against Domestic Violence. All components of the child protection system such as child protection laws, coordinating mechanisms, centralized data systems, trained professionals and preventative and responsive services are at early stages of development (Olonbayar et al., 2010; Dorjpurev et al., 2015).

Child protection initiatives have included drafting an independent law on child protection, establishing a central data system on child well-being, legal acceptance of the roles of newly introduced social workers in advocacy and child protection on behalf of the child, establishment of institutions and groups for social work education and practice and children's rights and welfare. Khoroo social workers are employed by the government at the front line and are frequently involved in the translation of policy initiatives to the work they do. At the same time, social workers at the khoroo level have become an access point for state service providers for families and communities, in particular for families whose children under 6 years of age are not involved in any activities such as kindergarten, preschool or school.

The current study is the first comprehensive piece of research that has investigated protective factors in Mongolia. By virtue of khoroo social workers' roles in translating government initiatives into practice, their relationship with other service providers, and their work with the community, the current study is well placed to strengthen the social workers' responsive work and support their development in preventative approaches to child protection in Mongolia. It is envisaged that a developed understanding of khoroo social workers, including their approach to working with families and communities to strengthen child protective environments, will enable strategic advancements in the following areas:

- Introducing protective factors for children and reducing risk factors of

child maltreatment;

- Supporting preparation of a skilled workforce such as qualified social workers and trained multidisciplinary team members by sharing findings and recommendations of the study;
- Contributing in the development of data and research on child protection and social work;
- Introducing concepts of protective factors in legislative and policy documents; and
- Contributing to public awareness of the factors that protect children and application of these factors in practice.

As one of only a few studies of its kind that is written in English, this thesis and subsequent publications will introduce the interaction of perceptions of protective factors within the Mongolian social work context to the international community. In doing so, it will become a reference for international communities working in the area of child protection and social work with communities that are culturally divergent.

Structure of the thesis

Chapter 2 introduces the demographic and political features of Mongolia and important components of the child protection system of Mongolia. An overview is provided of the child protection laws, coordinating mechanisms, service and responses, the skilled child protective workforce, and resources and public support. The newly developing profession of social work and its establishment in the context of Mongolia is described, covering both social work education and practice aspects. Following the local context of the development of social work in Mongolia the researcher reviews the existing studies on the global definitions of the social work profession and the models of social work knowledge, values and skills that are relevant to the current study. Overall, Chapter 2 provides both local and international contextual information about of the child protection system and social work profession.

Chapter 3 informs about the studies on the selected twenty protective factors against child maltreatment at three levels of human ecology including micro, exo and macro levels. These studies explore protective characteristics and effects of the selected factors on the children under six years of age against child maltreatment. In addition, previous studies on social workers' perceptions on topics related to child protection are introduced. Overall, the chapter introduces some of the international scholarly written background for the current study.

In Chapter 4, the researcher introduces two distinctive theoretical perspectives that guided the mixed methods with an explanatory sequential design. These theoretical perspectives are the ecological theory of human development, and phenomenology. The features and concepts of ecological theory on human development introduced by Bronfenbrenner and its application in child maltreatment research are described. There follows a brief outline of the different perspectives of phenomenology. Finally, an explanation of how the two theories work together and complement each other in providing a conceptual boundary is provided.

In Chapter 5, the researcher introduces the research design and methodological aspects of the current study. The research design section lists again the research assumptions, research aim, and questions, and provides descriptions of the rationale for selecting a mixed method with an explanatory sequential design. The chapter includes descriptions of both the quantitative and qualitative research phases of the current study. In addition, Chapter 5 provides an explanation of the methodology of the current study including the quantitative and qualitative recruitment and sampling strategies, ethical considerations, methods of data collection and analysis of distinct quantitative and qualitative research data. The chapter ends with a discussion of the validity and reliability of research findings and, finally, the limitations of the current study.

In Chapter 6, the researcher presents the findings from both the quantitative and qualitative data analyses consistent with the explanatory sequential design of the mixed methods. First presented are the quantitative results covering findings of the univariate and bivariate analyses which examined the general tendency of agreement, distributions and polarizations of each of the twenty protective factors,

as well as the associations between the social workers' perceptions and their backgrounds. Further examination of the qualitative results provided the participant social workers' explanations of key quantitative factors and their experiences of using protective factors introduced by social workers.

In Chapter 7, the researcher discusses both the quantitative and qualitative findings of the current study in relation to existing studies on protective factors for children against maltreatment, social work education and practice, and the local contexts of Mongolia. Discussions of the research findings cover five topics: first, the general trend of perceived protective factors; second, most versus least agreed protective factors; third, the associations between social workers' perceptions and their background; fourth, the use of protective factors in the practice; and, finally, explanations of why some factors are agreed more frequently than others.

Chapter 8 presents the conclusions of the current study. Recommendations are made for further directions of child protection research and social work education and practice.

CHAPTER 2: Overview of the Mongolian and International Contexts

This chapter consists of three major sections. The first section contains a description of the existing child protection system in Mongolia and its components, which reflect recent social and political changes. The second section comprises an overview of the newly developing profession of social work and its establishment in the context of both social work education and practice. The third section reviews the studies on the various definitions of the social work profession, the blended models of social work knowledge, values and skills. In consideration of the wide use of the international definition of social work among Mongolian social work educators and practitioners, and the lack of a national definition of social work, the overview of local and international contexts ends with a review of studies of different international models of social work knowledge, values and skills that have been introduced and cited by Mongolian educators and scholars.

Mongolian context of the child protection system

Demography

Mongolia is a landlocked country bordered by the Russian Federation in the north and by China in the south. According to the latest national census data of 2010, the total population of Mongolia is 2.784 million with a male to female ratio of 48.9% and 51.1% respectively (NSO, 2011). The population is relatively small compared to the area of the country, which is 1.5 million square kilometres. However, due to the lack of infrastructure and poor public services in rural areas, internal migration from rural areas to urban areas has increased. The largest cities of Mongolia, Ulaanbaatar, Darkhan and Erdenet, have become overpopulated and are experiencing their own problems arising from insufficient infrastructure and public services to cope with rising demands. The capital city, Ulaanbaatar, has experienced the largest population growth and this has resulted in added complexity involving environmental health problems (Neupert et al., 2012) and insufficient child and family services such as kindergartens, schools and health

clinics. Consistent with the latest census data, 2010, over 68% of the total population of Mongolia is located in urban regions including Ulaanbaatar's share of 44% (Neupert et al., 2012). The latest census data is old but the migration trend from rural to urban has continued to grow. The population density in Ulaanbaatar in 2011 was 246 persons per square km compared to the average population density across the country at 1.7 persons per square km (NSO, 2011). Popular Mongolian images of nomadic people dispersed across expansive lands are changing due to these trends of rural to urban population migration.

The population of Mongolia is considered to be relatively young. Approximately 27% of the county's population is less than 14 years of age, 69% is between 15 to 64 years of age and less than 4% of the population is aged 65 or above (NSO, 2011). The largest age group in the population pyramid is the 20 to 24 years of age group (Neupert et al., 2012). The high prevalence of certain groups of people (for instance the working age group) is explained as a demographic window. Spoorenberg (2008) argued that "the demographic window at the Mongolian population pyramid can be prolonged and be beneficial to sustain economic and social development by population policy if policy makers want" (p. 1). Most women of this age group marry and have their first child and are more likely to have children aged from 0 to 4 years of age (Neupert et al., 2012). This largest group of young adults are healthy and potentially productive citizens who bring economic benefits to families and communities, but parents with young children face challenges when competing for the limited employment opportunities in rural and city regions. Young people in rural areas may struggle economically; those who migrate to the city in search of work suffer weakening of their family and social support network (UNDP, 2000). These complexities present challenges for young families in Mongolia.

According to the 2010 national census data, the households with children aged from 0 to 6 constitute 41% out of the total of 713 thousand households with children aged 0-18 (Byamba & Sodbaatar, 2011). These statistics show that families with children younger than 6 years of age account for a large proportion of the families with children under 18. Approximately 10% of the total households are families headed by single parents, 62% are nuclear families, 24%

are extended and 2% are mixed families. The average size of a household is 3.6 persons (NSO, 2011). These statistics show that the majority of Mongolian children live with their parents in nuclear families, but children in a quarter of the total households live with parents and grandparents or relatives in extended families (NSO, 2011).

In regard to urban households, approximately 65.9% live in apartments or houses and 32.7% live in ger (NSO, 2011), which is the traditional dwelling and a valuable heritage of nomadic Mongolians. In Ulaanbaatar and other cities, regions have been set aside for ger dwellers who have migrated from rural areas to the cities and are no longer nomadic. There is a shortage of apartments, and those which are available are most often unaffordable. This has given rise to large ger communities on the outskirts of Mongolia's cities. Problems exist for individuals living in these regions due to limited or zero access to the central water supply, while sanitation is poor. Ger dwellers carry water from public water tanks or wells and need to buy coal for their heating during the winter. In contrast, urban families who live in apartments have adequate access to central water supplies, sanitation and most have central heating. Most migrants and many young urban families who cannot afford to purchase or rent apartments, build gers in either remote or crowded areas located primarily in the north, east and west districts of Ulaanbaatar city.

Ulaanbaatar city views

A view of the central and southern parts of Ulaanbaatar city where modern buildings and apartments dominate. Source: GLM/Getty, Breathtaking: World's 25 Most Beautiful and Polluted Sunsets in 2011, www.bloomberg.com

A view of a ger area in the northern part of Ulaanbaatar city. Source: Carlo Barria, Inside of Mongol's ger area, reuters.com

Additionally, families with young age children in ger areas have limited access to playgrounds, kindergartens and other services to support children and families. Although the Government of Mongolia and the City Municipal Office address the issues resulting from migration and city growth in collaboration with international donors and non-profits organisations, the gap between those who have and those who do not have access to adequate public facilities and services is extensive.

Administration and government structure

Mongolia is divided into 22 administrative regions, consisting of the capital city of Ulaanbaatar and 21 aimags. Representing the different levels of government, each aimag has approximately 15-20 soums, which can be conceptualised as equivalent to a village, and each soum is further divided into bags. Bags are the smallest administrative unit in each province. The capital city, Ulaanbaatar, is divided into nine districts and each district is further divided into khoroo, which are the smallest administrative units of the city. There are 152 khoroo in the city of Ulaanbaatar, and these vary in size depending on the population. According to the City Office of Statistics, the smallest khoroo has up to 2,515 residents and the largest has more than 17,540 residents (City Office of Statistics, 2013). On average, 8000 residents live in each khoroo. As frontline government employees, khoroo social workers and welfare officers play important roles in implementing state laws and policies.

Mongolia has a multi-party political system united by a parliamentary and

presidential government. According to the Constitution of Mongolia (1992), the political structure of Mongolia consists of legislative, executive and judicial branches of government. People directly elect a president every four years and, once elected, he or she resigns from party membership to take up this role. While primarily a symbolic role, the president has the power to block parliamentary decisions and is Chair of the National Security Council. In the role of Chair, the president provides general managerial supervision to the Council within the framework of relevant legislation and provides guidance to relevant national security agencies (Law on National Security, 2001).

The head of the legislative branch of Mongolia is the parliament, composed of 76 members who are elected by people from different parts of the country every four years. The majority party forms the prime ministers' cabinet. The parliament has the power to enact legislation, strategic national policies, and to ratify or reject international agreements (Constitution of Mongolia, 1992). For example, the Government of Mongolian ratified the United Nation's Convention of the Rights on Child in 1990 (UNICEF, 2009). After this ratification the Parliament of Mongolia passed the Law on the Protection of Children's Rights in 1996.

The parliament made several amendments to the Law on the Protection of Children's Rights during the period between 2003 and 2008. One of these amendments allowed social workers to advocate on behalf of the child at court and to other institutions when concerned about issues relating to a child's situation, risks or violation of rights. However, children's rights advocates and officials in charge of children's issues were critical of the Law on the Protection of Children's Rights because it was too general and not adequate for addressing the complex issues relating to child protection and the protection of children from different types of maltreatment. State officials, in collaboration with children's rights advocates and donor agencies, developed an independent child protection law that specifies the roles of social workers and protective services, which has been recently submitted to parliament. Khoroo social workers and welfare officers currently use the Law on the Protection of Children's Rights, which was initially designed to protect children' rights in general. This law, however, does not provide sufficient guidance to social workers on how to address the unique

and complex issues of child maltreatment.

The leader of the majority party becomes the Prime Minister and he/she nominates cabinet members in consultation with the president and parliament. The cabinet consists of the prime minister, deputy prime minister and 17 additional cabinet members (Government of Mongolia, 2014). The Prime Minister nominates the city mayor and the governors of aimags in consultation with the people's hural at the city and aimag. In addition to other leadership roles, the Prime Minister also chairs the National Council for Children. This body seeks to ensure inter-sectoral involvement and commitment in protecting children's rights. The National Council for Children is composed of the incumbent representatives from governmental, public and religious organizations, private entities, political, social and cultural leaders and individuals. The National Council develops and coordinates the implementation of state policies regarding the development and protection of children, which includes the mobilisation of social resources via the coordination of activities involving the community, organizations, private entities and individuals.

The National Authority for Children provides daily administrative support to the Council under the supervision of the Ministry of Population Development and Social Protection. The Authority is responsible for the implementation of child development and child protection policies that are reflected in the government agenda and reports its activities to the Minister of Population Development and Social Protection and the National Council for Children. The Ministry of Population Development and Social Protection also overviews the development and implementation of the policies on social welfare and population issues (NAC, 2014). This structure of inter-sectoral councils for children applies to all levels of government. The city mayors and governors of aimags fulfil the roles of Chair on councils for children in the smaller administrative units. Departments and divisions of the governors' offices in charge of children and family issues at city and aimag level manage the daily administration of the councils. Officials at city offices provide managerial guidance and supervisions to district officials in charge of children, families and social welfare issues. District officials of the divisions for population development and welfare provide managerial guidance

and supervision to khoroo social workers and welfare officers.

At the community level, the khoroo governor and governor's office staff serve the community in consultation with khoroo people's hural. The district governor, who is governor at a higher level of administration, appoints khoroo governors. Bag and khoroo governors have responsibilities to respond to requests from children and families and ensure the implementation and enforcement of the Law on the Protection of Children's Rights. On behalf of the state they make decisions and refer requests to relevant institutions or authorities. In addition, the khoroo governor's office conducts surveys of the children within the relevant administrative unit, provides information about children's situations to the governors at higher levels and relevant organizations, and organizes activities to support children in especially difficult circumstances (Law on the Protection of Children's Right, 1996). Khoroo social workers and welfare officers assist the khoroo governor in carrying out the above-mentioned duties in their respective areas.

The Government of Mongolia created the position of khoroo social worker in 2001 by renaming and re-organizing the duties of khoroo organizers in response to the proposal of the National Authority for Children (Sukhbaatar, Dorjpurev, & Namdaldagva, 2008; Tserendorj & Terbish, 2007) ensuring protection of children's rights at khoroo level. Soon afterwards the city separated the khoroo organizer's roles from social worker's roles and in 2005 funded the two separate positions of khoroo social worker and khoroo organizer (Tserendorj & Terbish, 2007). Starting from 2008 through 2011, welfare agencies extensively recruited welfare officers for the positions of khoroo social workers due to the implementation of extensive welfare assistance under amendments of Law on Social Welfare. Legally both khoroo social workers and welfare officers at khoroo governors' offices are called social workers, but they are employed by two different agencies having two different titles and salary rates.

Khoroo social workers became responsible for social and welfare issues of families and children and the provision of protective services to children and families in collaboration with multi-disciplinary teams. Khoroo welfare officers are responsible for providing monetary welfare assistance to children and families

based on eligibility criteria under the framework of the Law on Social Welfare. Both of these social workers play important roles in delivering public services to children and their families and have become state frontline practitioners in the protection of children from different types of maltreatment.

Child protection system and its components

The child protection system is complex, reflecting various aspects of social and legal regulations. According to Pouwels, Swales, Mccoy and Peddle (2010, p. 3) the term "child protection" refers to all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to prevent and respond to all forms of child maltreatment. They identified the following primary functions for a national child protection system:

> (1) Formulate child protection laws, policies, procedure and guidance to regulate, register and inspect services and service providers; (2) provide technical support and advice; (3) provide strategic leadership, coordination and direction; (4) set standards, provide training and accredit professional staff; and (5) collect and collate and analyse data and plan. (Pouwels et al., 2010, pp. 13-14)

The researcher of the current study found that this definition with its focuses on the functions of a child protection system is relevant for reviewing the context of child protection systems in countries where structures and protective services for children and families are at early stage of development. In particular, Pouwels and his colleagues' description of a child protection system is based on a systems approach, with the children's rights perspective of UNICEF. Similar to Pouwels and his associates' descriptions of each component of a child protection system, Save the Children also places emphasis on the functions of the following components of a national child protection system: (a) child protection law and policies; (b) coordinated system; (c) centralized data; (d) a range of preventative and responsive child friendly services; (e) a skilled and committed child protection workforce; (f) adequate and appropriate resource and allocations; and (g) public awareness and support (Save the Children, n.d.). The researcher found that these components of a child protection system were helpful in reviewing the functions of the existing child protection system in Mongolia - the context in which khoroo social workers and welfare officers operate to protect children from maltreatment.

Existing laws and strategy on child protection in Mongolia:

A local evaluation team with the assistance of UNICEF drafted an initial mapping of the child protection system in Mongolia in 2011. The team located 350 children's rights related provisions across 300 of Mongolia's acts of law (Olonbayar, et al., 2011). The most commonly cited and referenced acts of law were the Law on Protection of Children's Rights, the Law on Detention of Unsupervised Children, the Law on Domestic Violence, the Family Law, the Law on Education, the Law on Social Welfare, the Law on Crime and Prosecution, the Law on Vocational Education, the Law on Child Allowance and the Civil Law (Olonbayar, et al., 2011). The government's first national strategy for strengthening child protection in Mongolia (2010-2015), in collaboration with international children's rights organisations and local agencies, commenced with the drafting of independent legislation on Child Protection, including amendments to existing laws.

Khoroo social workers and welfare officers are expected to be familiar with the legislation in at least the areas of children, families and social welfare. The process for a social worker to gain employment as a khoroo social worker involves an entry exam that requires knowledge of relevant legal acts and policies. This exam can be challenging for social workers because 350 provisions related to the rights of the child are spread across 300 of Mongolia's acts of law. Nevertheless, it was considered necessary that khoroo social workers know, understand and are able to apply complex legislation and policies to their child protection work.

The Law on the Protection of Children's Rights (1996) is the primary legislation for social workers in their practice of protecting children's rights, including rights of survival, protection, development and participation. The main human rights principles are stated in Article 4 of this legislation, as follows:

> Respect and ensure the rights of each child, his/her parents, caregiver and legal guardians without discrimination on the basis of their race, language, colour, age, sex, social origin, status, place of birth, property, job, position, religion, opinion, education and health condition;
>
> The state, individuals, private entities and organisations recognize the best interest of the child in their all actions;

> Parents, caregivers and legal guardians are equally responsible for ensuring physical, mental and moral development and education of the child;
>
> Ensuring a child's right to survival, development protection and participation to social life is a duty of both state and family;
>
> A child's rights to seek and receive information, to freedom of association and religion, to reside abroad and return to their home country should not conflict with the State security of Mongolia, others' rights, freedom and health, public order and national ethics. (Mongolian Law on the Protection of Children's Rights, 1996, Article 4)

The Law on the Protection of Children's Rights was constructed by transplanting into Mongolian legislation the UNCRC on the rights of children to survival, protection, development, and participation. The Law provides a general framework to implement and monitor the UNCRC, but state mechanisms to protect children from different forms of abuse and exploitation are not clearly identified. The Law, therefore, provides general directions for child protection legislation, policy and practice development and cannot be conceptualised in the same way that acts of law are commonly understood in Western nations. For example, Article 10 states:

> To develop state policy on the protection of the rights of the child;
>
> To ensure the implementation of laws and regulations on the protection of the rights of the child;
>
> To take actions to develop, adopt and implement a national program and action plan on the child development and protection of the rights of the child;
>
> To support and assist training, leisure, mass media, care, nursing and detention centres for children with jurisdiction to develop and protect children. (Law on Protection of Children's Right, 1996, p. Article 10)

The government's power at the national level involves developing state policies and regulations as well as monitoring the implementation of laws and regulation on the protection of children's rights. When the power of the government devolves to the lower systems of governance, power to monitor the implementation of children's rights, collect data, respond to and refer requests to other organizations rests with the khoroo governments. The details relating to khoroo level governance are stated in the Law on the Protection of Children's Rights as follows:

> To monitor activities of the families, parents, carers and legal guardians regarding the implementation of the legislation on the protection of children's rights and review their requests, make decision and refer their requests to relevant institutions or authorities for solution of the request;
>
> To conduct a survey on children's situation in his/her respective area and provide relevant information to authorities at the higher level, district or city and organize assistance to those children who are in especially difficult circumstances.
>
> Other powers prescribed in the law and regulations. (Mongolian Law on the Protection of Children's Rights, 1996, Article 11.3)

The general description of the duty of the government to ensure the implementation of children's rights does not provide clear guidance around the provision of protective services when children are at risk of abuse and neglect. Instead, the Law on the Protection of Children's Rights provides a general framework for the implementation of children's rights. There are however a few articles in the Law on Protection of Children's Rights that are relevant to the functions of khoroo social workers and welfare officers. One of them is related to the provision of welfare services to children in particularly difficult circumstances. When formal and informal assistance is allocated through a khoroo governor's offices, the khoroo governor and social worker support children in difficult circumstances based on the following definition:

> Children, who are full orphans or with disabilities, in the street, or suffer from mental and physical damages due to physical, mental and sexual abuse, or doing a work dangerous for their health and life, are considered as children in the especially difficult circumstances. (Mongolian Law on the Protection of Children's Rights, 1996. Article 15.2)

According to this law children in especially difficult circumstances are eligible to receive the state's assistance, which extends to education, health service and services to meet their special needs free of charge. Families that adopt these children are eligible to receive state assistance. The provisions allow for the government to engage children in especially difficult circumstances in care services and, when applicable, transfer children into state care centres. The Law on Social Welfare contributes legislation on the provision of monetary and other welfare assistance to children in especially difficult circumstances and their families. Thus, khoroo social workers and welfare officers often use the Law on Social Welfare as the legal endorsement to provide monetary assistance via

welfare agencies and referral to other available services for disadvantaged children and their families.

The government's first and current national strategy for strengthening child protection in Mongolia (2010-2015) articulated a number of strategic directions that were approved by the National Council for Children on 25 May 2010 (National Council for Children, 2010). The government's aim was to improve legislation, management, funding, and partnerships in child protection, articulated as the following four objectives:

(1) to strengthen management and funding of child protection;

(2) to strengthen child protection services and coordination;

(3) to improve children's participation in child protection;

(4) to strengthen child friendly and responsible partnership (National Council for Children, 2010).

The significance of this strategy was highlighted at three levels of responses to child protection issues. These included prevention, treatment rehabilitation and immediate responses to serious child abuse, neglect and exploitation cases based on the following five principles:

(1) to ensure the safety and use of a children's rights based approach;

(2) to support children in their families or places which are similar to their families;

(3) to develop child protection partnerships;

(4) to deliver result based, effective professional services;

(5) to respect the best interest of the child in consideration of age, gender and development appropriateness.

The roles and responsibilities of child protection agencies remain unclear in the strategy. The draft strategy and consultations around the strategy on child protection covered the need to develop sequential child protection services from

receiving child abuse reports through to evaluations of the delivery of protection services that are based in branch offices and the community centres of the National Authority for Children (Borkhuu, Adilbish, & Undrakh, 2009). Instead, the strategy included activities management and funding, partnership and coordination of protective services under each of the three levels of child protection responses (prevention, treatment rehabilitation and immediate responses). Under the objective to develop immediate responses, the strategy prioritized the following activities:

(1) develop hospital based one stop shop or service;

(2) extend protective services addressed to unsupervised and abandoned children applying multidisciplinary team approach;

(3) provide free child hot line assistance to children in collaboration with government and non-government agencies;

(4) pilot models of immediate child protection services at soum and district levels;

(5) support contract based immediate child protection services provided by non-government agencies, NGO network and private agencies;

(6) include child protection components in an emergency preparedness plan (National Council for Children, 2010).

For the improvement of management and coordination of child protection services, there were two provisions to guide the work of khoroo social workers. The first was to support multidisciplinary teams through governors and people's hurals via the use of the existing mechanisms. The second required the implementation of in-service training and social safety net programs for social workers. Overall, the government strategy on child protection (2010-2015) provides strategic aims, principles and directions to strengthen child protection in Mongolia. This was a much needed and a honourable endeavour, but in practice implementation of strategic aims remains a struggle.

Coordinating mechanism

According to the Law on the Protection of Children's Rights, three government agencies play key roles in coordinating and monitoring children's rights issues in Mongolia. First, the National Council for Children chaired by the Prime Minister approves the state policies on the development and protection of children and

ensures inter-sectoral involvement in protecting children's rights. Secondly, the Ministry of Population Development and Social Protection overviews the development and implementation of the state legislation on population development and social welfare issues. As a cabinet member, the Minister of Population Development and Social Protection operates under the guidance of the National Council for Children that is chaired by the Prime Minister. Thirdly, the National Authority for Children operates as a secretariat office for the National Council for Children. The National Authority for Children is charged with the implementation of child development and protection policies under the guidance of the Ministry of Population Development and Social Protection as the implementing agency of the government. The National Authority for Children has offices in 21 provinces and in the capital city of Ulaanbaatar. The State Office for Social Welfare also operates under the Ministry of Population Development and Social Protection. It has independent offices in each of the 21 provinces and in the city of Ulaanbaatar. This structure allows the three government bodies in charge of children and family issues to operate with a top down and hierarchical approach.

While the khoroo governor oversees the implementation and monitoring of children's rights in his or her respective area, the khoroo social worker is responsible for the implementation of child development and protection issues. Welfare officers take care of the implementation of social welfare legislation at the khoroo level. On the one hand, khoroo social workers and welfare officers operate as arms of the government agencies and are responsible for the implementation and monitoring of the children's rights. On the other hand, the expansive geographical area of work and pressure resulting from the urgent mandates imposed by higher levels of government often compel khoroo social workers and welfare officers to function in an ad hoc manner as opposed to having time to think about prevention and protectiveness when they deal with child protection issues.

The Law on the Protection of Children's Rights and the Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence prioritizes children's rights and identifies the responsibilities of public officials at primary administrative units such as *khoroo* and *bag*, and

signifies the importance of participation and cooperation with non-government agencies and the public (Lkhagvasuren & Davaa, 2010). Furthermore, national programs based on the above mentioned laws emphasise the importance of collaboration among professional service providers at the primary level of state administration, khoroo and bag, to deliver child protection services in a timely, accessible and effective manner (Lkhagvasuren & Davaa, 2010). Professionals and researchers involved in piloting and developing a multidisciplinary team approach in Mongolia, advocate for a strong legal foundation for the establishment and operation of multidisciplinary teams.

The multidisciplinary team approach to responding to child abuse and neglect was championed at children's hospitals in Pittsburgh, Los-Angeles and Denver in the USA during the 1950s. Since that time, child protection multidisciplinary teams have become an integral part of hospital based and community based child protection services (Lalayants & Epstein, 2005, pp. 435-436). The Mongolian approach to child protection via multidisciplinary teams was adapted from international models and introduced by humanitarian agencies working in collaboration with the Mongolian government in 2003. Via a collaborative approach, services to victims of child abuse and neglect are delivered by team members and focus on assessment and delivery of collaborative interventions. The constitution of multidisciplinary teams is the governor, social workers, welfare officers, a family doctor, police and representatives of NGOs or local community groups concerned about child protection and protectiveness of children in their community.

Over the last ten years, international agencies in Mongolia have introduced and supported the concept of a multidisciplinary team approach. Local governors released official orders requiring the establishment of multidisciplinary teams. First multidisciplinary teams were established in each *soum* of Dornod aimag and in each khoroo in Ulaanbaatar (Lkhagvasuren & Davaa, 2010). Since the government employs most of the multidisciplinary team members (khoroo governors, social workers, welfare officers, police and family doctors) it was essential for other team members to have permission from the government authorities officially to join the multidisciplinary team. Khoroo social workers, as

the coordinators of the multidisciplinary teams, have the authority to engage outside involvement when specific assistance is required to respond to child abuse and domestic violence cases at the khoroo level.

The National Program on Preventing and Combating Domestic Violence of 2007 highlighted the important roles of multidisciplinary team members and approved the operation of multidisciplinary teams in the field (Lkhagvasuren & Davaa, 2010). Since 2010 the performance contracts of city mayors and aimag governors with the deputy prime minister have included the goal to develop and strengthen multidisciplinary teams in his or her respective areas. The commitment of all the local officials demonstrated good will towards the development of a multidisciplinary team approach to child protection. Based on the increased evidence of child abuse risks among children who are being exposed to domestic violence, a number of international donor agencies have extended their support to multidisciplinary teams in child protection. Initiatives of the Save the Children and National Centre Against Violence to support the multidisciplinary teams were mirrored in subsequent support from the United Nations Children's Fund, the Norwegian Lutheran Mission and World Vision International Mongolia.

The latest study on multidisciplinary teams conducted by Khishigsuren Lhagvasuren and Saruul Davaa in 2010 found that collaboration and joint efforts are needed at inter-ministerial and policy levels to determine the scope, regulation and coordination of services expected to be undertaken by multidisciplinary team members (Lkhagvasuren & Davaa, 2010). The benefit of a multi-disciplinary team approach is that it helps khoroo social workers to use appropriate inter-sectoral expertise in dealing with child abuse and domestic violence and, therefore, provide a strengthened response. Across the multidisciplinary team, there is the potential for improvements in knowledge and understanding about protective services and different types of available resources in the communities where they work. Most importantly, it is recognised that communities, and families with children have benefitted from prompt and coordinated service of frontline professionals of the multidisciplinary team at khoroo level (Lkhagvasuren & Davaa, 2010).

Services and responses

When Olonbayar and his team (2011) conducted an evaluation of child protection system mapping, they noted that the agencies in charge of the implementation of child protection policies responded to the issues of child protection as part of social protection or population issues, although it appeared on paper that these agencies planned and carried out many activities under the broad scope of child protection. By contrast, the establishment of child protection services at the local khoroo level was evaluated as successful due to the financial and technical assistance of the international donor agencies (Olonbayar, et al., 2011, p. 39). While governors at all administrative levels are charged with the protection of the rights of the child and are required to ensure the implementation and monitoring of children's rights in their respective areas, it appears that the capacity to fulfil these responsibilities at some levels of government remains undeveloped. As a result, the National Authority for Children and its branch offices in the city and aimag have provided most of the technical assistance and direction to professionals involved in child protection.

Government departments in Mongolia address child protection issues differently, depending on the directions and duties related to their respective ministerial portfolios (Olonbayar, et al., 2011). This means that frontline workers such as khoroo social workers, police officers, school social workers, teachers and family doctors receive different guidance according to the government department to which they belong. Multidisciplinary teams have brought together what was previously a siloed approach to child protection, into a unified, cooperative and coordinated response to child protection. (Lkhagvasuren & Davaa, 2010). As the result of continual support from international and national NGOs, the roles and coordination among multidisciplinary team members at khoroo and soum level has become clearer (Olonbayar, et al., 2011, p. 39) and this offers a solid foundation for further strengthening of the child protection system.

While khoroo welfare officers target groups who may be in need of welfare benefits, khoroo social workers provide direct and referral services to individuals and families identified as being in need. Each type of officer is employed by different government agencies. For instance, when khoroo social workers are

employed by the city municipal and khoroo welfare officers are employed by the state welfare agency, the frontline practitioners, in particular the khoroo social workers, have no specific funding allocated for their services, and therefore, much reliance is placed on the financial support of charities and humanitarian agencies.

The study by Khishgsuren Lhagvasuren and Saruul Davaa in 2010 described the existing practice of multidisciplinary teams in selected areas of Mongolia. Their survey focused on the scope of activities, achievements and weaknesses of existing multidisciplinary teams. The sample consisted of 45 team members from Ulaanbaatar city and Dornod province, and 23 officials in charge of child protection and development issues in various ministries and state agencies (Lkhagvasuren & Davaa, 2010). The main activities of multidisciplinary teams were the identification of families with high risk of domestic violence (51.1%), provision of social services to victims and families (40.0%), provision of basic counselling services (35.6%) and dissemination of information on multidisciplinary teams to the public (33.3%). Activities such as awareness raising (8.9%) and improvement of collaboration skills among multidisciplinary team members (2.2%) constituted a small proportion of their overall work (Lkhagvasuren & Davaa, 2010, p. 3). These findings indicate that the joint assessment of risks of domestic violence and provision of social work services are key activities for multidisciplinary team members.

Findings of Lkhagvasuren and Davaa's (2010) study showed that to deliver their services, multidisciplinary team members selected high-risk households and used broad assessment criteria to determine family needs and to coordinate a holistic approach to intervention, considering all aspects related to the children and families. The main criteria used to select high-risk households were low income, lack of employment and alcohol addiction. These criteria appeared to be consistent with two leading factors of child maltreatment that were found by American social welfare professionals: substance abuse and child poverty (Kamerman & Kahn, 2008). Lkhagvasuren and Davaa found that 50-60 percent of multidisciplinary members services were welfare services and 30-40 percent focused on attitudinal change, motivation enhancement, training, counselling and some medical examination and diagnostic services (Lkhagvasuren & Davaa,

2010, p. 3). The study confirmed that most of the multidisciplinary team members relied on available social welfare services in support of families with young children; fewer team members provided training and counselling for attitudinal change and motivation enhancement as this required specific skills and knowledge informed by studies in social work or other related disciplines.

Skilled and committed child protection workforce

Child protection is often perceived as a part of welfare or child welfare issues in legislation and the daily practice of social workers in Mongolia. The terms "children's rights" and "protection" are used interchangeably in existing legislation and government policies. Therefore, officers who work in social welfare, education, health, police and community agencies are involved heavily in ensuring implementation of the Law on the Protection of Children's Rights.

According to the Law on the Protection of Children's Rights, government and governors are expected to play leading roles in ensuring and monitoring implementation of this law in their respective territories. In addition, non-government agencies and their officials who work in the field of child protection and child development are expected to monitor the implementation of law and policy. If a violation of children's rights is suspected, parents, guardians, social workers and other citizens are allowed to submit their concerns to the relevant authorities. Government officers at the khoroo level who are in charge of children's issues and khoroo social workers may approach any individual who is believed to have violated children's rights. They may demand entry and intervene to safeguarding children's rights, or may make submissions to governors or relevant authorities if further sanctions are required. What may be problematic for practice is the lack of clear definition in law regarding what constitutes a breach of child protection in law, which means that many officials will likely rely on their own perceptions about what is child maltreatment and what is not.

> There is no clear definition of what should be considered as a breach of child protection and what is not. Mostly prevention from violence, exploitation and neglect and provision of protective and rehabilitative services are limited by providing social welfare, education and health services for children in difficult situations, as the Law on the Protection of Children's Rights stated. Though it is stipulated in the Law on the Protection of Children's Rights that infringers of children's rights are to be imposed an administrative penalty and cash fine under decisions of

> governors, the implementation is often not satisfactory. (Borkhuu, Adilbish, & Undrakh, 2009, p.6, unpublished work)

Major parts of the child protection workforce in Mongolia are government officials including governors at all levels, officers of the governor's office in charge of children and youth issues, health and education, and police officers. Other parts of the workforce are officers and volunteers employed by national and international non-government agencies who work in the field of child protection and children's rights.

According to the Mongolian Law on Civil Service, governors at all levels are considered to be in government and political positions appointed as a result of elections that were carried out in compliance with related regulations and legislation (Law on Civil Service, 2002). The position of governor at all levels is therefore not stable and a new governor is often appointed every four years. In contrast, officers at the governor's offices hold relatively stable positions, because the law protects their positions, if the position holders meet the requirements for their positions in terms of expertise, background and experience. Officers at the governors' offices belong to a group of public servants according to the Law on Civil Service. They are expected to assist the government in maintaining the continuity and normal function of the state.

The position of khoroo social workers and welfare officers are, therefore, relatively stable. According the Law on Social Welfare, both groups are called social workers. The officers in charge of children and family issues at the city and district governors' offices are also usually in charge of other social and population issues, in addition to children and family issues. They are often not social workers by profession, but they provide supervision and direct management of khoroo social workers. In contrast, the state implementing agencies and their city offices such as the National Authority for Children, and the State Office for Child Welfare usually recruit professionals such as social workers, public administration officers, lawyers and economists as specialists for their offices. These state implementing agencies provide professional and technical assistance to khoroo social workers in collaboration with the university social work lecturers and children's rights and protection officers of specialised humanitarian agencies.

A number of existing studies show that the development of social work profession is in its early stages (Adilbish, 2001; Hayashi, Frost, Yamashita, Khuajin, & B, 2009; Namdaldagva, Myagmarjav, & Burnette, 2010; Tice, 2009) and that social work services are still generally not well understood among professionals (West, 2006) nor by the public. Andy West (2006) stated that the government-employed social workers are heavily involved in administrative work rather than social work service.

> In Mongolia the term "social work" is used loosely and needs proper identification and definition. There are posts designated as social workers in both government and nongovernment organizations, but these appear to be vastly different in remit and intent. Government social workers seem to primarily have an administration function, making referrals as necessary but conducting activities on behalf of local governments for "society". They are not caseworkers, with main responsibilities of working for children and families, older people, people with mental health problems or others. (West, 2006, p. 23)

A number of studies confirmed West's assertion that individuals occupying social work positions in government agencies primarily do administrative work, including those in khoroo Governor's office (E. Sukhbaatar et al., 2008; Tserendorj & Terbish, 2007). In contrast, West (2006, p. 24) noted that social workers in non-government agencies "work closely with vulnerable groups of people including street children, children in institutions and alternative care centres and children with conflict victims of domestic violence and etc." Social workers in non-government agencies "do" social work.

From the perspective of Mongolian social work educators, Mongolia has made significant achievements in developing the new profession of social work over the last 20 years. In 1996 social work started as a professional discipline in response to social problems resulting from rapid political, economic and social change. There are now fourteen Mongolian state and private universities with undergraduate and graduate programs in professional social work. Significant effort has been invested in the improvement of the quality of social work education and its linkages with local needs (Namdaldagva, et al., 2010). Approximately 2200 social workers are employed in seven different fields of practice in Mongolia, namely social welfare and protection, health, education, public administration, legal and correction institutions, and humanitarian fields

(Sukhbaatar, 2015). Among them, more than 900 social workers practice as frontline social workers and welfare officers at khoroo and soum levels (Sandagsuren, 2014) including at least one social worker and one welfare officer at each of 152 khoroo in Ulaanbaatar.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology and the Mongolian Agency on Standardization and Measurement approved a social work education standard for undergraduate social work programs in January 2010. The standard aims to establish a benchmark for social work schools to ensure a high standard of social work education. In addition, with the assistance of Save the Children, social work educators and practitioners developed a separate curriculum and resource package on child protection that was disseminated across all universities with social work programs. This effort resulted in a child protection course being responsive to the above standard and becoming one of the required courses of social work degree programs.

However, there remains a concern about the qualifications of government-employed social workers. The study completed by Lkhagvasuren and Davaa (2010), which focused predominantly on child protection multidisciplinary teams, commented briefly on the percentage of qualified social workers:

> Twenty six per cent of multidisciplinary team members were lawyers, 15.5 per cent of multidisciplinary members were doctors, social workers and teachers. Only 37.5 per cent of the social workers who had primary responsibility of coordinating other members in the team by providing professional guidance were professional social workers. (Lkhagvasuren & Davaa, 2010, p. 4)

Another important finding was that 26.7% of multidisciplinary team members (N=45) who participated in the study had not attended any training on working in multidisciplinary teams. For the remaining 73.3%, more than one third did not complete available training (Lkhagvasuren & Davaa, 2010, p. 4). What this suggests is that many khoroo social workers and welfare workers are not formally educated in social work nor have they engaged in learning how to work in a multidisciplinary team.

Olonbayar and his evaluation team (2010) noted that the main workforce of child protection services in Mongolia operates mostly at the community level including

khoroo and soum governor's offices, and schools. The evaluation team also reported that the stakeholders who should be playing leading roles in managing and coordinating child protection services do not have an adequately trained staff and workforce in child protection. It was also found that a number of national and local non-government agencies, including the National Centre against Violence (NCAV), the Centre on the Protection and Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect, and the Centre on the Protection of Children's Rights provide direct services with qualified staff to children and women exposed to domestic violence as well as child victims of all types of abuse and neglect. From among these non-government agencies, NCAV was found to have branch offices in 18 provinces while others provide services only in Ulaanbaatar (Olonbayar, et al., 2011). Thus, khoroo social workers work closely with NCAV in dealing with child protection and domestic violence issues.

The two above-mentioned studies reported that there are a limited number of skilled workforces in child protection in Mongolia. The studies did not provide details about what kind of interventions are available or what kind of skills and qualifications social workers or officers are required to hold in order to be working in child protection services, nor the resources and other budgetary allocations to support staffing development.

Adequate and appropriate resources and allocations

Olonbayar and his team (2010) defined a number of state and non-government resources that allocate funding to child protection and well-being related activities in Mongolia. The state funding sources include package budgets spent under permission of the government leaders. For instance, all running costs and staff salaries of the National Authority for Children and staff salaries of aimag divisions for children are funded from a package budget of the Minister in charge of population, development and social protection issues. Running costs and additional child related activities at aimag children's divisions are funded by the budget of aimag governors. In the case of Ulaanbaatar, the city governor's budget covers both the administration and program costs of the city centre for children and families (Olonbayar, et al., 2011). The funding comes from a package budget of the Minister of Population Development and Social Protection instead of the

deputy prime minister.

Most of the state budgets appear to fund the administration and program costs of children's agencies, such as national and local children's authorities, orphanages, rehabilitation centres for disabled children and a few pilot programs. Funding also supports welfare allowances for children in especially difficult circumstances, universal human development payments for each citizen and payments for women with many children. Finally, some funding goes towards universal vaccination and nutrition for children under 6 years of age and welfare allowances for children and families in need. In contrast, funding from national and international nongovernment agencies directly support pilot child protection programs and projects, new initiatives, and professional services to target groups (Olonbayar, et al., 2011). Khoroo social workers and welfare officers play key roles in distributing welfare benefits and cash payments while using their administrative and brokering skills. Different types of welfare benefits and cash allowances are considered helpful and protective resources for parents, in particular parents with many children.

The government used to spend large quantities of its funds for cash distribution to each citizen. This was a redistribution of state wealth by sharing its profits gained from mineral resources. But due to economic decline, the government has not been able to distribute a universal allowance since 2012. Subsequently, universal welfare assistance has stopped and assistance now targets only individuals and families in need. All children however, are still eligible for universal free health care and basic education. All women who give birth are eligible for the maternal allowance for a one-year term.

In addition, the government covers all costs of public kindergartens including meals and refreshments for each child. Parents only provide stationery and personal care items (tooth brush, soap and towels) for their own child. Due to the lack of access to existing public kindergartens, many small children stay at home and one of the parents, usually the mother, cares for the children. Sometimes parents leave children alone behind a locked door. Since there is no law or legislation to regulate this practice, all social workers can do is advocate that parents do not leave young children alone. Family based or community based

childcare service is not common in Mongolia.

In addressing parents' and professionals' concerns about the lack of access to kindergartens and the high prevalence of domestic injuries of young children left unattended, the Ministry of Education and Science has developed a proposal for amendments in the Law of Preschool Education which would cover the regulation and support of the establishment of family based childcare services. The shortage of kindergartens was one of the many rationales for the proposed amendments. The following statement from the Minister of Education and Science provided statistics related to the shortage of kindergartens.

> The Ministry of Education and Science advises that 56,000 out of 228,000 preschool children aged 2-5 cannot enrol in kindergartens because of the shortage of kindergartens. This figure will increase gradually in upcoming years due to the trend of the growth of the population aged 2-5 years of age.
>
> Moreover, the increasing shortage of kindergartens leads to an increase in the ratio of children to teacher by 1.7-2.5 times more than the standard class size. According to the standard size of kindergartens, the ratio of children to a teacher should be no more than 25 children per teacher. (MOES, 2012)

Besides the shortage of kindergartens, the high prevalence of injuries among children under 6 years of age and the prediction of an increase in the population of children aged 2-5 in the following years were other important rationales for the establishment of family childcare services in Mongolia. In order to increase children's access to kindergartens and to improve children's protective environment, the amendments were submitted to the parliament in 2013 for approval. Parliamentary debate on these matters is still in progress.

The government's universal support for basic education and health of children is a solid protective factor for children. Unfortunately, many children under 6 years of age cannot enjoy their right to access to a kindergarten and to live and study in a protective environment due to the shortage of facilities, the increased ratio of children to teacher and the crowded children's clinics. A holistic and comprehensive approach is needed to respond to this issue, as suggested by Kamerman and Kahn (2008). They suggested a broad, holistic child and family approach to achieve the goal of children's well-being by using children's rights as the basis for intervention instead of focusing narrowly on the protection of

children against abuse and neglect (Kamerman & Kahn, 2008). By citing this reference, the researcher does not mean to de-emphasize the importance of a strong protective system against child maltreatment. Instead the researcher supports a comprehensive and holistic approach to building a child protective environment, covering all aspects of legislation, coordinating mechanisms, a skilled workforce, adequate resource allocations, and a knowledgeable and supportive public. In particular, an aware and supportive public is important for building a protective environment for children and their families and can also be a strong back up for frontline child protection practitioners when other components of the child protection system are underdeveloped.

An aware and supportive public

Deborah Belle and Joyce Benenson (2014, p. 1335) noted "decades of research have demonstrated that the well-being of children is tied to the cast of characteristics in their lives". In particular, the cultural context of protecting children is found important to ensuring the protectiveness of children's environment (Beazley, Bessell, Ennew, & Waterson, 2006; Garbarino, 2014; ISPCAN, 2014; Korbin, 1980; Larzelere, 2000). One of the reasons is that "culture includes models for every day living, beliefs, goals and values held in the mind – in other words the subjective experiences that shape the interpretation of what happens and do not only respond to but organise behaviour and the choice of context" (Weisner, 2014, p. 87). In this sense, the researcher has addressed questions about whether the public is supportive and aware of protective environments and services that protect children from maltreatment.

Beazley, Bessell, Ennew and Waterson conducted a regional study in 2005 and 2006, which explored the views and experiences of 3,322 children and 1000 adults in 8 countries in the Southeast Asia and Pacific. This included 607 Mongolian children and 40 adults. The study's findings were disappointing, but not surprising, as they related Mongolian researchers' tendency to write about people's attitude toward corporal punishment and the connection between traditional ideas and practices of corporal punishment. A representative quote from their study:

> Data collected by the attitude survey show that adults still hold a

> traditional tendency to believe that punishment plays a positive role in disciplining children. Especially when children disobey, it is acceptable either to beat them or shout at them in order to teach them a lesson to "put sense" into them… Secondary data analysis also showed that the traditional tendency of disciplining children through punishment was dominant in social psychology, and both adults and children agreed that physical and emotional punishment is one way of disciplining children. (Beazley, et al., 2006, p.166)

This finding informs us that the public acceptance of corporal punishment is evident in current practices of child rearing in Mongolia. The researchers connected the existing practice of disciplining through corporal punishment with cultural and traditional views of raising children. The following findings of the descriptive statistics of Beazley, Bessell, Ennew and Waterson's study confirmed the consequence of accepting corporal punishment in child rearing practice. According to the study, the prevalence of punishment among Mongolian children aged from 6 to 15 years of age was given as direct assault (hitting) 45.6%, other direct assault 5%, indirect assault 9%, deliberate neglect 1.2% and verbal attack 33.8% (Beazley et al., 2006, p. 127). The study also included 55 children in institutions, with 25% reporting punishments such as being beaten with a rubber truncheon and having to maintain uncomfortable positions for long periods of time. Reasons for punishment were given mainly as failure of behaviour (30% home, 22% school) and failure of obedience (60% home, 46% school) (Beazley, et al., 2006, p. 127). This study indicated that corporal punishment is accepted widely across the country from urban to remote areas and from families to children's institutions in Mongolia. This practice of using corporal punishment challenges social workers and multidisciplinary team members to work together with the public against child maltreatment, in particular against corporal punishment, physical abuse and other forms of maltreatment.

There were some positive findings from Beazley and his team study. The study found that the vast majority of Mongolian children who participated in the study (95%) agreed with the statement, "Children must have it explained to them if they do something wrong". However, only 55% of adults agreed (Beazley, et al., 2006, p. 183). The difference between children's and adults' agreements with the statement can be related to the increase in programs aimed at raising awareness of children's rights which were targeted at children and were carried out by local and international children's rights agencies over the last 20 years. In addition, the

research showed that some adults – people around children – might not be aware of the importance of practicing non-physical forms of child upbringing instead of using corporal punishment to discipline their children.

The study of Lkhagvasuren and Davaa (2010) provided further evidence of how people have a limited understanding about who to approach when child abuse or domestic violence occurs. The study reflected the opinions of 100 residents from one district in Ulaanbaatar and one soum in Dornod province and reported that 54.1% of the residents would approach police, 8.2% social workers, 8.2% the National Centre against Violence, 4.2% non-governmental agencies, and 5.1% would approach other agencies including courts, human rights agencies and the media. The remaining 20.4% answers indicated that respondents "do not know where they should approach" (Lkhagvasuren & Davaa, 2010, p. 52). The study found positive signs of people's willingness to improve their understanding about addressing child abuse and domestic violence. For example, "…the residents requested that multidisciplinary teams provide information and advice to the public (26.55%), take legal measures against offenders (11.2%), conduct training (7.1%), undertake activities to change public mentality and ethics, treat alcohol addiction problems, improve living conditions, organize child development and education activities and provide timely and efficient services to the public (19.45%). More than 35.7% of the residents did not have any understanding about the types of services that can be obtained from multidisciplinary team (Lkhagvasuren & Davaa, 2010, p. 4).

As Wulczyn and his colleagues noted "whether one sees systems as formal or informal, every family, community, and nation has a child protection system in place" (Wulczyn, et al., 2010, p. 8). Indeed, a child protection system with various protective elements exists in Mongolia. But the demographic and political structural changes in Mongolia have affected five components of the child protection system:

(1) fragmented legislation with various laws that address separately different aspects of child protection;

(2) a lack of coordinating mechanisms that ensure multi-sectoral involvement

in protecting children's rights;

(3) child protection responses predominantly with assessment and welfare services;

(4) a workforce without adequate training social work and child protection;

(5) a public with limited awareness of newly introduced initiatives of child protection such as alternatives to corporal punishment and multidisciplinary team approach.

In such challenging contexts of child protection, newly introduced social workers play key roles in protecting children from different types of child maltreatment.

Development of Social Work in Mongolia

Social work is a relatively a new profession in Mongolia, introduced in the 1990s to address emerging social problems that resulted from rapid changes in transition from a socialist country to a market oriented economy. These changes affected Mongolia's rich traditions of nomadic life. Gombo Sanjaa, a Mongolian sociologist and pioneer social work educator noted this tradition as follows:

> Mongols have engaged for thousands of years in nomadic pastoralism over a vast territory due to the severe continental climate. This culture and the style of life were the major causes for poorly developed infrastructure in Mongolia that totally differs from that of settlement civilizations. Mongols enjoyed the way of life, assembling a nomadic tent, making felt, preparing foods and etc, together with neighbours. (Sanjaa, 1997)

Mongolia has maintained the tradition of a nomadic life style with strong informal support systems for thousands of years, which endured even when the socialist government led the country from 1921 to 1990. Due to the socialist ideology of building a society without social problems, the government of Mongolia during those seven decades emphasised the need for everyone to be involved in addressing the social issues. Socialist ideology, therefore, was supportive of nomadic collectivist views of helping each other. While many of Mongolia's nomads have now settled semi-permanently in *ger* regions, the informal support of family and neighbours continue to be the main form of social support drawn upon by Mongolian people.

Similar to other socialist countries, the profession of social work did not exist in Mongolia during the socialist period from 1921 to the end of the 80s. Even previous university based social work training in most other Eastern European countries were closed during the socialist regime (Zavirsek, 2008) due to the ideological position of the profession of social work. Zavirsek (2008) explains:

> [Social Work was] perceived as an activity for petite-bourgeois women … it was deemed an unsuitable activity by the communist regimes which came to power following the Second World War. The belief that socialism would be able to eradicate the need for social work interventions and would ensure the well-being of every "human being" was also prevalent at the time. (Zavirsek, 2008, p. 734)

Under the strong collectivist view of "one for all and all for one", socialism expected organisations of employees, workers' unions or specialists of social sectors, such as doctors, teachers and women or children's organisations, to respond to social issues. Mongolian institutions providing higher education during socialist times focused on the preparation of leaders, such as pioneer leaders, youth leaders and party leaders, who would play key roles in mobilizing and organizing people of different ages in the socialist society.

Following the collapse of the socialist regime, the Mongolian people experienced beneficial changes that included independence, freedom and liberty. Nevertheless, rapid political and economic changes were not always positive. For instance, the liberal reforms included cutbacks in the state budgets and privatisation of the state-owned fabrics and services. Examples included a decline in the number of primary schools, kindergartens, staff and a shortage of teaching materials (Adilbish, 2001, p. 52). Privatisation led to the visibility of new disadvantages – unemployment, street children and school dropouts. The social sector began deteriorating as a result of the major cutbacks. What was formerly called "blanket protection" for all no longer existed after the socialist regime. The new model of targeted assistance was introduced addressing the most disadvantaged groups in the society (UNDP, 2000, p. 14).

After the collapse of the socialist regime, it took time for the state to respond to unexpected outcomes. In the early 1990s the first western humanitarian agencies arrived in response to the call of the Government of Mongolia for international assistance to address social problems. Initially,

> The state did not do really to start to address these issues until 1994-1995 when it established mechanisms for social and health insurance, employment services, and special benefits for the sick and disabled. In addition, it introduced a National Poverty Alleviation Programme, which received supports from international donors. (UNDP, 2000, p. 44)

In collaboration with international and donor agencies, government organizations began to train people with new skills that would enable them to work as social and welfare workers, children's workers, women's workers, teachers and practitioners (Adilbish, 2001). These programs included Social Work Training and Education Projects, the National Poverty Alleviation Program and the National Program on Pre-School Education. Save the Children UK has since collaborated with the National Centre for Children (renamed the National Authority for Children) to train children's workers in all levels of government (Adilbish, 2001; Namdaldagva, Mayagmarjav, & Burnette, 2010). This training eventually spread across the country. It stimulated the motivation to establish academic training, which was thought would be more sustainable and professional than in-service training. The need for university based social work training was confirmed in a situation analysis that was carried out in 1995-1996 by the Centre for Social Development, a national non-profit agency with support from the Save the Children UK and the National Authority for Children (Adilbish, 2001; Namdaldagva et al., 2010; Tsamba, 2009).

There were three influential milestones in the establishment of social work education in Mongolia. The first was the National Workshop on Social Work, conducted in November 1996. The National Workshop allowed Mongolian educators, researchers and practitioners from different social fields to discuss the findings of the situation analysis for the development of a social work curriculum. The second major event was the International Social Work Conference at the State Pedagogical University in 1997, which was the first international social work conference hosted by Mongolia. At this conference, the international panels introduced the global perspectives of social work and social development to Mongolian professionals. Professor Richard Estes of the University of Pennsylvania presented on "social development", "social work and social change" and "models of education for social development in social work". Professor S. J. Clark from the Institute of Applied Science, University of Wales,

presented on “social work as community development, models for change”. A representative of Social Services presented on teaching “social development in the UK” and “teaching methods of social work”. Two other academicians from neighbouring countries of China and Russia, Dr. Lu Sui Zhen from the Social Work Training College in Beijing and Dr. V. I. Blinov from the State Pedagogical University in Moscow gave presentations on recent changes in China’s social safety and social work response and specific features of social work training in Russia (Adilbish, 2001, p. 55). Mongolian educators and practitioners also introduced their own reflections and perspectives on social work at the conference.

For the first time, at the conference, Mongolian scholars and practitioners shared their analysis and perspectives on social work. Professor Gombo Sanjaa introduced the traditional helping mechanisms in Mongolia; Tuvshintugs Tsamba gave a presentation on “The changing role of children’s workers: Transition and Beyond” and Enkhbat Badarch from the Centre for Social Development presented key findings of the situation analysis and introduced social work practice in Mongolia (Adilbish, 2001). As a result of extensive discussions, the participants of the international conference (a majority of whom were Mongolians) agreed to establish the first Association of Mongolian Social Workers. Participants also agreed to develop social work with a social development orientation in Mongolia. This approach to social work was later termed “developmental social work” in a strategic paper on the social security sector of the Government of Mongolia (Ministry of Social Welfare and Labour, 2003) and was the second milestone in the development of social work in Mongolia.

Resulting from recommendations and agreements made at the conference, the Social Work Resource Centre was established in January 1997 at the State Pedagogical University. As the third milestone, this resource centre was one of the first social work departments in Mongolia. Instituted as a Curriculum Community consisting of educators, researchers and practitioners from across organizations and social fields, representative individuals worked together to develop the initial social work curriculum (Adilbish, 2001; Quieta, 2002). These three milestones of the early development of social work provided a solid

foundation for the future development of both social work education and practice in the context of Mongolia.

Social work education

As previously stated, a qualified and trained workforce is one of the key components of a child protection system. Where the child protection system is underdeveloped, defining the roles of qualified frontline social workers is essential for building protectiveness in families and communities. In this context, an undergraduate social work program commenced in 1997 at two state universities: the State Pedagogical University (later named the Mongolian State University of Education); and, the Polytechnic University (later named the Mongolian University of Science and Technology) (Namdaldagva et al., 2010). Due to the newness of the profession in Mongolia there were no lectures who had been formally educated in social work. Therefore, lecturers and practitioners from different social science backgrounds were supported by humanitarian agencies to visit other nations (Quieta, 2002) or to engage locally in intensive training with visiting social work educators from other nations:

> Social work lecturers held degrees in humanitarian and social sciences, not social work, so those who taught in social work programs immersed themselves in the profession through short-term intensive training with academics from the US, India, Russia, Denmark, and Japan. (Namdaldagva et al., 2010, p. 887)

Contributions from the Open Society Institute (later named the Open Society Foundations, OSF) were significant for the further development of social work education and practice in Mongolia. From 1999 to the present day, Mongolian professionals and social work educators have been benefitting from several interlinked OSF programs focussed on post-communist countries. These programs include:

> (a) The Social Work Fellowship Program that aimed to support individuals to obtain social work master degrees from OSF partner American universities with internationally recognized social work schools. This program closed in 2010 for Mongolia after it had facilitated 17 individuals to complete a master of social work degree;

(b) The Social Work Faculty Development Program that supports two or three social work educators each year from targeted countries to visit OSF partner American universities for one or two semesters, aimed at improving their own professional and curriculum development. This program is still ongoing;

(c) The Academic Fellowship Program that supports alumni, who graduated from internationally recognised universities, to teach in one of partner local universities in her/his home country with the support of international scholars;

(d) The Higher Education Support Program which sponsored several summer school training programs on social work education and practice;

e) The Alumni Projects which aim to support alumni of Social Work Fellowship Program to apply knowledge and skills, learned from the graduate and faculty development programs into the context of their own country. This initiative is ongoing.

Social work educators and practitioners who benefited from various OSF programs have joined together and played leading roles in the development of social work education in the many ways. This includes:

(1) strengthening capacity building of social work schools across the country by organizing summer schools for young social work educators each year;

(2) developing core curricula for social work programs;

(3) improving field practice;

(4) establishing professional associations;

(5) networking with social workers overseas. In each of these contributions, protecting minors and disadvantaged group of people in the societies were always important issues.

Since 2002, more than 20 social work scholars from the US, UK, Australia,

India, and Japan have provided workshops on different social work themes and models of practice. These have helped social work educators from across the country to engage in discussion and develop a shared understanding about social work education and practice. This resulted in an agreement on national social work curriculum standards, including child protection. In January 2010, the Mongolian government approved child protection as the first core foundation learning required in the social work education standard (Namdaldagva et al., 2010, p. 890), making the learning about child protection a professional education requirement when undertaking an undergraduate social work degree.

According to the Law on Higher Education, the content of any higher education or bachelor degree program is required to cover subjects/courses under three main streams: general foundation, professional foundation and specializations courses. The social work education standard advised the inclusion of two courses from each of two social science packages for the general foundation courses of the social work curricula. The first humanitarian and social science package included philosophy, Mongolian history, cultural studies, ecology and environmental protection and human development, while the second package included foundation economic theories, political studies, psychology, sociology and management. The following social work courses were required as professional foundation courses for social work bachelor programs. These courses included introduction to social work, social work ethics and values, history and philosophy of social work, social work methodology, child protection, social work theories, social policy, social work management, social and economic development, social work research methods, social welfare, and fields of practice (Mongolian Agency on Standardization and Measurement, 2010). The approval of this standard provided a common ground for all social work education, training and practice across Mongolia.

By 2010, there were fourteen universities and social work departments offering undergraduate and post-graduate social work degrees in Mongolia involving more than 1200 students and 60 lecturers (Namdaldagva et al., 2010, p. 890). While each university works to the national education standards, they remain influenced by academics and practitioners who were influential in the development of social

work in Mongolia. For example, the social work curriculum at the Mongolian State University of Education is modelled on the US scheme with input of Japanese and Indian programs. Resources such as textbooks, visiting lecturers, and training materials come from the United States. Russian and German social work education models influenced the social work curriculum at the Mongolian University of Science and Technology and the National University of Mongolia respectively (Namdaldagva et al., 2010, p. 888).

Mongolia's first social work education standard drew mostly from the content of American social work education models, but included components from other nations. Each curriculum includes courses on child protection and social work with families and children in addition to typical social work foundation courses on behaviour and social environment, social welfare and protection, social policy, social development and the global and local context of social work. The premise of these courses is to enable social workers to work for and with individuals, groups, families and communities. In particular, empowerment of client systems is a key feature to address strengths and challenges that are encountered in their lives. Social work knowledge and practice of identifying and working for protectiveness in children's environment in both local and global local contexts is understood as essential.

Social work practice

Along with the development of social work education, over the last twenty years, social work practice in Mongolia took place in the field of school social work, child welfare and protection, and health and forensic settings. Locating a professional niche of their own has not been smooth or easy for the social work community. Contemporary struggles continued to exist while attempting to shape a professional identity alongside other long-standing professions that are well recognised, such as medicine, law, engineering and education. Without a clear identity, recruitment into social work positions is affected, particularly when employers may not be clear in the first place what social workers do. To encourage the recruitment of individuals with social work degrees Mongolian legal acts and strategic papers mandated that government employed social workers in the education, social welfare, child protection and domestic violence

sectors, as well as social work in forensic settings. But, it did not specifically indicate in law whether social workers should have formal social work training. Therefore, the agencies recruited social workers who may have either a university qualification in social work, or an unrelated degree coupled with a short social work course or on the job training. Moreover, no licensure is necessary to practice social work.

The process of introducing social work into educational settings commenced in 1997 and was focused primarily on the prevention of school dropouts. It took until 2000 before the first social work position gained government recognition. Two years later legal endorsement of the position of school social worker at all schools was achieved and the detailed description of school social work service was included in the amendment of the Law on Education in 2006. In a study by Enkhtuya Sukhbaatar (2006, p. 4), 125 individuals occupying school social work positions were surveyed. It was found that 88% of respondents held degrees in teaching, 10% had degrees in social work and only two per cent had degrees in another discipline. Of the 125 social workers who filled out the survey, two persons held the degree of Master of Social Work, seven had a Bachelor of Social Work while 64.8% had trained through short-term training in social work, and the remaining answered that they had no training in social work at all (Sukhbaatar, 2006, p. 5).

One consolation was that university qualifications in teaching might have provided some necessary awareness of children's development and the interacting influences of school and home life if we interpret the findings from a strengths-based perspective. On the other hand, the consequence of such a view was the recruitment of non-social workers to the positions of social workers. Similar situations were evident in other sectors where social work positions were legally recognized. At the time, this recruitment practice was justified as resulting from the development of social work being at an early stage, the limited number of qualified social workers and the growing demand to fill social work positions.

The next stage in the development of social work in Mongolia was the establishment of social work positions in the soum and khoroo. These received government recognition upon recommendations that child and family support

services, where front-line workers engaged directly with families in the community, was necessary. In 2005, amendments to the protection of children's rights and domestic violence legislations formalised these social work positions. The role of khoroo social workers, in particular, was highly valued by the Mongolian government as it brought the government closer to children and families and offered the potential to intervene in matters that were often hidden. As well, the majority of public services were delivered at the khoroo level of governance and it was recognised that social work intervention would be complementary to those services.

Following the implementation of the amendment of the Law on Social Welfare and other legal acts, it became clear that the roles of khoroo social workers were different from khoroo organizers. The recruitment for these two posts was carried out through the Human Resource Unit at the District Governor's Office. Khoroo social workers were expected to carry out all duties indicated in the areas of delivery of social welfare assistance, including preparing documentation for cash allowances and other types of support provided by welfare assistance, and organizing activities and training in the implementation of the Law of Children's Rights Protection and Domestic Violence.

In 2008, vacancies for 102 social workers became available, two at each khoroo governor's office (Sukhbaatar et al., 2008, p. 16). One of these two positions was subsequently renamed khoroo welfare officer. Individuals recruited into these positions had successfully passed their civil service exams which did not include any social work content. The highest scoring individuals were recruited first. When the lists were exhausted, additional exams were held. What this meant was that individuals were recruited to social work positions on the basis of civil service exam scores, not the professional qualification held. Following commencement as khoroo social workers, they were required to complete short course training in social work provided by the government in collaboration with university social work departments. From 2006 to 2010, more than 720 practitioners completed social work training across the country (Namdaldagva et al., 2010, p. 889). Social work departments have organised and still organise different types of short-term certificate training for practitioners upon the request

of state and non-government organisations, and training continues to be developed and facilitated; most of this training is tailored to the needs of individuals and/or organisations, covering a range of aspects on generalist social work. Ongoing social work training is also offered under the auspices of a teacher re-qualification training program (Sukhbaatar et al., 2008, p. 30) and some specialised training is provided by different government or non-government organisations.

These short-term training programs have helped khoroo social workers without social work degrees to learn appropriate skills and knowledge for social work practice. By the end of 2006, 45% of khoroo social workers had attended short-term certificate training programs organised by social work departments, 40.8% of khoroo social workers had attended other social work training and 29.2% of khoroo workers had attended other training in social welfare (some khoroo social workers attended more than one type of training, which accounts for the discrepancy).

Although the number of university degree qualified social workers in the position of social workers and welfare officers at khoroo level has increased, there remains a majority of social workers and welfare officers with non-social work university qualifications, as described below:

> The majority of practitioners who hold social work titles in these sectors [school social work and social welfare sectors] are professionals from other background who became "social workers" through certified training programs. As a result, social work graduates in these fields are mainly employed in the NGOs or in other sectors. (Namdaldagva et al, 2010, p. 892)

The recruitment of unqualified social workers for government vacancies is related to the newness of social work in Mongolia and limited understanding about the profession of social work. As well, the recruitment policy of public servants overrides the potential for a selective approach in the recruitment of social workers on the basis of social work degree qualifications. This practice is reflected in the management and coordination of social work services at government agencies as well. Officials without social work degree qualifications are allowed to supervise frontline social workers. This creates another issue of a lack of professional supervision of and support for social work practitioners

(Lkhagvasuren & Davaa, 2010; Tserendorj & Terbish, 2007). Instead, non-government organisations have become the most accessible human service agencies for qualified social workers. Non-government organisations are more selective and consider professional qualification more seriously when they recruit professionals for their limited vacancies.

Social work educators and professionals have been concerned about these issues and have identified them as the challenging issues of social work education and practice in Mongolia (Namdaldagva et al., 2010; Sukhbaatar et al., 2008; Tserendorj & Terbish, 2007). The public and even some social workers themselves consider that the work done by khoroo social workers is a sponsorship "welfare hand-out" type of work that links poor people with charity agencies or delivers food assistance or clothes to poor people (Sukhbaatar et al., 2008, p. 26). This misconception of social work is also found held by governors or government officials.

According to the job description, a khoroo social worker is required to report his/her work to the khoroo governor, whereas the khoroo welfare officer reports his/her work directly to a head of the district division of social welfare and labour. "Some governors or supervisors of social workers still see the roles of social workers as roles of pioneer leaders, khoroo organizers… who used to function during the socialist regime" (Sukhbaatar et al., 2008, p. 25), as key implementers of the political agenda of the leading party. This politicised view of social workers' roles remains visible in recent government decisions relating to the duties of khoroo social workers. For example, since 2010 khoroo and soum social workers were ordered by government regulations to take responsibility for registering and documenting the distribution of the universal cash allowance. This has required significant amounts of time and commitment to be spent on administration, as opposed to intervening with children and families. The importance of this administrative task to the government is reflected in the fact that more khoroo and soum social workers have been employed, which has resulted in some recent devolution of authentic social work at the khoroo level.

According to Sukhbaatar et al. (2008), 74% of school social workers, khoroo social workers, social workers in correctional settings and non-government

agencies surveyed (N=177) advised that they worked in shared office space. With specific focus on khoroo social workers, research about the same time found that a vast majority of khoroo social workers shared a room with their khoroo organiser. This presented challenges for khoroo social workers who needed privacy when talking about sensitive child and family issues (Tserendorj & Terbish, 2007). More recently, government orders related to the job environment of khoroo social workers have sought to implement a "one stop shop" for khoroo government services (Government of Mongolia, 2013) in attempt to reduce multiple bureaucratic steps for individuals seeking government services. Due to these changes, all khoroo officers now sit in one office regardless of the features of their roles and job descriptions. While some khoroo offices have the benefit of spaciousness and others have counselling or training rooms that offer privacy, many do not. This means that a khoroo social worker is often talking with people on potentially sensitive issues in tight office spaces and in earshot of four other officers – the welfare officer, the officer in charge of registration, the khoroo organiser and the khoroo governor. Nevertheless, it is accepted that the khoroo governor is able to see and hear when people are talking to one of the workers, which limits what can be said by vulnerable individuals who seek help.

The community of Mongolian social workers is continually expanding and proving its value in the local and global arenas. Seven newly established social work associations, which each seek to represent different fields of social work practice,[1] have been advocating for professional recognition of its members. While the level of activity of these associations is variable, the Association of School Social Workers is most active. In collaboration with the International Association of School Social Workers, they are currently organising the International Conference for School Social Workers to be held 9-10 June 2015 in Ulaanbaatar, titled: "Building child friendly and protective environments in schools and communities." This conference will provide further opportunities for Mongolian social workers to share their work with social workers from different parts of the world.

[1] These associations include the Association of Mongolian Social Workers, the Officers.

Definitions of the social work profession

The profession of social work has a rich history in terms of its development and recognition, arising in the early 20th century on the foundation of charity movements (Payne, 2007). Shifts from charity-based activities to scientific methods in social work occurred mainly in the USA, UK and Canada (Barker, 1995a; Payne, 2007). While much debate exists on the professional status of social work, it has nevertheless been recognised globally as a helping profession. Over time, changes in concepts to do with the defining features of social work have reflected shifting contexts and developments related to practice.

In 2000 the global definition of social work was discussed and agreed upon by representatives from 116 countries of social work associations that are members of the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) (Hare, 2004; IFSW, 2012a; Payne, 2007). One year later, in 2001 the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) agreed to accept this definition (Hare, 2004; Ramsay, 2003). This definition of social work has promoted social change, problem solving in human relationships and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance their well-being. In addition, the definition highlighted the use of theories of human behaviour and social systems and social work interventions in the practice of interacting with people and their environments. Human rights and social justice were fundamental principles of the global definition of social work (IFSW, 2012a). Recently, the definition has been updated as a result of extensive discussion and comments on the previous definition. Some of these discussions are presented in this chapter.

The IFSW General Meeting and the IASSW General Assembly approved the latest version of the global definition of social work in July 2014, as quoted below:

> Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversity are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance well-being (IFSW, 2014)

Both versions of the definition call social workers around the world to "promote social changes and the empowerment and liberation of people". But the latest version of 2014 includes two more concepts: the promotion of social development, and the promotion of social cohesion in social work practice, in addition to the concepts articulated in the definition of 2001. At the same time the principles of collective responsibility and respect for diversity were added to other fundamental principles of human rights and social justice (IFSW, 2012a, 2014). These definitions show that social workers across the world deal with both individual and social issues at many levels, from micro practice through to meso and macro practices. The 2001 definition made the following suggestion:

> The task force and member associations [of IFSW] ultimately agreed that the central organizing and unifying concept of social work universally was intervention at the interface of human beings and their environment, both physical and social, thereby affirming the thinking of previous of social work theorists. (Hare, 2004, p. 409)

The IFSW definition of social work acknowledges the wide range of knowledge and practice-based on local, indigenous and universal contexts. However, debates about the IFSW definition's applicability to the contexts of non-western history and culture have taken place among social workers around the world. For example, Hutching and Taylor (2007, p. 389) argued, "the IFSW definition [of 2000] can be a reference point on the journey to the development of an indigenous profession in China", but the evidence shows that application of the IFSW definition into a Chinese context is not likely to fit IFSW "universals". Hutching and Taylor (2007) do not ignore the lived experience of social workers in China and the individual lives of those they work with, but suggest that Asian histories involving state domination over the provision of welfare has influenced approaches to social work practice. Yip (2004) explained that Asian values underpinned by histories of socialism have compelled indigenous social workers to prioritise collective responsibility over individual liberty. Despite this, there are trends that many social workers look beyond their own nations for the development of social work.

In countries where social work is developing, such as in Mongolia, the IFSW and global trends in welfare are continuing to be followed in the development of social work, thereby establishing "social institutions and services similar to more

developed countries" (Payne, 2005). As stated in the previous chapter, the 1990s through to 2010 in Mongolia were dominated by Mongolian social work pioneers who were keen to learn key concepts of the IFSW definition of social work introduced by American, British, Indian and Russian social work educators and introduce these to Mongolia (Adilbish, 2001; Namdaldagva et al., 2010). They formed the first association of social workers focused on social work education and practice from the perspective of social development. This perspective, called "developmental social work", reflected concepts introduced by James Midgley in 1995 and has been widely accepted by social workers in developing countries (Midgley, 1995; Payne, 2005, p. 14).

According to this perspective, "social development …is a process of planned change designed to promote the well-being of the population as a whole in conjunction with a dynamic process of economic development" (Midgley, 1995, p. 25). While Mongolian pioneers of social work joined together with international scholars to formulate an approach to social work that linked together social and economic development, not all social work schools and departments in Mongolian universities fully reflected the concepts of developmental social work perspectives in their programs. In most cases generalist social work approaches became the main direction for curriculum design.

Blending social work knowledge, value and skills.

An understanding of social work knowledge, values and skills is essential for social workers to operate ethically and professionally in their different practice arenas. Social work knowledge, skills and values shape social workers' approach when responding to various social issues such as child maltreatment and protectiveness of children's environment in the context of social work practice. An understanding of social workers' perception of protective factors can provide insight into the blending of these three components of social work practice that draw from both personal and formal learning. Nevertheless, how to apply appropriate knowledge, values and skills into social work education and practice has been of key concern among social work educators and practitioners in both global and local contexts.

Due to its nature, the context of social work is very diverse and changeable (Payne, 2007; Yanca & Johnson, 2008). Therefore, social work is often called a contextual subject. Payne (2007, p. 2) explained this contextual characteristic of social work from the perspective of social construction in the following way, though he noted that this is "an extreme form of the idea of social construction."

> …Human beings "construct" social phenomena like social work by their interactions; when they interact differently, the phenomena change. This view says that if you do social work in one-way, and say: "This is 'social work,'" so it is, in that situation. If someone claims to be doing it another way in another situation, then that is social work too. This draws attention to how any social situation offers an opportunity to be flexible and to achieve change. (Payne, 2007, p. 2)

This changing context of social work was described in the IFSW commentary accompanying the earlier global definition of social work profession as:

> Social work in its various forms addresses the multiple, complex transactions between people and their environment; its mission is to enable to all people to develop their full potential, enrich their lives, and prevent dysfunction. Professional social work is focused on problem solving and change. As such, social workers are change agents in society and in the lives if the individuals, families, and communities they serve. Social work is an interrelated system of values, theory, and practice (IFSW, 2012a)

Payne's explanation about the changing context of social work and the IFSW commentary on the global definition of social work endorses the multiple and complex contexts of social work practice. The definition also expresses the commitment "to enable all people to develop their full potential, enrich their lives and prevent dysfunction" while it acknowledges the two main approaches of clinical social work and social policy and advocacy. These two approaches have been competing with each other for many years until the period of the "formal development of a generalist approach of social work that took place in the 1960s and 1970s". The need to apply clinical, program, policy and advocacy practice in social work was officially endorsed by identifying them in the global definition of the social work profession and the code of ethics of several national social work associations (Shdaimah & McCoyd, 2011). The commentary on the global definition of the social work profession also encouraged social workers to apply sound knowledge and a skills base to social work practice (Trevithick, 2012) from the interrelated and rich system of values, theory and practice of social work.

As previously mentioned, the generalist social work practice has become a popular model among social work educators and practitioners in Mongolia. In other words, the model of Johnson and Yanca was introduced extensively when western, mainly American, social work texts where imported and translated into the local language. The Johnson and Yanca model of generalist practice was initially developed by Louise Johnson in the 1970s with the emphasis on an integrated approach to practice with individuals, small groups and communities. The model was "a developing conceptualisation of social work practice at that time" (Yanca & Johnson, 2008, p. 28). These concepts included assessment, relationship, and person in environment, process, and intervention. When the model was re-conceptualised as the generalist model of social work practice, two other practice levels focussing on families and organizations were incorporated into understandings of an integrated approach. More recent developments in thinking about integration of social work knowledge skills and values into social work models of practice have incorporated eco-system theory, strengths approaches and cultural competency (Yanca & Johnson, 2008).

The Johnson and Yanca model provides a creative blending of knowledge, values, and skills in social work practice to respond to clients' individual concerns and social needs. According to Johnson and Yanca (2010), knowledge, values and skills are related to how social workers feel about what are the right and wrong things to do, the reflections, wisdom and knowledge they draw upon when thinking about action and how they apply their feelings and thinking into action. As they noted:

> …knowledge is a part of the cognitive or thinking component of practice; values are a part of the feeling or emotional component of practice, though in some ways they are also a part of the thinking component. Skills are action, or the doing part of social work; they are a part of the behavioural component. (Johnson & Yanca, 2010, p. 17).

These three aspects of social work were explained at each stage of the social work process starting from assessment through intervention and evaluation. In their model, they suggested combining these three aspects appropriately and creatively in the field of social work depending on the situation. This is important for understanding why social workers may perceive social phenomena in different ways and use their perceptions to inform their child protection or maltreatment

prevention work.

The ability to combine appropriately and creatively the elements of knowledge, values, and skills in the helping situation is indeed an important characteristic of social workers. This ability calls not only for choosing and applying appropriate knowledge, values, and skills but also for blending the three elements in such a manner that they fit together and become a helping endeavour that is a consistent whole. This ability involves more than the blending; it involves identifying and choosing appropriate, often unrelated bits of knowledge and using not only social work values, but also those of the client and the agency in order to screen the knowledge tentatively chosen for use. It involves skilful application of the knowledge and interactional skill in the situation. Because each person's situation and each need for help is different, the knowledge, values, and skills to be used are also different (Johnson & Yanca, 2010, p. 27).

The Johnson and Yanca (2010) model also encourages the consideration of diversity in terms of situations where social workers operate and people with whom social workers interact. This model was introduced widely to Mongolian social workers when American social work textbooks were being used extensively for both academic and in-service training.

Social work knowledge

Knowledge has been defined in different ways (Jacobs, 2009; Johnson & Yanca, 2010; Trevithick, 2008, 2012); however, there is one common underlying premise. Trevithick (2012, p. 1214) explains this common principle as knowledge helps us "to understand ourselves, others, and the world around us." This meaning has similarities with the popular saying among Mongolians: "A person without knowledge is like a person who is lost in a deep forest."

In the social work context, knowledge has been emphasised as a strong base for social work actions (Barlett, 1970, p. 69). Siporin (1975, p. 363) defines knowledge as "cognitive mental content (ideas and beliefs) concerning reality that we take to be true (perceive with certainty, based on adequate evidence, or that we decide is confirmable and has a high probability of truth". Social work knowledge is both drawn upon and developed by social workers to enable

understanding of the complex systems involving people and society, as explained by Johnson and Yanca (2010, p. 18): “It is relative to the situation in which it is developed. It is descriptive of the phenomena of persons in environment and explains the functioning of individuals and their social systems.” Thus, social work knowledge can be understood as an iterative process that draws on formal learning and reflection on practice experience in context, which is then used to develop theories that provide guidance to social work practice and methods. The linkage has been articulated as follows in the definition of social work approved by IFSW/IASSW (IFSW, 2012a).

> Social work bases its methodology on a systematic body of evidence-based knowledge derived from research and practice evaluation, including local and indigenous knowledge specific to its context. (IFSW, 2012a)

Social work educators and practitioners acknowledge the importance of both theoretical and practical knowledge, including local knowledge, which provides an evidence-base for practice and the contexts where practitioners work.

Social work scholars frame theoretical knowledge differently depending on areas of focus in education, practice and research. For example Johnson and Yanca (2010, p. 18) specified that knowledge is about human development, human diversity, social systems theory, the ecological perspective and the strengths approach in accordance with their model of Generalist Social Work Practice. They conceptualised theoretical knowledge as borrowed from other social sciences and natural sciences in addition to practice knowledge and “practice wisdom”. To make this clearer, Trevithick separates the domains of theoretical knowledge into three categories:

- Theories that are developed, adapted, or “borrowed” from other disciplines (e.g. psychology, sociology, etc);
- Theories that analyse the task and purpose of social work (e.g. raising questions, such as: Should the focus of social work be “revolution” or “reform”?);
- Theories relating to direct practice, that identify the different fields of practice, practice approaches, values-based perspectives, and skills and interventions used in social work (e.g. client/person-centred, task-centred, etc.). (Trevithick 2012, p. 35)

Trevithick (2012) calls the last category "practice theories". She adds that there is no fundamental difference between the terms "theoretical knowledge" and "theory" and described each of the components as located in the theoretical domain. On the surface, it appears that Payne (2014, p. 5) had a contrasting view by separating practice theory from knowledge, stating that, "theory is different from knowledge - theory involves thinking about something; knowledge is a description of reality. Reality is a picture of the world that is accepted as true" (Payne, 2014, p. 5). This debate reveals the different perspectives about knowledge and theory that may explain similar understandings differently.

Trevithick (2012) discussed theory and knowledge in the context of two other knowledge domains: factual knowledge and practical knowledge, which coincidently resembled Payne's (2014) separation of theory from knowledge. Under what she terms a "Knowledge and Skills Framework", Trevithick (2008; 2012) breaks down the components of factual and practical knowledge (practical knowledge being interpretation of factual knowledge and practice evaluation) in addition to the first domain- theoretical knowledge. While Trevithick (2012, p. 61) acknowledges the common terms for the second domain - factual knowledge, as "findings", "statistics", "figures" and "records", she extends the domain of factual knowledge to include: knowledge of key legislation and law; knowledge of social policy; knowledge of agency policy, practice and processes; knowledge of particular problems; and, knowledge of particular groups of people. The third domain – practice knowledge includes two different groups: knowledge use or utilization; and, knowledge creation and skill development. She encourages using all three types of knowledge, that are connected in a triangulated relationship, to inform social work practice, thus reflecting both the perspectives of knowledge from social work scholars and theory developed by practitioners.

The question of "what kinds of knowledge are useful in practice?" arises. To answer this question, Payne (2014, p. 10) cited Struan Jacob's summaries of the philosophical accounts of knowledge in practice, which highlighted the differences between "knowing how to do something" and "knowing about…some aspect of the world". He also included Jacob's definitions of technique and tacit knowledge. According to Jacob, technique is knowledge that is formulated in an

organized way and is usually written down. This is different from practice knowledge; tacit knowledge is unformulated, which is different from formulated knowledge of facts, procedures and values (Payne, 2014, p. 10). Overall, the difference between academic knowledge and practical knowledge is described as follows:

> Knowledge about the world used in academic study of the natural or social world is worked out by rational deductions from confirmed observations. This is different from knowledge in practical fields like social work. In practical fields where knowledge is used to do something, practitioners use theories to help them understand how knowledge can support their decision-making. Their aim is not just to know more, but to use what they know. In practical fields of work, therefore, theory is about supporting reasonable judgement with thought-through arguments based on knowledge as Struan Jacob defined. (Payne, 2014, p. 10)

This distinction between knowledge used in academic study and knowledge used in the social work practice field reminds us to be cautious when we study knowledge and skills of other groups that differ from social work education and practice. It also reminds us that "Social workers must use both heart and head when interacting with clients and providing services" (Sheafor & Horejsi, 2008, p. 45). Using knowledge devoid of theory is insufficient, but also retaining knowledge and theories inside our heads is not enough for social workers; it is important to use what we know. It leads to consideration of two other equally important components of doing social work as it relates to the ways of social workers' ethical and skilful application of knowledge in their practice. Social workers also listen to their hearts to employ ethical and effective service in the field.

Social work values

In a broad context, the *Social Work Dictionary* defines values as "the customs, beliefs, standards of conduct, and principles considered desirable by a culture, a group of people, or an individual" (Barker, 1995b, p. 399). More specifically, social work values play key roles in determining social work mission, social workers' relationships with clients, colleagues, and societies, and defining ways of interventions and resolution of ethical dilemmas in practice (Reamer, 2013, p. 15). Compared to knowledge, values are defined as not provable and "they are what is held desirable;

they are used to identify what is preferred" (Johnson & Yanca, 2010, p. 21). Thus, Bisman (2004) suggested that the legitimacy of values in social work practice has often been denied as a result of greater weight placed upon formal knowledge by scientific communities. However, in the understanding of social workers' perceptions of child protective factors the influence of values perceptions, and perceptions on knowledge creation to inform practice cannot be denied.

The typologies of values and related terms are cited in the literature of social work in various ways from general to specific (Dolgoff, Harrington, & Loewenberg, 2012; Levy, 1973; Reamer, 2013; Shulman, 2009; Siporin, 1975). For instance, Siporin (1975, p. 352) proposed that there are different types of values that include ultimate or absolute (general), instrumental, personal, social, religious or spiritual, scientific, professional, moral, ethical, and non-moral values. Siporin (1975) distinguished these values by category, according to propositions "about what is preferred":

- [a fact] proposition about what actually exists;
- [a need] though values are regarded as involving desired end resulted that will meet human needs;
- [a right] a recognised, legitimated claim from social responses and resources, which people are obliged to meet;
- [an obligation] a wider societal demand and inner commitment for the valued performance or non-performance of actions, for which is held, and for which one holds oneself, responsible. (Siporin, 1975, p. 352)

Knowing about differences between these terms are important for social workers, particularly in the context where child protection and children's rights are used interchangeably. It is also helpful to be aware about this classification for frontline social workers who are heavily involved in the implementation of children's rights and child protection regulations. Moreover, Siporin's classification provides basic but important arguments for social workers to consider human rights principles in their practice. As indicated previously, human rights are one of the core principles of social work.

Often the terms "values" and "ethics" are used interchangeably as well. However,

they are not the same. Dolgoff et al. (2012, p. 25) explained that "values are concerned with what is good and desirable" while, "ethics deal with what is right and correct" (Dolgoff et al., 2012, p. 25). While social work practice can be influenced variably by values and ethics, it is important to tease these out so that the interaction between social workers' perceptions about child protective factors and their child protection social work practice can be understood.

Charles S. Levy provided two classifications of social work values which were acknowledged by Reamer as "two useful, pioneering classifications of the values held by the social work profession" (Reamer, 2013, p. 25). According to Levy's (1973, p. 34) first classification, values were conceived along three dimensions including preferred conceptions of people, preferred outcomes for people, and preferred instrumentalities for dealing with people. By distinguishing values from knowledge, he noted that "these three categories might constitute a guide for planning and action in social work practice and education" (Levy, 1973, p. 34). As Reamer (2006) wrote, Levy's second classification of the values differed somewhat to his first one. Levy offered four broad categories including societal values, organizational values, professional values and human service practice values of social work values (Reamer, 2006, pp. 24-26).

Levy's classifications of social work values highlighted the importance of the role of values in social work education and practice. The classifications guided what types of values can underpin which actions of social work. They interact with organisational and cultural beliefs that inform social workers' perceptions of right and wrong as it relates to the work they do, such as in their responses to child abuse or protective work with children and families. In particular, Levy's (1973, cited Reamer, 2013, p. 26) second classification of social work values strengthens this understanding. Levy's second classification of social work values has become an important part of social work education in Mongolia to the extent of this researcher's knowledge.

If the distinction between personal and professional values is not clear, they can present risks for social workers in the form of misunderstanding of the issues encountered in practice. For example, Cohen, Emerique and Hohl (2002, cited in Vuille, Bolzman & Durret, 2013, p. 416) expressed concern about professionals'

use of personal values in the practice as follows:

> professionals frequently evaluate the needs and demands of clients defined as "others" on the basis of value judgements that do not necessary stem from professional ethics, but rather from their own personal values.

This concern is about the practice that is guided by personal values rather than professional values and ethics. Reamer (2013, p. 29) warned that in some situations "these personal values can prove trouble, particularly if they conflict with laws or agency policy". Yet in other situations, the application of personal values to social work practice may have little adverse effect. This is because in many circumstances many "social workers know instinctively or intuitively what is the right thing to do" and these "instincts are important and do influence behavioural choices" (Dolgoff et al., 2012, p. 65). To understand social worker perceptions about the factors which are important to child protective environments, and how these value-laden phenomena play out in social work practice, the understanding of the historical, cultural and broader social influences on the development of personal and professional values, and individual virtuousness is necessary.

Dolgoff et al. argued that "social work practitioners take their professional values from societal values – that is, from the values held by the larger society in which they practice" (Dolgoff et al., 2012, p. 24; Shulman, 2009). Despite this, there is general consensus among social workers of some societal values as core fundamental values of the profession (Dolgoff et al., 2012, p. 24; Shulman, 2009, p. 658). Some of these fundamental values are embedded in the international definition of social work, such as the principles of human rights and social justice that are stated as fundamental to social work (IFSW, 2012a). Likewise, social work associations and social workers in different countries have their own missions and priorities depending on their contexts and histories, of which many have been codified into guiding statements, such as codes of ethics.

While social workers in Mongolia do not have a nationally agreed upon code of ethics, a group of Mongolian social work alumni who graduated from American social work schools took the initiative of developing a code of ethics for Mongolian social workers. They received acceptance of their version of the code

of ethics by the participants at the National Conference on Social Work in 2006 (K. Sukhbaatar, 2013). The IFSW definition of social work and its statement of ethical principles are used as a guide for professional university education. It is envisaged that the IFSW definition and statement will be used to contribute to the value judgements and ethical actions of university qualified social workers in their practice.

Like Mongolia, many other countries do not have a national code of ethics and draw upon the IFSW definition of social work and its statement of ethical principles to guide professional education and practice. The underlying principles of two of the values of the IFSW definition encourage different perspectives in social work and these have conflicted with each other since the establishment of the social work profession. Payne (2007) exposed this tension:

> Two values present in the IFSW definition of social work concern human rights and social justice. This represents the tension in social work's claim to achieve social improvement between individuals, who have personal rights because of their humanity, and society, whereas the social work profession defines itself as valuing social justice. (Payne, 2007, p. 84).

As Payne (2007, p. 84) stated, these two values represent "personal and social elements in social work's claims" that guide a helping process in two different ways. The tension between the two evolved during early stages of social work's development in the western countries, UK and America. Valuing belief in individual's capacity to improve was based originally on modernist views of charity leaders that "social work should accept the civic responsibility to make and act on moral judgements about its clients", thereby society could be cured of its ills by caring for, controlling and curing non-conformist individuals of their ills (Payne, 2007, p. 84). The value of a belief in social improvement drew upon leaders of the settlement movements, who thought that social change and reform could eliminate injustice and social problems created by industrialization (Adilbish, 2001, p. 65). According to Timms (1983, cited in Payne, 2007) social change and reform was a "transformational approach" aimed at "general political change in social welfare", and promoted by the Fabian socialists in contrast to the approach of the Charity Organization Society. Two other historic debates between functionalist and diagnostic social work and between radical social work and

therapeutic approaches explored "the conflicts within social work, to identify the value issues that are revealed" (Payne, 2007, p. 84).

In a contemporary view human rights is acknowledged of as one of the fundamental values of social work. As a result, social work values oblige social workers to respect moral standards that underpin codified ethical principles located in human rights covenants. This includes respecting "the inherent worth and dignity all people and the rights that follow from this", and accepting "to uphold and defend the each person's physical, psychological, emotional and spiritual integrity and well-being" (IFSW, 2012b). In addition, the acceptance of human rights in social work encourages social workers to respect the right to self-determination, to promote the right of participation, to treat each person holistically and to identify and develop strengths of their clients (IFSW, 2012b). At the same time, acceptance of social justice as one of the fundamental values in social work enhances social workers' responsibility to promote social justice in relation to society generally, and in relation to the people with whom they work. Social workers are expected to challenge negative discrimination, recognise diversity, distribute resources equitably, challenge unjust policies and practices and work in solidarity to challenge social conditions that contribute to social exclusion, stigmatisation or subjugation and to work towards an inclusive society (IFSW, 2012b).

Social work is a value-based profession. Since its development, the classification of social work values has changed, reflecting directions and changes in the contexts of social work practice. Mongolian social workers, specifically khoroo social workers widely use the code of ethics agreed by the international social work associations due to the lack of an existing nationally agreed upon code of ethics. Despite this, an initial process of developing and discussing a code of ethics has taken place. The professional value base of khoroo social workers is similar to the accepted global values of the social work profession. These values also help khoroo social workers to make ethical decisions and select methods and skills to use in their daily practice of protecting children from child maltreatment.

Social work practice and skills

The latest global definition of social work has called the profession of social work

"a practice-based profession and academic discipline"(IFSW, 2014). Using relevant skills tactfully to respond to "crises, emergencies or everyday personal and social and individual problems" in different social work practice settings (IFSW, 2012a) as well as "to engage people by supporting them to address life challenges and enhance well-being" (IFSW, 2014) are critical components of the social work profession. From its first attempt to the latest statements defining social work, key concepts of social work practice have changed to reflect the on-going development and current environment of the profession. One of the well-known social work definitions is the working definition of social work practice introduced by Harriet Barlett in 1958. This working definition highlighted the concept that the components of social work values, purpose, sanctions, knowledge and methods were key elements and practical aspects of the profession, framed by methods, techniques and skills.

As Bartlett (1970) wrote, "social casework, social group work and community organization" included systematic observations, assessment, action plan and evaluation of individuals, groups and community in the environment (Barlett, 1970, p. 223). A quick glance at the latest global definition of social work in 2014 indicates that some types of commonly used social work methods, such as individual therapy, group work and community work which still remain core activities of the social work profession are similar to what was included in the working definition of social work in 1958 and the common base for social work practice introduced in 1970. There are now additional activities such as counselling, policy formulation, analysis, advocacy and political interventions (IFSW, 2014). It should be noted that the context of social work practice has changed significantly over the fifty years.

Ongoing changes in the content and context of social work practice have been acknowledged in various social work publications. Turner (2003) acknowledged Bartlett's contribution of the pioneering definition of social work practice, which was developed originally in the context of American social workers in the 1970s when the bachelor degree of social work was the norm for practice. Turner (2003) noted that Bartlett's contribution included all the elements of practice and ways to recognise social work practice, but that Bartlett did not mention what practice

specifically consisted of nor the specifics of relationships between different elements (Turner, 2003, p. 345).

Turner (2003) suggested looking at a broader, generalist approach of social work when considering features of different societies with industrialised postmodern economies and Third World struggling economies. The consideration of democratic versus non-democratic characteristics of societies was suggested as important when conducting a review of social work contexts (Turner, 2003). Given the changes in the content and context of social work practice from an earlier stage of social work development to the beginning of 2000, Turner (2003, p. 247) proposed a more holistic approach to practice by adopting considerations of a generalist social work practice. The researcher believes that this broad generalist approach is relevant to the contexts of khoroo social workers who have to deal with various social problems related to the economic, political and demographic challenges of modern Mongolia.

As mentioned previously, Johnson and Yanca's (2010, p. 13) generalist practice model considers values and skills in five key concepts of practice that include assessment, person in environment, relationship, process and intervention. In contrast, a postmodern perspective raises questions about whether social work practice should focus on issues of fitting or not fitting into the environment or system, and whether practice should involve awareness about the context in which knowledge is constructed and communicated (Turner, 2003, p. 341) in ways that discursively consider meaningful ways of "fitting in" and conformity to social ideas. Therefore, Turner (2003) advises that a combination of generalist social work practice knowledge with postmodern thinking is appropriate for the entry-level practitioners, social work academics and for in-service training. This broad perspective may be useful for new social work communities who are seeking appropriate ways of developing social work in their own contexts.

In the process of the development of social work, the focus of practice has shifted from pathology or problem-based practice models to strengths and empowerment-based practice approaches (Lee, 2001) within a generalist framework for social work education and practice (Cox, 2001; Lee, 2001). The central focus of strengths based practice is defined as a focus on client capacity rather than their

problems or pathologies (Cox, 2001; Saleebey, 2009). In consideration of practice and research in child protection, the strengths based practice model and empowerment theory are complementary to other practice approaches that include resilience focused, ecological and human development interventions. Literature on skill frameworks for child protection practice that consider the relevance of strengths based and empowerment approaches, particularly those utilising ecological and human development theories, are discussed below as they relate to protective factors and social workers' perceptions.

Connolly (2007) introduced the practice framework that supports strengths-based and resilience-focused approaches in child welfare in New Zealand. This framework is based on three sets of philosophical perspectives: child centred, family led and culturally responsive perspectives and it is suggested that these be applied in three phases of child protection practice, namely assessment and engagement, finding solutions and securing safety and belonging (Connolly, 2007, p. 829). The three strands were central to the development of this framework. When Connolly introduced her framework she proposed shifting social workers' attitudes towards strengths-based approaches rather than a deficit-based or forensic focus. She proposed changes in the notions of three phases of child protection practice in the following way:

> It is interesting to note that prior to the development of the framework these phases were identified differently, e.g. the "assessment and engagement" phase was referred to as "intake and investigation"… and "the finding solutions" was referred to as second phase. The third phase, now referred to as "security and belonging", were earlier identified as "service responses". However, it was considered that the framework offered opportunities to think differently about the way in children and families are responded to and that it was possible to shape these ideas through language. (Connolly, 2007, p. 829)

In addition to the proposal of changing ways of framing the phases of child welfare practice, Connolly (2007) encouraged a focus on resilience by enhancing protective factors such as positive parenting, stable family life, strong family and kin network, community involvement and supportive network. The researcher found the components of this practice framework are relevant to the current study. Even the strands that contributed to developing the framework are found to be applicable to improving the implementation of current child protection policy and

further development of social work education and practice in Mongolia.

The key components of the Mongolian government's strategy on strengthening child protection in 2010-2015 and the three strands of the Connolly's child welfare practice framework based in the context of New Zealand have consistencies. As discussed earlier, the principles of the Mongolian government strategy on strengthening child protection put the emphasis on ensuring children's rights, promoting family support programs, child participation and partnership and managing protective services although recent activities of the Government of Mongolia are not necessarily consistent with the principles of this strategy. Mongolian social workers may need to look at details of the implementation of the New Zealand framework on child welfare services for further improvement of child protection practice and research in Mongolia.

Overall, Mongolian social workers include elements of strengths-based and empowerment approaches in their social work education and practice. At the early stage of development of social work, international and local social workers chose social work with a social development perspective and strengths-based practice rather than clinical social work as the key framework for social work. Mongolian social work educators and practitioners, therefore, included some concepts of social development relating to empowerment, social justice and participation, as well as elements of strengths-based practice in social work education. These were also considered essential concepts to be applied in daily practice.

The ways of knowing and utilizing various skills in daily social work practice are important components (Barlett, 1970; Johnson & Yanca, 2010; Shulman, 2009). As part of the thinking, feeling and doing processes, skills help social workers to "bring knowledge and values together and convert them to action as response to concern and need" (Johnson & Yanca, 2010, p. 25). One of the key issues in utilizing skills in social work practice is to be aware of the skills that can be applied according to situations and how to consider the appropriate knowledge and values according to context. Johnson and Yanca (2010, p. 25) highlighted the importance of this ability and named it "a skill of social work as the appropriate selection of techniques for a particular situation and the effective use of those techniques". The issue of utilizing social work skills effectively and becoming

confident or expert in skills was always important and it still remains critical for social work practice. While the current study did not attempt to examine social workers' knowledge of and confidence in using particular social work skills, the linking of values and knowledge when providing their perceptions of protective factors offered insight into skills they might use or, otherwise, skills in need of development.

Social work scholars seek answers to questions such as, "what type of skills or interventions are being used for what types of problems?" (Kranz, 2011, p. 225). The Practice Skills Inventory (PSI) developed by O'Hare (1997) is one of the instruments used to identify responses to this question. O'Hare (1997) categorized social work skills into four groups: supportive, therapeutic, case management, and treatment planning and evaluation. O'Hare and Collins (2000) learned that experienced practitioners were more likely to use supportive skills with clients who experienced moderate mental health problems than new graduates and less experienced workers, and they were significantly more likely to use specific therapeutic skills with clients who had experienced physical abuse, sexual abuse, physical neglect, emotional neglect, problems at school, violence, family and couples problems or unemployment (O'Hare & Collins, 2000, p. 57). They found that case management skills were more likely to be used by, and more highly developed in, experienced social workers when softer forms of child maltreatment were identified, such as lack of food, clothing, physical neglect and shelter, and parental adversity that included mental illness, substance abuse, unemployment, poverty and discrimination (O'Hare & Collins, 2000, p. 57).

As social work education and practice evolved, the measurement tools of social work practice and skills became available. One tool is the practice skills inventory that helps to measure what types of skills were employed, depending on the problems that social workers dealt with. The development of social work in Mongolia followed a similar pattern that has been tested in other countries and one can assume that the confidence of Mongolian social workers to apply particular skills will develop with practice experience. Social workers in Mongolia are aware of child protective factors, but their capacity for application in their child protection work remains a challenge.

Summary of the chapter

Demographically, the population of modern Mongolia is changing in both structure and locality. The largest age group are young people aged 20-24. The increased number of young people leads to increases in the number of children aged 0 to 4 years as well. Simultaneously, the intensive internal migration from remote areas to urban areas has made the capital city of Ulaanbaatar the densest area of Mongolia. These changes are reflected in the context of social workers' daily environment that is similar to other frontline workers at the community level. Since the Government of Mongolia operates within a top down, hierarchical approach, a similar structure and operation applies to all levels of government. At the community level, khoroo social workers and welfare officers have key responsibilities at the Governor's office in implementing and monitoring the laws on children's rights and social welfare.

Over the fifteen years of development, the profession of social work has been recognised widely by society and recognised in a number of legal acts. Mongolian social workers have gradually developed both social work education and practice and set up educational and practice institutions across the country. However, further developments are needed. There is a wide gap between the practice of social work and the expectations of social work educators and social work practice that takes place on the ground. This gap is evident in both the training and practice of khoroo social workers and welfare officers and is consistent with social workers in other sectors of Mongolia.

In the international context, social work places emphasis on practice and skills, defining itself as a practice-based profession. In rapidly changing contexts, social work practice models and frameworks are expanding, but the main practice methods such as casework, group work and community work with phases of assessment, action and, evaluation still play important roles in social work practice. New practice models, frameworks and different inventories to measure practice skills are becoming available in social work practice in both general and specific dimensions. Emerging practice models and frameworks introduce new

views of looking at social issues and phenomenon. Perspectives such as the strengths based approach allow social work practice to shift from a deficit or problem focused approach to strengths and a more solution based approach.

These changes in generalist social work practice affect child protection components including child protection, prevention and welfare. Consistent with the development of social work education and practice, different types of measurements of social work practice skills have become more available in research. Some of these new models, frameworks and measures were found to be relevant to social work and child protection in Mongolia, while some of them seem to be challenging in the context of Mongolia where social work is an immature profession. It may be that Mongolia is trying to catch up with the rest of the world in terms of social work values, knowledge and skills, but this is difficult in a short time when compared to social work that developed over hundreds of years in some other nations. For this reason, some of the basics of generalist social work practice that incorporate a systemic understanding, such as presented in the current research, will contribute to the development of child abuse prevention models in Mongolia.

CHAPTER 3: Literature Review

The chapter 3 consists of two sections. The first section reviews the studies on the factors that have been found as influential and protective at different ecological levels for children under six years of age. The studies on protective factors span social sciences disciplines in addition to social work, such as psychology, sociology, and public health. The second section of the review informs about the studies on social workers' perceptions about understanding of child maltreatment. To search and locate the relevant literature for the current study, the researcher used the electronic databases and search engines including SCOPUS, SciDirect, ProQuest, SAGE Online and Google Scholar and followed the parameters limited with the timeframe from 1970 through 2015 and different combinations of the following key words: child, family, and community protective factors, child protection, child development, child maltreatment, child abuse, children under six years of age, social work, perception of social workers.

Protective factors against child maltreatment

If social workers' knowledge about and perceptions of the importance of protective factors for child well-being and development can be understood, then it may be possible to target particular issues in social work education and professional development to inform interventions aimed at mitigating child maltreatment risks in troubled families. This section informs about twenty protective factors that were selected from the publications of Benzies Bernard (1991) and Maria Scannapieco and Kelli Connell-Carrick (2005). As it was previously informed, the study focuses on the protective factors for the children under six years of age. The researcher updated the selected twenty protective factors by extensive research findings considering the relevancy for the target age group of the current study. A brief overview of studies on child protective factors is followed by a description of the protectiveness of each of the twenty factors at three levels of human ecology: the micro-, exo- and macro-systems. Through the literature review, the researcher found that these twenty factors are relevant to the protection of young children from maltreatment and therefore included them in

the questionnaire of the current study in order to collect data on social workers' perceptions.

Overview of the protective factors

A protective factor is defined as an attribute of individuals and environments, which serve as buffers between person and stressful situations (Garmezy, 1985, p. 218). It is also defined as "something that, in certain contexts, reduces individual risks of psychosocial problems, and can therefore be understood only in the context of patterns of risks" (Little, Axford, & Morpeth, 2004, p. 108). Protective factors are also used interchangeably with the terms of compensatory and enduring factors, resources, developmental and ecological assets to stand against risk factors or increase likelihood of positive development outcomes (Bowers et al., 2011; Cicchetti & Lynch, 1993; Garbarino, 2014; J. Landau, 2010; Lynch & Cicchetti, 1998; Weigel, Lowman, & Martin, 2007). Each of these is defined slightly differently. For example, the term "asset" is defined as a measurable characteristic in a group of individuals or their situation that predicts a positive outcome in the future on specific outcome criteria. "Resource" is often used as a synonym for asset, referring to the human, social, or material capital utilized in adaptive processes (Masten & Reed, 2005, p. 76). The "developmental" asset which is cited commonly in recent prevention literature, is defined as "a set of interrelated experiences, relationships, skills and values that enhance child outcome in the perspective child development" (Weigel et al., 2007, p. 720). Ager (2013, p. 494) suggested that protective factors should be looked at in more systematic and holistic ways instead of "additive" and fragmented ways of looking at risks and resilience.

Patterson (2002, p. 349) argued that protective factors are "the characteristics that contribute to families being resilient", which is different from the term "resilient", an outcome of significant risk exposure. In his research review on public policy implications of child resilience, Ager (2013) suggested greater commitment to the operationalisation of resilience in all levels of analysis:

> Resilience is not just a result of the accumulation of a range of "protective factors", but such factors are embedded in one of the self-regulating systems that influence capacity to respond to threat and loss. (Ager, 2013, p. 494)

These two arguments indicate that the terms “protective factor” and “resilience” are not the exactly same, but the connection between these two terms can be interpreted as pre and post conditions of the status of being protected from risks. On the other hand, it also suggests being cautious in operationalizing resilience in research. When protective factors lead to protection from and prevention of risks, resilience can be a stable outcome after the exposure to a significant risks or harm.

By linking protective factors with individual risks, Little, Axford and Morpeth (2004, p. 108) noted: “a protective factor is not the absence of a risk factor”. They suggested paying more attention to “how protective factors can reduce risks to a child’s health and development” and to considering protective factors in the context that some protective factors such as good social supports in the neighbourhood, significant adults in the child’s life and other factors can help to improve discouraging situations of children (Little et al., 2004, p. 114). Masten and Reed (2005, p. 76) also defined a protective factor in the context of risk or adversity saying that a protective factor is “a measurable characteristic in groups of individuals in their situation that predicts a positive outcome in the context of risk or adversity”. In addition, it has been noted that protective factors can be helpful at one point of time, and could be harmful at another time (Benzies & Mychasiuk, 2009; Hawley & DeHaan, 1996; Little et al., 2004; Rutter, 1989).

A number of studies recommend that protective factors need to be assessed in context as moderators that mediate toward better functioning of individuals, families and communities (Benzies & Mychasiuk, 2009; Little, 1999) so that they can be used in prevention programs (Cullen, Cullen, Lindsay, & Strand, 2013). These studies report that protective factors are beneficial to preventative interventions (Benzies & Mychasiuk, 2009; Bowers et al., 2011; Hawley & DeHaan, 1996; Little et al., 2004; Ungar, Ghazinour, & Richter, 2013; Walsh, 1996; Wolfe, 1994); in particular, they are beneficial to the interventions that are aimed at helping families already in crisis and at risk of child abuse and maltreatment. The preventative interventions that focused on developing strong protective factors are found to be more cost-effective than the aid when interventions is provided to families that are already in crisis (Benzies &

Mychasiuk, 2009; Patterson, 2002).

Allison et al. were concerned about common characteristics of contemporary studies which mainly focused on deficit-oriented models rather than looking at strengths orientations that address children's capacities to use family and social supports (Allison, Stacey, & Dadds, 2003, p. 266-281). Consistent with promoting the strengths based approach in social work practice, Connolly (2007) noted "harnessing the collective strengths of the family toward the care and safety of children also supports the notion of building family resilience" (p. 830). Citing Kalil's research, Connolly explained the term of family resilience as having the same meaning as the protective environment of the family. This protective environment includes parents' connection with other adults in the household or extended family network and their ways of coping with adversity or stress and of developing collective strengths to respond to challenges at different points in the family life course (Connolly, 2007, p. 830).

The protective factors of the larger systems including extended families and community levels were found to be essential to ensure family well-being and to reduce negative effects of socio-economic constraints (Patterson, 2002; Voydanoff, 2005). Community resources and social and psychological assets such as a sense of belonging to the community, assistance in meeting family needs and the neighbourhood with social order and support, informal supports of families and communities, are found to be important protective factors that strengthen families and help them to get out of at risks situations (Benzies & Mychasiuk, 2009; Voydanoff, 2005). These comments suggest that understanding protective factors at different levels of children's environment and, their application to practice with families and communities are critical for the prevention and protection of children and families at risk of maltreatment.

In terms of typology of protective factors, Garmezy (1985) suggested three broad categories of variables:

(1) Personality disposition of the child;

(2) A supportive family milieu, and

(3) An external support system that encourages and reinforces a child's coping efforts and strengthens them by inculcating positive values (Garmezy, 1985, p. 219)

Garmezy (1985) developed these categories of protective factors after examining the list of risk reducers developed byof Rutter et al. This list included a number of individual, parental, social or school characteristics. Garmezy (1985) summarized the list, then organised the categories into three groups of protective factors that cover individual characteristics of the child, family characteristics and community characteristics or external support system.

The introduction of the human ecology theory by Bronfenbrenner resulted in further extensions of the categories of protective and risk factors in the context of child maltreatment (Belsky, 1993; Garbarino, 1977; Scannapieco & Connell-Carrick, 2005). Brofenbrenner's ecological theory on human development, which was updated by the author as well as by other researchers, is now known as the socio-ecological model. In this model the protective factors are categorised in four levels: ontogenic, microsystem, exosystem and macrosystem in conjunction with risk factors. These four levels are defined as follows:

(1) Ontogenic system level of the socio-ecological model, which was introduced by Belsky (Scannapieco & Connell-Carrick, 2005, p. 26), refers to the factors that explore the childhood histories of abusive parents;

(2) Microsystem level includes child, parent and family related factors such as happy relationship with and of parents, maternal warmth, parents' knowledge about child development and parent's expectations;

(3) Exo-system level covers the factors related to the broader community such as adequate formal and informal support in the community, childcare and kindergarten in the community;

(4) Macrosystem factors include factors related to the larger socio-political and cultural environment such as the cultural value of protecting children (Garbarino, 1977; Scannapieco & Connell-Carrick, 2005).

Initially Bronfenbrenner introduced four systems of human ecology: micro, meso, exo and macrosystems, but later decided that the mesosystem was a part of the

microsystem. With Belsky's addition of the ontogenic system the socio-ecology model remained at four systems. The researcher of the current study selected 20 protective factors at the three levels of micro, exo and macrosystems to measure the participant social workers' perceptions about protective factors. Since the current study did not address the background of abusive parents or perpetrators, the researcher excluded the protective factors at ontogenic levels.

The studies about protective factors revealed that protective factors are characteristics of children, families and their environment that stand against or reduce risks to children's development and protection. Various similar terms to protective factors are used interchangeably, but there are differences between them in terms of nature and the scope of the concept. The term "resilience" is often used together or interchangeably with protective factors, but some authors distinguish resilience from a protective factor by the difference in timeframe: resilience functions post-exposure while a protective factor functions pre-exposure to risk. Other scholars also encouraged consideration of the co-existence of protective and risk factors and the changing nature of protective factors depending on time and context. The next section introduces the studies on each of 20 relevant protective factors within the three ecological systems, the microsystem, exosystem and macrosystem.

Protective factors at the microsystem level

The microsystem is the immediate environment of the child where he or she lives, grows and interacts with her/his primary and proximate caregivers. The protective factors at the microsystems include the factors related to the characteristics and functioning of the child, her/his parents or caregivers and family members close to the child (Belsky, 1993; Cicchetti & Lynch, 1995; Garbarino, 1977, 2014). Family related dynamics, parenting styles, developmental and psychological resources of the parents are also considered as factors in the microsystem (Cicchetti & Lynch, 1995, p. 39).

Child related factors such as the easy temperament of the child, being a girl, having competent behaviour and having loving and adorable characteristics are found to be protective factors for children under 6 years of age in a number of studies of child development, psychology, social work and other areas of social

and medical sciences addressing the prevention or protection of children from maltreatment. The studies related to these four factors will be discussed below.

Child with an easy temperament becoming a protective factor

Chess and Thomas (1977) discussed the temperament of an "easy child" in their NY Longitudinal Study (NYLS) that was initiated in 1956. The aim of the study was "to test the hypothesis that temperamental individuality is an important factor in the child-development interactional process" by following the behavioural development of 136 subjects from early infants onward (Chess & Thomas, 1977, pp. 2-3). In this study the authors examined nine different categories of child temperaments and found that the category of easy child was one of three functionally significant categories. According to Chess and Thomas (p. 3), an "easy child" is characterized by biologic regularity, a preponderance of approach reactions to the new, a positive mood of mild to moderate intensity, and easy adaptability." Chess and Thomas (p. 4) reported on the positive effects of the "easy child" on child-parent relationship by saying that a child's easy temperament stimulates both "parental love and affection and the child's sense of being wanted and loved". However, they stated that the other side of the "easy child" category is that parents may ignore needs of the "easy child" because the child adapts so quickly and fusses so little; "one father was critical about his daughter 's easy adaptability because in his eyes she was a 'pushover', someone who would not fight for what she wanted".

Rutter (1979, pp. 50-57) found in his longitudinal four-year study that "children with adverse temperamental characteristics were twice as likely as other children to be the target of parental criticism". This study started in 1970 covering the total population of the 10 year old children in an inner London borough. In Garmezy's (1985, p. 219) discussion of some of the findings of the above study, he indicated that a positive temperament is one of the risk reducers among other reducers such as temperament, gender, warm relationship between parent and child, affection, absence of severe criticism, supportiveness and positive school environment. Both Chess and Thomas (1977) and Rutter (1979) found that a child's positive temperament is the protective factor that can be one of the risk reducers. It was suggested that the children's temperament should be taken into account in

assessment and intervention of child development and protection.

Tschann, Kaiser, Chesney, Alkon and Boyce (1996, p. 184) examined the effects of a child's temperament and stressful family functioning on child behaviour problems among 145 preschool children aged 2 to 5 years from four urban childcare centres in the United States. The study found that children with more difficult temperaments showed more behavioural problems than children with easier temperaments, particularly when they were exposed to high levels of family conflict. Easy children had lower rates of internalizing and externalizing behaviour problems regardless of the levels of family conflict (Tschann, Kaiser, Chesney, Alkon, & Boyce, 1996).

A number of studies reported that children with an easy temperament and less internalizing/externalizing behaviour problems were less vulnerable to child maltreatment (Benzies & Mychasiuk, 2009; Flores, Cicchetti, & Rogosch, 2005). They consistently associated this with the adaptive personal characteristics and warm relationship with caregivers.

Gender

A number of studies found that being a girl is a protective factor in certain circumstances (Benzies & Mychasiuk, 2009; Criss, Pettit, Bates, Dodge, & Lapp, 2002; Rutter, 1979, 1987). While feminist theorising is not central to the analysis of this thesis, it is worth noting that parent-child interaction is affected by the gender of the child and how the parents themselves "do" gender in accordance with social and cultural constructions (e.g. theory of gender performativity (Butler, 1990). Gender performativity is historically, socially and culturally embedded. It discursively informs parental expectations of either the male or female child, and the nature of parent-child interactions with that child. Berry and Boyden (2000) proposed that socially constructed expectations of girls tend to be far easier for girls to achieve than the gender expectations placed upon boys, which is a key factor in understanding the lower levels of resilience in boys. Heller, Larrieu, D'Imperio and Boris (1999) explained that social dynamics that are more supportive of resilience, such as nurturing children when they are physically abused or emotionally distressed, may be more available to girls than to boys. This is because social expectations tend to accept girls who are feminine

and emotional, but expect boys to be masculine and strong (Butler, 1990). These studies, therefore, help to explain why simply being "girl" is a protective factor when compared to "boy".

Criss et al. (2002, p. 1220) studied peer acceptance and friendship linking these factors with family adversity and a child externalizing problems based on the data that was collected during home visits from 585 families with 5 year old children from three different sites in Indiana, USA. Family and child characteristics were assessed through parent questionnaires and interviews; positive peer relationship data were collected during kindergarten and grade 1; and kindergarten teachers rated externalizing behaviours (Criss et al., 2002). The findings of this study indicated that "girls were more socially preferred by their peers, boys' mothers were rated as using more harsh discipline, and boys' friends were considerably more aggressive" than girls' friends (Criss et al., 2002, p. 1227).

When Rutter (1987, p. 327) discussed the concepts around mechanisms that protect people against psychological risks, he noted that " being female and having an easy temperament not only reduce the initial impact of some risk situations but also reduce the likelihood that maladaptive patterns of interaction will become established." He conveyed the message that "the protective mechanism lies in the interaction rather than in the individual attribute", and suggested using this knowledge in interventions (Rutter, 1987, p. 327).

These studies indicate that interactions between child and parents or child and caregivers are different depending on the gender of the child and the parents or caregivers gender preference in children. These are influenced by social and cultural expectations related to gender. Rutter confirmed that the protectiveness related to gender factors lies in the interaction rather than in the individual characteristics. Gender is considered an individual factor that protects a child from exposure to the risks of maltreatment.

Competent behaviour

A number of studies on child development and child abuse and neglect found that children's personal characteristics can contribute or protect children from maltreatment. Garbarino and his associates stated that "character traits developed

in early childhood can buffer children from severe stress and trauma" (Garbarino, Dubrow, Kostelny, & Pardo, 1992, p. 101). They described personal characteristics such as being active, easy going, having few sleeping and feeding problems, being humorous, and competent at an early stage of childhood help children to cope with stresses successfully (Garbarino et al., 1992, p. 101). In addition they found that the age of the child is important in building a resilience based on Werner's review which reported that "older children are better able to cope with stress than younger children" (Garbarino et al., 1992, p. 101).

The study completed by Kinard (1999, p. 473), on maternal depression was significantly related to maternal ratings of social competence of the child. The greater the mother's depressive symptoms, the more likely she was to rate her child as having a lower social competence. This study covered 334 predominantly white mother and child pairs living in moderate to low socioeconomic neighbourhoods. The children were elementary school age from 7 to 11 years old (Kinard, 1999, p. 467).

Some studies indicated differences in levels of development of competence among young children in terms of gender. For example, Liable and Thompson found that girls at 3 years of age had more verbal competence than did boys, therefore the researcher found that verbal competency of girls could contribute significantly to their narrative proficiency and advanced levels of socio-emotional development (Liable & Thompson, 2002, p. 1201). This may make it easier for parents to interact with their girl child and to address her emotional needs when compared to boys. On the other hand, studies on child competence indicated this as a protective factor, but that a child's age remains a critical determinant of the level of protectiveness of this factor.

Child who is perceived as adorable

No studies were located about the child who is perceived as adorable. A number of studies discussed a factor related to the child who is perceived as affectionate; however the child who is perceived as affectionate was combined with the child is who is loving and of high cognitive ability. The child who is perceived as affectionate, loving and with high ability is found to be more likely to be safeguarded from maltreatment, according to Garbarino and his associates (1992)

and Radke-Yarrow and Sherman (2005). These studies found that loving and nurturing interactions between parents and young children can build a foundation of positive relationship between parents or caregivers and children that contributes in building a protective environment for children.

Parents or caregivers who experienced a secure attachment with their own caregiver

Wekerle and Wolfe (1998, p. 343) stated that "insecure attachment in childhood sets the stage for abuse because of rejection, role reversal, and fear which were familiar territory for the parent with unresolved loss or a history of maltreatment". Scannapieco and Connell-Carrick (2005, p. 75) noted: "parents who have not experienced child maltreatment are more likely to have experienced a secure attachment with their own caregiver. Caregivers that come to this relationship experiencing secure attachment are more likely to have a healthy parent-child relationship". These studies confirmed that parents' experiences of secure attachment with their own caregivers help parents and caregivers to build a healthy and positive relationship between child and parent. Therefore parents or caregivers who had a secured attachment with their own parents or caregivers were selected as one of the twenty protective factors that protect young children from maltreatment.

Parents or caregivers with adequate knowledge and expectations of child development

Cicchetti and Lynch (1995, p. 34) found that maltreating families fail to provide children's developmental needs. Parents with adequate knowledge and expectations about children development were found not likely to maltreat their children (Cicchetti & Lynch, 1995; Scannapieco & Connell-Carrick, 2005; Werner, 1993). Wekerly and Wolfe also defined a number of key factors that determine healthy parent-child relationship: Adequate parental knowledge of child development and the demands for parenting; and, adequate parental skills in coping with the stress related to caring for small children and in enhancing child development through proper stimulation (Wekerle & Wolfe, 1998, p. 341).

Commencing in 1955, Werner's (1993) longitudinal study in Kavai, Hawaii, traced developmental patterns of a multiracial cohort of 698 children from

perinatal to ages 1, 2, 10 and 32. She found that "better educated parents had more positive interactions with their children in the 1st and 2nd years of life than less educated parents and provided more emotional support for their offspring during early and middle childhood, even if the family lived in poverty" (Werner, 1993, p. 509). For young children it is critical to have a positive interaction with parents and emotional support from primary or other caregivers for their development and adjustment in the place where they reside.

Maternal warmth

Maternal warmth is found to be an influential factor that promotes resilience in young children who are exposed to socio-economic deprivation (Kim-Cohen, Moffit, Caspi, & Taylor, 2004). Kim-Cohen et al. (2004, p. 654) tested genetic and environmental contributions to young children's resilience using Environmental risks (E-risks) data from among 1,116 five-year-old twin pairs born in 1994 and 1995 across England and Wales. As the authors noted, this study identified and examined specific protective factors including maternal warmth for different types of resilience outcomes among socioeconomically disadvantaged children. They found that "maternal warmth had significant and moderate correlation with behavioural resilience" in children, in addition to the factors of children's outgoing temperament and stimulating activities for children (Kim-Cohen et al., 2004, p. 657).

Using the same data of E-risk, (Bowes, Maughan, Caspi, Moffit, & Arseneault, 2010) conducted a study examining the role of families in promoting resilience following bulling victimization in primary school, when twins reached 7, 10 and 12 years of age. This study also assessed maternal warmth as one the family protective factors using the same measure of the Five Minutes Speech Sample. Bowes and associates (2010) found that maternal warmth and atmosphere at home both were strongly associated with behavioural resilience in boys compared to girls. The researchers (Bowes et al., 2010, p. 815) recommended the consideration of these family protective factors in school based and clinical prevention programs.

Even in the situation of conflict between mother and child, it was found that the mother's attitude and communication towards the child is important. Liable and

Thomson's (2002, p. 1200) study found that mothers who used extensive explanations and low levels of aggravation with children aged 30 months demonstrated higher levels of emotional understanding when the child was aged 3. The study indicated that the mother's warm attitude and communication with greater explanation builds a strong positive relationship between child and mother.

Baker and Phipps's (2009) work that studied Canadian family change and family policies found that in a two-parent family, the mother left the labour force at the birth of a child, and that it was still typical for women to assume the major responsibility for home and childcare. According to Kamerman and Kahn (1997), a similar picture of gender roles was found in four countries, Great Britain, Canada, New Zealand and United States, when they compared family changes and policies in four western countries. They noted that the husband's contributions to home and family work have increased modestly. Trickett and Susman's (1989, p. 290) study also found that fathers reported less childrearing support than mothers did, which was explained by the traditional roles of mothers. These studies confirmed social expectations about traditional gender roles that expect women to take major responsibility and heavy involvement in child rearing practice. This occurs across societies, even when mothers are employed outside of the home.

Brooks-Gunn et al. studied associations between maternal employment and child cognitive outcomes in the first three years of life. They found that children, whose mothers worked by the ninth month, particularly if they worked 30 hours or more per week, had significantly lower scores on the Bracken scale that was used to measure child cognitive outcomes at 36 months. The quality of the home environment and the quality of the child's care experience made a difference for children whose mothers did not work for the first 9 months (Brooks-Gunn, Han, & Waldfogel, 2002, p. 1052). The last study indicated if the mother stays home until the child reaches 9 months, it brings improvement in the child's cognitive outcome combined with the quality of childcare and a child friendly home environment for the toddler.

Happy relationship of parents

In the analysis of the determinants of parenting functioning in the frame of the etiology of child maltreatment, Belsky and Vondra (1989, p. 188) identified caring, affectionate spouses (marriage) as one of three long range protective factors that can enhance parenting in addition to two other factors such as an active and cohesive neighbourhood (social network), or a bright adaptable child (child characteristics). More specifically Belsky and Vondra (1989, p. 178) emphasized, "marital relations enhance or undermine psychological well-being which contributes to parental competence". Supporting Belsky and Vondra' (1989) study, Scannapieco and Connell-Carrick (2005, p. 120) stated, "mothers who were happy with their partner relationship were more likely to provide responsive, stimulating care to their preschool children". Later, the effects of the parents' happy relationship on children's positive adjustment were found to be dependent of the levels of neighbourhood disadvantage.

The longitudinal study by Vanderbilt-Adriance and Shaw of 226 urban boys and their mothers which followed them from infancy to early adolescence, found that "a high level of romantic partner relationship quality was associated with positive social adjustment of children only in the lowest neighbourhood disadvantage trajectory" (Vanderbilt-Adriance & Shaw, 2008, p. 898). The researchers added that the parents' conflict-free relationship may help a child to feel confident and safe in the home, but it might be not enough to respond to multiple risks that may influence a child from outside of the home (Vanderbilt-Adriance & Shaw, 2008, p. 898).

According to the research completed by Belsky et al. (1991, p. 494), there were significant associations found between husbands' neutral and positive marital change and positive child behaviour and paternal behaviour. In contrast, marital decline was associated with intrusive fathering and negative child behaviour (Belsky, Youngblade, Rovine, & Volling, 1991). This study involved 100 Caucasian families of middle and working-class socio-economic status. At the time of enrolment, all of families were expecting their first child. In this study parents were identified by maternal perception of the level of satisfaction in their marital or significant other relationship.

Parents or caregivers with structured, consistent daily routine

The parents with structured and consistent daily routines are found to be important protective factors for pre-schoolers (Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000; Koulouglioti, Cole, & Kitzman, 2009). On the other side, lack of daily routines and unpredictability in children's lives were found harmful in children's healthy development and academic success. For young children, lack of caregiver's supervision becomes one of the causes for child injuries (Ganchimeg, Davaalkham, Chimedsuren, & Amarsaikhan, 2009; Koulouglioti et al., 2009).

Koulouglioti, Cole and Kitzman (2009) also found that lack of caregiver's supervision was positively related to injury of children with infrequent everyday routines. Koulouglioti et al. (2009) used secondary data derived from the Rochester Preschool Injures Study including data of 264 mothers and their 3 year old children (Koulouglioti et al., 2009, p. 517). In the case of Mongolia, no study was found that tested associations between the rate of child injury and lack of parental or caregiver supervision or rates of maltreatment, but the rates of child injuries and burns among children under 5 were found significantly higher in pubic health and traumatology studies.

According to research at the National Traumatology and Orthopedics Teaching Hospital of Mongolia (2006), Ganchimeg and her associates (2009) found that the rates of child injuries among children under 4 years old were considerably higher when compared to other groups of children and child injuries and were registered as the second cause of death of the children under 5 (Ganchimeg et al., 2009). The hospitalization rate due to burns was the highest among children aged 0 to 4 compared to other age groups of the population. These findings indicate that children under 5 years old in Mongolia are definitely at high risk of being injured and burned. The causes of these high risks can be lack of parents' or caregivers' supervision and lack of understanding of the measures on prevention and protection for young children from maltreatment, in particular child neglect.

Quality of the child rearing conditions

Egeland et al. (1990) conducted a longitudinal study that covered preschool children with behavioural problems (N=96) and children with competent manners (N=22) starting at age 4 ½ and 5 years old and followed them through first,

second and third grade of school (Egeland, Kalkoske, Gottesman, & Erickson, 1990, pp. 891, 893). Through the HOME inventory, Egeland et al. (1990, p. 900) found that children who functioned in a competent manner in school had organized and predicable home environments that were stimulating and responsive to the children's needs. It was also found that differences existed between the group with behaviour problems and the exception group (group with competent children) on emotional climate and growth-fostering scales. Egeland et al. (1990, p. 900) reported that mothers of children with competent behaviour had higher scores on emotional climate that was indicated by mothers' accepting, respectful and positive feeling towards the child.

Supportive significant other in the home

Gunvor Andersson conducted a longitudinal study (2005) of 26 children who were placed in a children's home when they were younger than 4 years old and followed them up after they left the children's home at five-year intervals until they reached 20-25 years of age. He noted that the children who participated in his research had insecure parental relations during their childhood, and none of them lived with both parents after leaving the children's home with 20 of them having been in foster care for long periods or permanently. Some of them had lost contact with their mothers while in foster care or when moving to the other foster parents. They also had not had pleasant experiences of living in foster families. The relationship between the carer and children did not work as a protective factor. Instead they had at least one good relationship, a sister or brother or their grandmother or friends (Andersson, 2005, pp. 49-50). It was not mentioned whether these sisters or brothers were natural or adopted. But the good relationship with a significant supportive other in the home became a protective experience for them. Some of them also spoke of a teacher, a social worker or a scout leader as an important person for them (Andersson, 2005, p. 50).

Werner's longitudinal study of multiracial Hawaiian children from birth to age 32, found that all resilient youngsters had at least one person in their lives who accepted them unconditionally regardless of temperamental problems, physical attractiveness, or intelligence. Most of the children established close bonding with that person early in their lives. If this bonding was not with a parent, then it was

with another family member – a grandparent or favourite aunt or uncle (Werner, 1993, p. 512). These studies support the suggestion that in child rearing the protective bond between child and parent does not necessarily have to be with the natural parent.

The studies about protective factors at the microsystem indicated that some characteristics of young age children such as an easy temperament, gender and competent behavior, and being perceived as affectionate and loving put children in less vulnerable circumstances to child maltreatment because of socially acceptable, adaptable and warm personalities and culturally influenced roles and expectations of gender. Social, educational and cultural characteristics and positive interaction of primary caregivers such as parents with adequate knowledge and expectations, maternal warmth, happy relationship of parents, or a supportive significant other also contribute significantly to the protectiveness of young children. Besides parents' characteristics and their interactions with children, the structured and high quality of the home environment which is the most proximate setting of children's ecology play important roles in building a protective environment for the developing person. The studies suggested that the protective factors at this level can stand against or reduce the risks of child maltreatment at the proximate environment of the growing child.

Protective factors at the exosystem level

According to Garbarino (1977, p. 722) "social habitability" or a question of environmental quality is an important focus of the ecological model of child maltreatment. The focus on the environmental quality of the child allows us understand the factors related to the broader community system called "exosystem". Cicchetti and Lynch (1995, p. 38) indicated that the exosystem represents the formal and informal social structure that creates the context in which individuals and families function in the framework of an ecological and transactional model of child maltreatment. It is common that there is no children's direct involvement in and influence on decisions made in the exosystem. Nevertheless, legislations, policies and rules created at this level affect children's lives directly and indirectly (Garbarino, 2014).

As Garbarino and Kostelny (1992) stated, child maltreatment is not only a

problem of the individual or family, it is also a problem of the neighbourhood and community. Therefore, the studies found that having adequate informal and formal supports, resources and supportive networks are important contributors to building protective living environments for children and their families.

Having adequate formal support e.g., social service and assistance and social policy as a protective factor

Garbarino and Kostelny (1992) found a strong influence of socioeconomic and demographic factors on child maltreatment rates based on their examination of the trends in reported child maltreatment in areas of Chicago during the period 1980-1986 (p. 455). Garbarino and Kostelny used different methods to find out why one neighbourhood called North was deteriorating for children and families compared to other neighbourhoods in Chicago. The interview findings of the Garbarino and Kostelny study (1992) reported that the community with low risks of child maltreatment had very strong formal and informal social support networks and strong political leadership. In contrast, leaders of the community with high risks of child maltreatment did not know about community services or agencies that were available in the community and demonstrated little evidence of network or support systems, either formal or informal (Garbarino & Kostelny, 1992, p. 461). Based on their findings, Garbarino and Kostelny (1992, p. 463) advocated the introduction of "powerful efforts" and preventative approaches in order to reverse negative social momentum and focus on building a strong neighbourhood and community.

When Vermeer and Bakermans-Kranenburg commented on the findings of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Study (NICHD) on Early Childcare and Youth Development that was conducted in the United States, they reported that childcare by itself is not a risk factor, but that low-quality care is a risk factor for the development of children (Vermeer & Bakermans-Kranenburg, 2008, p. 265). The NICHD study added to the evidence that having a high quality care in the community increases the protectiveness of the community for young children. This finding is of particular interest to the current study, particularly when considering philosophies that promote community responsibility for care under Mongolia's socialist regime as opposed to the

current bureaucratic system in which the majority of work done by khoroo social workers is office bound, authoritative and primarily administrative. Understanding the perceptions of social workers on protective factors in a child's exosystem in Mongolia's current political framework will contribute new understandings about how to return child protection work to the community.

In addition, the literature suggested that high quality care may protect socio-economically disadvantage children from the environmental risks that affect their developmental functioning (Harden, Monahan, & Yoches, 2012, p. 290). Children who attended a childcare centre or preschool before entering school performed better on academic skills assessment than their peers. In particular the largest effects were shown for disadvantaged children after controlling for family indicators such as family income, parental education, and family structure (Magnuson & Waldfogel, 2005, p. 177). Having a warm and open relationship with his or her teacher or childcare provider is identified as an important protective factor for children (Joseph & Strain, 2004, p. 24). The protectiveness of the family environment, informal and formal supports and strong sense of social network and leadership play important roles in building a protective environment in the community or neighbourhood. The studies confirmed that having access to childcare is not enough to ensure development and protectiveness of children. Instead, high quality of childcare and a warm and open relationship between child and teacher are found to be important protective factors for young children, in particular for children from disadvantaged families. While these findings are important, there is no consideration of non-western culture and different contexts informing the family environment, which the current study will offer via analysis and discussion of Mongolian social worker's perceptions of protective factors.

Having an accessible childcare and kindergarten in the community as a protective factor

Benzies and Mychasiuk (2009) systematically reviewed 43 peer-reviewed articles on family resilience. They discussed the outcomes of having access to high quality childcare on families, particularly low-income families. The main outcomes of quality care included improved children's educational outcome, competence and increased possibility of parental employment. This review

supported results of previous studies that highlighted the importance of having access to high quality of childcare for children's educational outcomes and for increasing positive interactions between children and caregivers among disadvantaged families.

The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) Study of Early Childcare, recruited and interviewed 1,364 mothers when their children were 14, 23 and 35 months old to examine the characteristics and quality of childcare for toddlers and pre-schoolers (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000, p. 116). According to the NICHD study, the highest level of positive caregiving was provided by the home-based caregivers, including fathers, grandparents, caring for only one child, closely followed by home based arrangements with relatively few children per adult. In contrast, the least positive caregiving was found in centre-based childcare where there were higher ratios of children to adults. Childcare centres that employed caregivers who were more experienced and educated in child-centred theories resulted in care environments that were safer and educationally stimulating for the children (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000, p. 116). The NICHD study added that home-based arrangement or childcare with experienced and educated caregivers and with small child: adult ratios offered the highest levels of child development and protection.

The studies that sought correlations between the quality of childcare and children's developmental outcomes were countless compared to studies considering the association between accessible childcare and being safer in childcare or kindergarten than staying unsafe in devastatingly poor home environments. This trend of studies may be related to the emphasis on the quality of early education rather than on access to early education.

The Effective Preschool and Primary Education longitudinal study undertaken by Whitman (2011) in England compared school achievement outcomes in terms of literacy and mathematics for children who attended a low-quality preschool as opposed to staying at home. After five years of schooling, the children who attended a low-quality preschool were no different than those who had not gone to a pre-school at all (Whitman, 2011). On the other hand, studies on children

who attended a quality pre-school showed variable results.

The challenging issues under consideration by policy makers and researchers appeared to be different for high income and low income countries. It appears that the focus of researchers from high income countries is on the high quality of childcare and its impact on children's development and safety (Harden et al., 2012; National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000), while, in contrast, the accessibility to childcare and kindergarten remains more critical than their quality for the countries with low income. According to the National Statistical Office of Mongolia (NSO) and UNICEF, approximately 60% of children under five years of age in Mongolia (61% of girls and 58% of boys) attend a preschool (National Statistics Office & UNICEF, 2011). But, the study undertaken by the Teachers College of Columbia University and Mongolian Educational Alliance indicated that only 15% of the most disadvantaged children in Mongolia including migrant children, herders' children, children in poor families and children with disabilities are enrolled in pre-school education (UNICEF, 2014a, p. 46). Therefore, the priority of the political agenda focuses on accessibility or enrolment in preschool education rather than quality issues of childcare and kindergarten in Mongolia, as may be the case in most developing countries.

Recent studies indicated that child injury of young children has become a serious issue in Mongolia. For instance the public health researchers, Ganchimeg, Davaalkham, Chimedsuren and Amarsaikhan (2009), found that child injuries and poisoning are becoming the first and second causes of death among children under five years old in urban and rural areas of Mongolia. Ganchimeg et al. (2009) reported that there was no comprehensive study found beyond two reviews of medical statistical data. Based on their findings, the researchers recommended taking urgent preventative actions in addition to policy development (Ganchimeg et al., 2009). This alarming finding showed that the prevention of child injury is not only a public health issue but is also an issue of child neglect and lack of supervision by parents and caregivers of young children, combined with lack of access to childcare services in the communities.

Having an adequate informal social support e.g., relatives, friends, neighbours as a protective factor

Social support is referred to as the interpersonal interactions within the family's social network, including extended family members, that provide emotional support, and actual tangible help or information (Benzies & Mychasiuk, 2009, p. 107). Orthner, Jones-Sanpei and Williamson (2004) examined indicators of family strength among low-income households with children that contribute to family outcome. Orthner et al. (2004) used the Family Strength Index that assessed 23 potential assets in five dimensions such as economic, problem-solving, communication, family cohesion, and social support strength. Two indicators, such as turning to friends and talking to others for help measured social support assets within this index.

According to Ortner et al. (2004), the weakest strength for most low-income families was social support across all five strength dimensions that included economic, communication, problem solving, social support and family cohesion. Fewer than half of the participants said they had friends or family that they could turn to in times of significant need (Orthner, Jones-Sanpei, & Williamson, 2004). Full-time employed single and two parent household heads were more likely to have others with whom to talk to regularly (Orthner et al., 2004, p. 164). Supporting the findings of Ortner et al. (2009) and previous studies on family resilience, Benzies and Mychasiuk (2009) proposed to assess the protective factors in this context including as many influences that moderate or mediate their functioning as possible.

Recent social work studies promoted both universal and targeted services in the prevention of child maltreatment. However, child maltreatment is often hidden which makes it impossible in many instances to target appropriate services. There is also shame associated with families being known as recipients of statutory child protection services, which further silences them. Increased attention to a universal maternal and child health services, according to Scott (2009), is likely to capture those families that would normally remain hidden. Such an approach has the potential to engage isolated and vulnerable families in both formal and informal support networks, and strengthen the protectiveness of their environments, before

child maltreatment becomes serious. Identifying these families via a universal approach means that the families most in need are targetable. And, linking vulnerable families with informal others in non-threatening forums is likely to increase opportunities for learning new ways to manage children, as opposed to maltreating them. This was reflected in the study of 19 semi-rural families in Scotland by Hogg, Ritchie, Kok, Wood and Huby (2013) who learned from participating parents that the "best people for picking up tips" about managing children and other resources were other parents (Hoggs, Ritchie, Kok, Wood, & Huby, 2013, p. 1114).

A supportive partner at the time the mother becomes a parent is considered as a protective factor as well (Scannapieco & Connell-Carrick, 2005, p. 78). England and Erickson (1990, p. 31) noted: " if the abused individual is fortunate enough to establish a sustained relationship with a loving and accepting mate, relative, or therapist, it appears that his/representational model can be altered in a positive fashion". For example, a mother who tends to avoid close relationships because of her own childhood experience of an insecure attachment may have developed a representational model of herself that was built in her early childhood. Egeland and Erickson (1990) emphasised the importance of children's representational models that was introduced by Bowlby (1980). At an early age, the child constructs a model that fits the reality experienced, and once established the model is difficult to change (Egeland & Erickson, 1990, p. 31). Another example showed that "single mothers who had few friends and lacked support from family avoid close relationships because of their early history of unavailable parents" (Egeland & Erickson, 1990, p. 31). What this tells is that earlier childhood experiences of parents have associations with later parent-child interactions. The current study found, from the khoroo social worker's perceptions of protective factors, that these perceptions are potentially influenced by the social workers' own earlier childhood experiences – many who were children during Mongolia's socialist regime potentially with a different family life. How those earlier experiences influence perceptions of protective factors, and the changes evident in the khoroo social workers as a result of background life, education and other experiences, are discussed later in this thesis.

In the context of Asian communities, grandparents are found to be important supports for women becoming mothers and bringing up children. According to Bhopal's study that was based on primary data taken from 60 interviews with South Asian women residing in East London, the women's relationship with their own mother was a very important part of becoming a mother. The participants stated that "they felt close to their own mothers and wanted to have daughters, because it was the daughter who cared for their mothers and were able to understand and empathise with the pressures women face in South Asian communities" (Bhopal, 1998, p. 489). The findings identified the common role of the parental grandmother and other female parental kin in the Asian communities in terms of the provision of informal childcare support (Bhopal, 1998). This finding is also similar to and applicable in the context of Mongolia, where grandparents are commonly expected to share roles of parenting and upbringing their grandchildren.

Living in a non-violent community as a protective factor

According to Osofsky (1999), children who live in a community with chronic violence are not likely to be allowed to explore their neighbourhood independently because of parents' excessive control over them. He suggested that a comprehensive approach for dealing with urban violence is necessary, which extends to the development of "community support that can help children and families feel less isolated and overwhelmed and more able to cope with the chronic violence in their lives" (Osofsky, 1999, p. 42). Adding to primary prevention of domestic violence, Wolfe and Jaffe (1999) highlighted Hawaii's Healthy Start Program as an example of prevention efforts to protect children under five years of age. This program was initiated in 1984 and offered a comprehensive assessment of the strengths and needs of families at the time of a child's birth, as well as various outreach services including home visits. These interventions provided families with help, starting from birth, to prevent the incidence of child abuse and to promote healthy child development (Wolfe & Jaffe, 1999).

In the context of Mongolia, Lhagvasuren and Davaa (2010) confirmed in their study the benefits of multidisciplinary work at the community level. This included

joint assessment of risks of domestic violence and child abuse, which was considered a key aspect of preventative services. What is not known, however, is the influence of individual khoroo workers' perceptions of protective factors on their assessments and how that may impact on the design of interventions.

Living in a resourceful community e.g. socio-economic status of residents is well as protective factor

Garbarino and Sherman's study (1980, p. 192) found that parents in the low risk area used the neighbourhood more often as a resource for the children by exchanging child supervision and finding other children in the neighbourhood as playmates. In contrast, mothers in the high risk area were less likely to engage in neighbourhood exchanges generally. In high risk area there was less self-sufficiency, less reciprocal exchange and generally less adequate provision of childcare (Garbarino & Sherman, 1980, p. 192). Garbarino and Sherman labelled high risk neighbourhoods as socially impoverished and suggested that this could be an indication of the quality of social life and security for children in those neighbourhoods (1980, p. 195). Overall, this study reported that families with more resources and networks would experience less child maltreatment than the families with limited social resources (Garbarino & Sherman, 1980).

Adding to findings of the previous studies, Garbarino and Sherman's study showed that institutional (formal) and cultural social networks (informal) offered supports that were in fact protective factors for parents with young children. Social support networks based on positive interactions and exchange of resources with family members, supports from grandparents, supportive partners or significant others, or neighbours are critical backup for parents with young children. But, high risks of violence or limited social networks or resources in the community become escalators of social isolation, specifically among the families with high risks of child maltreatment.

Connection of parents or caregivers with the community as a protective factor

Coohey (1996, p. 250) tested the construction of social isolation in the context of child maltreatment in an empirical study involving 300 maltreating and non-maltreating low income mothers. Coohey found that the construction of social isolation is not only an etiological factor for child maltreatment, but is a large set

of variables that are linked to the parents' perception of support of their informal and formal networks. In her study, differences were located in the maltreating and non-maltreating mothers' perceptions of networks and supports available to them. Maltreating mothers perceived that they had fewer members in their social networks, fewer total contacts, and perceived they had fewer emotional and instrumental resources from their network when compared to non-maltreating mothers. Maltreating mothers' perceptions of support correlated with the receipt of fewer resources. This study showed that a parent's construction of social isolation was connected with the parent's perceptions of supports from formal and informal networks. For example, neglectful parents had fewer contacts and resources in the community compared to other groups.

Trickett and Susman (1989) conducted a comparative study on parental conflict between two groups of two-parent families with similar socio-economic background; one group had families that had no history of child abuse and other group had families that had histories of child abuse. They found significantly more parental conflict in the child abuse group when compared to the levels of parental conflict in the non-child abuse group. The study found that the majority of parental conflicts related to the family environment as opposed to child rearing variables. Tickett & Susman (1989) concluded that parental conflict related to child rearing practices usually ended up as simply a disagreement, but that conflict about family matters had more significant negative outcomes for children. This is because these families became isolated from their networks and subsequently experienced reductions in the social supports available to them. In some cases parental conflict led to severing of family supports altogether.

Gracia and Musitu (2003) conducted a study to determine the differences between Spanish and Columbian cultures in relation to community social support and child maltreatment in both cultures involving 670 non-abusive parents and 166 abusive parents in Spain and Columbia (Gracia & Musitu, 2003, p. 153). They found that in both cultures abusive parents demonstrated lower levels of community integration, participation in community social activities and use of formal and informal organizations than the parents providing adequate care and using both formal and informal social supports (Gracia & Musitu, 2003). But there were

differences in the degree of community involvement and participation between the two countries. The researchers linked these differences with collectivist and individualist values. For example, the higher level of community participation and involvement in Columbian samples was explained by collectivist values (Gracia & Musitu, 2003). According to the researchers collectivist values "stand for a society in which people from birth onwards are integrated into strong, cohesive in groups, which throughout people's lifetime continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty" (Gracia & Musitu, 2003, p. 164). The study showed that abusive parents demonstrated lower community integration and participation in two different cultural contexts. These findings indicate more contacts with the community networks and resources and better integration and participation in community activities are main features of less risky families and neighbourhoods in terms of child maltreatment. What may become evident in the current study is differences in perception about particular protective factors according to khoroo social workers' age, such that the older ones may be influenced by their socialist past in viewing collectivism as a protective factor as opposed to younger khoroo social workers who would need to learn a similar sense of community via their formal education.

The studies on protective factors at the exosystem level found that the environmental quality, in particular characteristics and functions of family within their neighbourhood and communities affect children's development and safety both directly and indirectly. The structure and availability of formal and informal social supports in the community are essential protective factors to mitigate or reduce risks of child maltreatment. What is important for children are strong formal and informal support networks, strong community leadership and collaboration, access to high quality of childcare, children's positive interactions with caregivers at childcare, parent's strong sense of connection and exchange of resources with other family members, neighbours and community, and active participation in community activities. Thus, the studies suggested considering these factors in further interventions and preventions in order to build positive and protective child rearing environments at all levels: family, neighbourhood and community, as well as in the socio-political and cultural environment which is part of the larger ecological system, macrosystem.

Protective factors at macrosystem level

The protective factors in the macrosystem include those that relate to the larger socio-political and cultural environment that affect the child and their systems. In the descriptions of these factors scholars tended to focus on examining cultural values of protecting children. The cultural values to be discussed in the thesis include the cultural value of protecting children and the cultural value of promoting nonphysical forms of punishment. These will be discussed later, particularly in the ways that these studies help to understand Mongolian khoroo social workers' perceptions of child protective factors and the interaction of their own cultural values on their perceptions.

Cultural value of protecting children

Lum (2011) provided the following definition of culture:

> Culture is the integrated pattern of human behaviour that includes thoughts, communications, actions, customs, beliefs, values, and institutions of a racial, ethnic, religious, or social group (Lum, 2011, p. 17).

In this sense, how cultural values interact with the protection of children relates to the development of cultural practices. Hence culture informs what are the right and wrong ways of doing things among a particular group of people, how to treat children in their family, community or societal context, and so forth. It is obvious that cultural practices related to child protection may not be shared among all members of a given group because, if they were, then people would all treat and protect children in exactly the same way. What can be said is that the relationship between cultural values, cultural practices and the key features of protective environments may have some dominant elements or practices identifiable across particular groups of people. Many of these dominant cultural practices are passed through the generations and among members of a given social group via visual, verbal and written texts. Many endure regardless of other training, education or life experiences. Korbin (1980) explored the cultural context of child abuse and neglect and exposed some differences in child rearing styles:

> Middle-class Americans tend to believe that each child should have his or her own bed, if not his or her own room. Hawaiian-American women, on the other hand, were incredulous that Haole parents put their infants and young children in a separate bed, and further in a separate room.

> [Alternatively] in Japan culture… sharing a bed with a family member is preferable. This reflects the high value placed on interdependence among family members…(Korbin, 1980, p. 6)

Korbin's (1980) study provided contrasting examples to display how the cultural value of protecting children is different and contextual. While the study is more than thirty years old, it provides a picture of dominant child rearing practices at a point in time, and locatable within groupings of people. Cultural variables in each grouping, evident in this quote, include class, gender, race and geographic location. What can be concluded is that people who share cultural variables with the cultural groupings described are more likely to also share cultural practices that may include sleeping children separately or alternatively sharing a bed with a child.

When considering the cultural practices that have endured for centuries in Mongolia, the protection of minors, orphans and disadvantaged individuals are strong cultural values of nomadic Mongols. The Mongols kept and transferred unwritten ethical duties of caring for minors and orphan children through their language and customs from one generation to another. Tuvshintugs Tsamba, a state honoured teacher, identified the ten main principles that have been used traditionally in child rearing practice among the Mongols (E. Sukhbaatar, 2009). These principles include love your child in the right way, protect your child from harmful and bad things, teach life skills to your child, influence positively your child, play with your child, work together with your child, rear your child in ways that help them become alert and curious to new things, teach your child to be cautious and provide a model to follow; do not hide your life constraints from your child and teach your child the customs and culture of your families and country (E. Sukhbaatar, 2009, p. 12). These moral messages were often included in the folktales and proverbs told to young children as a mechanism for passing on cultural values, ethics and norms. This uniqueness of the Mongolian culture is explained:

> In the long process of nomadic way of life, Mongolian people have formed their own way of cognitive ability to explain nature and society. They use their philosophy and practical experience to pass down their language and culture… Proverbs as one of clues to show different cultural backgrounds make a great contribution to the exchange of Mongolian culture and other cultures forming the intercultural

communication. (Wang, Wurencaodao, & Zhoulina, 2014, p. 72)

Folktales and proverbs are the most common and simplest way to teach cultural values and practical concepts of daily lives. Proverbs, in particular, are used frequently by Mongolian people. They are considered equally important educational tools in cultural child rearing practices, if not more important, than formal learning.

Raymond (2012), an American theological scholar, highlighted the importance of familiarity with the use of Mongolian proverbs to understand Mongolian culture. Others have described how proverbs are used by Mongols for moral reasoning, including those that justify gender divisions of labour. For example, Nikolaeva's (2009) study of Buryat families located in Russia and the north of Mongolia described how ancient Mongolian proverbs strengthened positions on woman's responsibility for child rearing. Whymant (1926) also studied Mongolian proverbs and how they provide rules for everyday conduct. Whymant (1926) suggested that proverbs not only constituted the moral basis of a civilised society but also taught children appropriate behaviour. Kler (1945), in his comparative study of Mongol proverbs with those of other nations from Europe to Japan, listed the proverb "Where the children are master they don't listen to anybody" which promotes an authoritarian parenting style to ensure children's respect for adults. In consideration of Mongolia's domination over Russia from the 12th to the 15th centuries, and the cultural influences from the Moslem civilisations west of Mongolia and Chinese civilization in the east, other proverbs relevant to old Mongolian child rearing practices may be located in literature on Russian, Chinese and other neighbouring nation's cultures.

The contemporary history of Mongolia and local studies on folk literature started when the Mongolian People's Republic was established in 1921, ten years after Mongolia became independent from the Manchu Qing Dynasty which ruled Mongolia for over two hundred years. During the period from 1921 to 1989, the People's Republic of Mongolia was strongly influenced by Russia and followed the socialist ideology. Mongols commonly benefitted from universal free education, health, and affordable housing during the socialist period, though the strong ideological control limited their freedom of choice and democracy.

Mongolian scholars first started transferring unwritten folk literature into written forms of literature during the socialist period.

The first publication on folk literature appeared in 1959 by Professor Bayamba Rintchen, "one of the foremost scholars of the People's Republic of Mongolia", as three volumes on folk-literature in the Bonn and Harvard series (Bawden, 1960, p. 530). Professor Rintchen collected songs, stories, proverbs, shamanist hymns and other specimens of folk-literature for over 30 years (Bawden, 1960). His publication became an invaluable source for western scholars on Mongolian studies (Bawden, 1960). Locally, his work became a benchmark and guided many Mongolian scholars to study different forms of folk literature.

Scholarly studies specifically focusing on the influence of proverbs in moral thinking around child protection and protective environments are not easily locatable. However, from the mid 1990s human right advocates started challenging the harmful effects of some traditional practices on women and children. For example, Altantsetseg Luvsanvandan, a Mongolian women's rights activist in her plenary keynote speech at the 5th East Asian Woman's forum (Luvsanvandan, 2003) mentioned traditional roles in which proverbs were used for the development of children, particularly teachings about family life, morality, nature, animal and environmental protection, but also warned that many traditions relating to family life had not been preserved over the 70 years of Mongolia's socialist period. She advised that socialist state policies and administrative ruling systems, as well as the subsequent influences of globalisation and the European education systems and cultures have disregarded some good Mongolian traditions. As a result, she recommended that decisive steps be taken to restore traditions that may lead to strengthening family life and countering contemporary social problems such as unemployment, poverty, homelessness, and childhood disadvantage.

Several scholarly articles examined current practices of physical or non-physical punishment of children in Mongolia. These articles together with other relevant articles are reviewed in the next section concerning the cultural value of promoting non-physical forms of punishment.

Cultural value of promoting non-physical forms of punishment

Cultures that promote parents' attitudes and behaviours, and permit the physical disciplining of children may have the potential to put children at risk (Scannapieco & Connell-Carrick, 2005). However, in Mongolia there is broad acceptance of physical punishment to discipline children in daily child rearing practice and many people do not consider physical punishment to be abusive. However, Mongolian and international children's rights advocates assert that physical punishment breaches the fundamental rights of children to be respected as human beings, to be treated with dignity, and to be protected from all forms of abuse and neglect. They advocate banning all forms of physical punishment in all contexts involving children in the home or otherwise (Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children & Save the Children, 2013).

The Government of Mongolia, as one of 48 signatory countries to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, expressed commitment to the prohibition of physical punishment of children. Despite this, the Global Report of 2013 documented that physical violence inflicted upon the world's population of children is set to rise significantly if governments' human rights commitments, including that of Mongolia, are not translated into the cultural practices of the people. While Mongolian criminal law prohibits physical punishment in schools and educational settings (violation carries a criminal sentence), physical punishment in the home, alternative care settings and penal institutions is not likewise regarded (Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children & Save the Children, 2013). Many health promotion activities in Mongolia have attempted to encourage parents and service providers to use non-violent forms of discipline with children. However, changing a culture in which physical discipline of children is regarded appropriate in child rearing can be challenging.

According to a systematic literature review undertaken by Larzelere (2000, p. 209), 17 out of 38 research studies reviewed examined the causal effects of physical punishment on child outcomes. All 17 reported beneficial outcomes when physical punishment was used in non-abusive ways, flexibly, not frequently and primarily as back up to milder disciplinary tactics. Larzelere (2000) concluded that milder forms of physical punishment did not necessarily present

adverse outcomes for children. The levels of severity of physical punishment constituting "non-abusive" was not clear from this study; thus it is difficult to determine what level of severity was as effective or counterproductive. Larzelere (2000) agreed that further exploration was needed, with which the researcher also agrees, given that the judgement about what level of physical discipline is appropriate is subjective and, for that reason, no one can really say how much physical punishment is too much.

From a human rights perspective, physical punishment is not acceptable under any circumstance. In considering the physical punishment of children, there already exists a vast differential of power in the adult-child relationship. As well, physical punishment encourages the view that "it's okay to hit weaker people" (Beazley et al., 2006). Beazley et al. (2006) found that acceptance of physical punishment was prevalent across eight countries of the Southeast Asia and Pacific region: Cambodia, Fiji, Hong Kong, Indonesia, the Republic of Korea, Mongolia, the Philippines and Vietnam. According to this regional study, the widespread prevalence of physical punishment of children was present among families and in children's homes. All eight countries perpetrated physical punishment in the name of discipline including beating, hitting, slapping or lashing, with and without the use of an instrument such as a cane, stick or belt (Beazley et al., 2006, pp. 9, 196). In children's homes and institutions, they found that some punishments were so severe that they constituted torture under the UN Convention (Beazley et al., 2006, p. 197). The prevalence of physical punishment was relatively high in all eight countries. However, many children were also reported as being free from physical punishment, which indicated that some adults were aware of other means of guidance and discipline (Beazley et al., 2006, p. 196). What this suggests is that, although there may be a dominant accepted cultural practice in one group, there are also many sub-groups within the dominant group that may share alternative concepts, ideals and practices.

Kohrt et al. (2004) tested the ecological-transactional theoretical framework in Mongolia (Kohrt, Kohrt, Waldman, Saltzman, & Carrison, 2004). Mongolian boys (N=99) aged between 3 to 10 and their caregivers participated in the study. Kohrt et al. (2004) found ten child adversity risk factors across three tiers of the

ecological system (micro, exo and macro): cultural acceptance of violence as discipline, contact with extended family, household size, primary caregiver's education, primary caregiver's mood and feeling questionnaire score, frequency of contact with mother, frequency of contact with father, quality of marriage/presence of spousal abuse, severity of physical punishment and frequency of physical punishment (Kohrt et al., 2004, p. 178). Kohrt et al. (2004, p.174) found impacts of the cultural, community and family factors on childhood mental health disorders and the association between cultural beliefs of accepting physical punishment and the probability of physical punishment.

People in different places have their own perspectives on appropriate practices for the protection of minors and disadvantaged groups in the society. In this sense, cultural values of protecting children are contextual. While one cultural group may practice a particular form of child discipline and perceive it as non- abusive, another cultural group may consider the same practice as abusive or neglectful. Similar to this pattern, many Mongolians have their own ways of protecting minors and disadvantaged groups. As part of nomadic lifestyles, most of the ethical and moral duties were transmitted from one generation to another as verbal advice, proverbs and folktales. Western and eastern scholars noted that Mongolian proverbs are useful tools to understand Mongolia culture and people, parenting responsibilities, discipline of children, and so forth. Academic literature confirmed the existence of the physical discipline of children in Mongolia and, while prevalence is elusive because much takes place in the home, one could assume that the cultural practice is normative and therefore widespread. But this is slowly changing in Mongolia as a result of the efforts of human rights advocates and others in their promotion of non-physical forms of child discipline.

Studies on social workers' perceptions

Many studies focused on social workers' perceptions in various social work fields in different countries and cultural settings across countries. (Albrithen & Yalli, 2013; Astor, 1997; Lev-Wiesel, 2003; Monnickendam, Katz, & Monnickendam, 2010; Popoviciu, Birlet, Popoviciu, & Bara, 2012). In addition, the studies on social workers' perceptions of child protection issues addressed mostly resilience, child maltreatment risk factors, health determination of child maltreatment, and

child abuse rather than specifically focusing on protective factors (Fakunmoju et al., 2013; McMurray, Connolly, Preston-Shoot, & Wigley, 2008; Rossi, Shuerman, & Budde, 1999; Segal & Iwai, 2004; Shor & Haj-Yahia, 1996; Sullivan, Whitehead, Leshied, Chiodo, & Hurley, 2008). The studies on social workers' perceptions are reviewed below; however they did not focus specifically on perceptions of child protective factors.

McMurray et al. (2008) studied social workers' perceptions and the use of resilience in working with children and youth in a longitudinal study conducted from 2004 to 2006 in England. Thirty-two semi-structured interviews were conducted with 19 social workers, who were responsible for 52 children and young adults in the age group from 0 to 16 (McMurray et al., 2008, pp. 299, 303). The findings indicated that it was difficult for social workers to conceptualize resilience and "they did not feel confident in their theoretical understanding. Indeed, a few of the care professionals felt that resilience was an academic issue rather than a useful construct to be utilized in their practice" (McMurray et al., 2008, p. 304). Instead, the social worker participants "talked about the significant role they played in advocating for parenting skills" and perceived that if young people had professional support this could have a positive impact on their future lives (McMurray et al., 2008, pp. 305-306). Positive links between the educational organizations and parents were highlighted as a helpful way to increase levels of confidence of both parents and child. McMurray et al. (2008) proposed that the social workers' discussions about resilience were not theoretical and contrasted this with other studies that achieved alternative results.

Daniel (2006) conducted exploratory case studies looking at the application of resiliency theory and practice in statutory social work with children in Scotland. Daniel's study used a published workbook which provided structural guidance and practical suggestions for assessment and intervention based on the theoretical framework of resilience within six domains of children's ecology. These domains included secure base, education, friendship, talents and interests, positive values and social competencies (Daniel, 2006, pp. 303-305). The study examined social workers' perceptions of resilience and their application of concepts relating to resilience in assessment and intervention. Social workers and other practitioners

who were providing services to eight neglected children aged 6 to 11 participated in the study via pre-testing of social workers' perceptions of resiliency in an initial questionnaire, training on resiliency concepts and post-training interviews. The study found that when participants commenced the study many were already using elements of resilience theory in their practice, but did not name it as resilience. The study found rich materials that supported children aged 6 to 11 to build resilience, and, most importantly, "the study indicated that the concept of working to nurture resilience can be operationalized for use with neglected children" (Daniel, 2006, p. 309). Daniel's study showed that some social workers use elements of certain concepts and theories in their practice, but they often do not identify them according to their scientific label.

Sullivan et al. (2008) studied the perception of risks among child protective workers in Canada. The study involved sixty-three social workers including 27 with less than three years of experience and 36 with more than three years of experience (Sullivan et al., 2008). After reading two scenarios of an assessment done by Ontario's Risk Assessment Model, social workers were required to determine the extent of risk present to the child and indicate actions required to be taken (Sullivan et al., 2008, pp. 699-700). Interestingly, Sullivan and her colleagues (2008) found that the perceptions of social workers with different levels of experience were not different in terms of determining risks and managing risks in the community(p. 699). According to the researchers, this finding was consistent with a study by Shor and Haj-Yahia (2008) that compared perceptions of social workers and relevant professionals on issues of child maltreatment, though similar perceptions and determinations of risks did not exist in the other studies they reviewed due to variability in case management decisions resulting from workers' level of work experience. Sullivan et al. (2008, p. 702) proposed that in-service training combined with the use of the risk assessment protocols would reduce the influence of work experience (Sullivan et al., 2008, p. 702).

Segal and Iwai (2004) conducted a study in Japan of three professional groups who worked with children (social workers, physicians and lawyers), comparing their perceptions of 45 child abuse related behaviours with the perceptions of

members of the general public who did not work with children. The researchers tested the null hypothesis – relationships between demographic characteristics of the professional groups and their perceptions of the child related behaviours (Segal & Iwai, 2004, pp. 19-20). Segal and Iwai found no significant differences among the groups in terms of occupation, education and income as expected. But, they found some differences based on age and gender. Older respondents and female respondents were more likely to perceive abuse in each of the 45 child abuse related behaviours. The researchers further explained:

> The relatively small differences based on gender and age, furthermore, may be ascribed to process of socialisation. When differences were found in perception based on age, the older respondents and the females were more likely to perceive abuse. This may reflect the tendency to be more tolerant of strict discipline when one is in the child bearing/rearing age as one raises ones own young children. In addition, females were more likely to evidence higher scores when there were differences in scores between the genders. As men traditionally are expected to tolerate greater physical and emotional difficulties than females, who are also expected to be nurturant, they may be more likely to find such punishment acceptable than may females.(Segal & Iwai, 2004, p. 26)

Segal and Iwai (2004) linked the different views of accepting abusive behaviours between younger and older generations and male and female respondents with the traditional views in Japan that accepted strict discipline and punishment for child rearing practice. This finding was consistent with that of Beazley et al. (2006) in their study of physical punishment in traditional and current child rearing practices across different Asian communities. Fakunmoju et al. (2013), in a comparative study of child abuse perceptions in the United States, Ghana and Nigeria, also found gender differences in perceptions of child abuse related behaviours for the Nigerian sample and associated this with the patriarchal nature of Nigerian society. While this study was not of social workers, it showed that cultural variables such as race, gender and cultural practices help to define perceptions of child protectiveness.

Shor and Haj-Yahia (1996, p. 425) conducted a study among 1,302 Israeli students from the disciplines of psychology, social work, education and medicine to determine their perceptions of child maltreatment, awareness of risk factors, recognition of the signs of child abuse and willingness to report various kinds of maltreatments. Among the Israeli students, similar patterns in their perspectives

were identified regardless of their educational disciplines, and there was a general tendency to perceive neglect as not constituting maltreatment.

Rossi, Shuerman and Budde (1999, pp. 581-583) studied the decisions made by 27 child protection experts and 103 child protective service workers in relation to child maltreatment cases scenarios. Experts each had an average of 20 years of experience working in the child welfare fields. The workers had an average of 10 years of experience in social service positions with an average of almost six of those years being in child protection (Rossi et al., 1999). Experts were provided with summaries of 70 cases and asked to provide their professional decisions following the reading of each case. Workers each received 32 of these case summaries and likewise responded. Regression analysis was used to code the 1,854 case decisions of the participants. Rossi et al. (1999) identified vast inconsistencies in decisions concerning identical cases when comparing each the experts and the workers. The researchers drew attention to the need to improve the validity and consistency of decision-making and suggested developing a rationale for making decisions in terms of safeguarding children and referring families to services. They recommended translating the valid rationale into training procedures that could lead to more consistent decision making in the field (Rossi et al., 1999, pp. 595-598). These two studies demonstrated two ways of studying professionals' perceptions on child maltreatment. The first used a questionnaire focusing on students' perceptions about four main areas of child maltreatment; and the second used the scenarios of child maltreatment cases to understand both perceptions and actions of experts and workers who were addressing the specific issue of decision-making.

In terms of welfare related professionals' perceptions about child abuse, maltreatment and protective environments, the existing research and literature is wide and varied in focus. While some located that perceptions across different cultures are different, others located group differences within larger cultural groupings, such as gender, age and experience. What is missing from these studies and is explored in this thesis, are the local, international, historical and educative contexts of social workers that influence their perceptions of child maltreatment and protectiveness. Unique to the current thesis is the way in which

the Mongolian life has formed and strengthened over hundreds of years via fables, proverbs and folk tales, including those that have a role in preserving some cultures related to child rearing, while other may have been abandoned due to changes in cultural, social and political contexts.

Summary of the chapter

Protective factors are defined as characteristics of children, families and their environment that stand against or reduce risks to children's development and protection. Similar terms to protective factors are often used interchangeably, such as the term "resilience". Some authors distinguish resilience from a protective factor, connecting it with experiences of exposure with risks, while others locate it as a protective factor in itself. Scholars also encourage consideration of the co-existence of protective and risk factors and the changing nature of protective factors depending on time and context. The ecological model offers the opportunity to observe protective and risks factors at four different nested systems within a human ecological system. The studies about protective factors at the different systems of the human ecological system inform that some characteristics of young age children and their primary caregivers as well as their communities where they reside had positive effects on protection and prevention of children and families from different forms of child maltreatment. Thus, the findings of these studies suggest considering the protective factors of children and their environments in further interventions and preventions of child protection and social work. As well, understanding of social workers' perceptions on protectiveness of children's environments will give insight into their capacity for applying preventative and protective models in the Mongolian child protection context, the training needed for this to occur and the supports required for families in communities. These are considered as some of the most important contributions that this thesis will make to social work.

The next chapter explains the research theory and methods used to synthesis ecological and phenomenological approaches for studying the perceptions of Mongolian khoroo social workers in relation to factors that may protect children from maltreatment.

CHAPTER 4: Theoretical Framework

The core reason for using mixing methods in social inquiry is to invite multiple mental models into the same inquiry space for the purpose of respectful conversation, dialogue, and learning one from the other, toward a collective generation of better understanding of phenomena being studied (Greene, 2007, p. 13). Accordingly, this chapter provides the key concepts of two different theories that guide the current study, the ecological theory on human development, and phenomenology. A multi-method approach that involved quantitative data collection via survey complemented by qualitative data from semi-structured interviews leads to mixed methods with an explanatory sequential design. In doing so, this study uses the two different theories sequentially to extend the quantitative findings by the qualitative findings in order to have a better understanding of the researched social phenomena in the Mongolian context.

This chapter outlines the concepts of ecological theory of human development and of phenomenology. First, the features and concepts of ecological theory by Bronfenbrenner are introduced as they relate to a systems approach to understanding child development and its application in child maltreatment studies. This is followed with an explanation of key concepts and features of phenomenology. Finally, an explanation of how the two theories work together and complement each other in providing a conceptual boundary is provided.

Ecological theory of human development

Urie Bronfenbrenner initially developed the ecological theory of human development in the field of developmental psychology. As Moen (1995, p. 1) stated, Bronfenbrenner's "theoretical paradigm, ecology of human development has transformed the way many social and behavioural scientists approach, think about and the study human beings and their environment." Bronfenbrenner's first articles (1943-1944) discussed the importance of having connections between individuals and social networks and having methods and techniques that help to understand those units beyond the individual and make links between observations (Cairns & Cairns, 1995, p. 399). These initial articles contained his

key ideas which contributed to the development of modern social ecology (Cairns & Cairns, 1995). Bronfenbrenner' ecological model of human development was first published in his book of 1979 (Bronfenbrenner, 1995; Moen, 1995).

Before describing the concepts and elements of Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory of human development, the researcher of the current study will highlight Bronfenbrenner's two personal and professional experiences that affected him profoundly in developing this model, as he described them in his publication (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). In the preface of his book *The ecology of human development: Experiment by nature and design* the first stimulating experience was Bronfenbrenner's involvement in field research studying community and other factors in the diverse communities in North America, Europe, Middle East and Asia. Bronfenbrenner described the benefits of learning about diversity through his involvement in different field research:

> First, it radically expanded my awareness of the resilience, versatility, and promise of the species Homo sapiens as evidenced by its capacity to adapt, to tolerate, and especially create the ecologies in which it lives and grows. Seen in different contexts, human nature, which I had previously thought of as singular noun, became plural and pluralistic; for the different environments were producing discernible differences, not only across but also within societies, in talent, temperament, human relations, and particularly in the ways in which the culture, or subculture, brought up its next generation. The process and product of making human beings human clearly varied by place and time. (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. xiii)

Other experiences were connected to his heavy involvement in the Head Start Program as a member and leader of the planning committee, in presidential task forces, and in scientific advisory groups at various levels of administration (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). According to the Office of Head Start at the Administration for Children & Families, a Division of the Department of Health & Human Service, USA, "Head Start was designed to help break the cycle of poverty, providing preschool children of low-income families with a comprehensive program to meet their emotional, social, health, nutritional and psychological needs"(n.o.). His involvement in the Head Start program led Bronfenbrenner to the conclusion that researchers should emphasize the linkages between research and public policy. Bronfenbrenner presented his conclusions about his involvement in the Head Start as follows:

> Participating in the Head Start Planning Committee, two Presidential Task Forces, and other scientific advisory groups at the national, state, and local levels, as well as testifying for and collaborating with politicians and government officials on legislation, brought me to an unexpected conclusion that is a recurrent theme in the pages that follow: concern with public policy on the part of researchers is essential for progress in the scientific study of human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, pp. viii-xiv).

These two descriptions about Bronfenbrenner' personal and professional experiences, gained from his involvements in field research in diverse communities and the development and implementation of Head Start, brought him to two conclusions. Firstly, the process of developing the ecological model of human development should reflect the strengths and challenges of diverse communities at various levels from individual to societal, and secondly, linkages between public policy and scientific research are important. The whole process and rich context in which Bronfenbrenner developed his ecological theory of human development made, in the mind of this researcher, his theoretical framework eminently suitable for application in the current study, given that this study's aim was to understand the different perceived protective factors at various levels of human ecology in Mongolia and also to understand how khoroo social workers own ecological systems interact with their perceptions of child protective systems.

Basic concepts of the ecological theory of human development

The ecological theory on human development, introduced by Bronfenbrenner in 1979, offered a new perspective on looking at interactions between a developing person and that person's environment. Bronfenbrenner (1979) defined the term of development as " a lasting change in the way in which a person perceives and deals with his environment", and the ecological environment as "a set of nested structures, each inside the next, like a set of Russian dolls" (p. 3). As the key concept of the theoretical framework, the ecology of human development was defined as follows:

> The ecology of human development involves the scientific study of the progressive, mutual accommodation between an active, growing human being and the changing properties of the immediate settings in which the developing person lives, as this process is affected by relations between these settings, and by the larger contexts in which the setting are embedded. (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 21)

Bronfenbrenner highlighted three features in the above-quoted definition: (1) a developing person who should be viewed "as a growing entity that progressively moves into and restructures the milieu in which it resides"; (2) the interaction between person and environment that should be viewed "as two-directional that is characterized by reciprocity"; and (3) "the environment defined as relevant to developmental processes is not limited to a single, immediate setting but is extended to incorporate interconnections between such settings, as well as to external influences emanating from larger surroundings" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, pp. 21-22). As Bronfenbrenner stated, the ecological environment is "a set of the nested structures" including micro-, meso-, exo, and macrosystems. He gave the definitions of each system and highlighted the important terms in each definition.

> A microsystem is a pattern of activities, roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given setting with particular physical and material characteristics. (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 22)

According to Bronfenbrenner, a setting is "a place where people can readily engage in face to face interaction - home, day care centre, playground, and so on;… whereas the factors of activity, role and interpersonal relation constitute the elements, or building block of the microsystem" (p. 22). In the definition of the microsystem, Bronfenbrenner highlighted the "experience" as critical. He said that the use of the term "experience" indicates both objective and subjective/ perceived characteristics based on consideration of both behaviourist and phenomenological concepts. Bronfenbrenner (1979) explained the reason he included the phenomenological view in addition to objective behaviourist concepts in the following way:

> Very few of the external influences significantly affecting human behaviour and development can be described solely in terms of objective physical conditions and events; the aspects of the environment that are most powerful in shaping the course of psychological growth are overwhelmingly those that have meaning to the person in a given situation. (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 22)

As Bronfenbrenner noted, this formulation is not original but was influenced by the work of theorists from different disciplines including Husserl, Kohler and Katz from philosophy and psychology, Mead and Thomas from sociology, Sullivan from psychiatry, Dewey from education and Linton and Benedict from anthropology (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, pp. 22-23). Bronfenbrenner (1979)

acknowledged Kurt Lewin's ideas of life space and psychological field that contributed greatly to the phenomenological conception of the environment in his theory of the ecology on human development.

According to Bronfenbrenner, Lewin's position about the reality of a relevant environment exists not only in the so-called objective world, but it appears in the mind of the person. Bronfenbrenner explained: "[Lewin] focuses on the way in which the environment was perceived by the human beings who interact within and with it"; however, Lewin's theoretical map of the space of the psychological field was curiously lacking in content, according to Bronfenbrenner (1979, p. 23). Bronfenbrenner explained Lewin's unwillingness to specify in advance the content of the psychological field by linking it with anticipated major tasks of psychological science that "needs to discover empirically how situations are perceived by the people who participate in them" (p. 23). For example, what are khoroo social workers' perceptions of protective factors within an ecological system that they too have participated in as children and later in their professional development? Two aspects introduced by Lewin were important to Bronfenbrenner in explaining the interactions between human beings and the environment: the tasks or operations in which a person sees the self or others as engaging; and, the perceived interconnections between people in settings.

Bronfenbrenner also noted the notion of "role" as a part of the system, the idea of which was borrowed from the sociological theories of Mead and Thomas. Bronfenbrenner (1979) updated and included "role" in his model as seen in the following definition:

> The standard definition of role in the social sciences is a set of behaviours and expectations associated with a position in society, such as that of mother, baby, teacher, friend, and so on. (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 25)

According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), all these phenomenological perspectives are relevant to the settings of the ecological structures at each system and they are reflected in his definitions of the systemic levels within ecological system, including the meso-, exo- and macrosystems:

> A mesosystem comprises the interrelations among two or more settings in which the developing person actively participates (such as, for a child,

> the relations among home, school, and neighbourhood peer group; for an adults, among family, work and social life. (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 25)

Bronfenbrenner (1979) stated that the mesosystem is a sub-system of the microsystem. He explains, "It [the mesosystem] is formed or extended whenever the developing person moves into a new system" (p. 25). However, in the mesosystem, the setting of the developing person will be "beyond single settings" (p. 3); "interconnections may take a number of additional forms". There will be others who participate in both settings and immediate links between them will be "in a social network including formal and informal communication among settings" (p. 25). "In the phenomenological domain, …the extent and nature of knowledge and attitudes existing in one setting about the other" (p. 25). In the context of the current study these concepts imply that the protectiveness of the growing child must be examined in relation to the child's immediate environment and in connection with primary caregivers, with their network with each other and the interconnectedness between them. This extension may exist in a larger system and have a more complex impact on the development of the growing child.

The exosystem refers to one or more settings that do not involve the developing person as an active participant, but in which events occur that affect, or are affected by what happens in the setting containing the developing person (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 25). Bronfenbrenner provided the following hypothesis that describes the exosystem:

> The person's development is affected by events occurring in the settings in which the person is not even present. [For instance,] I shall examine data suggesting that among the most powerful influences affecting the development of the young person in modern industrialized societies is the conditions of parental employment (1979, pp. 3-4).

As Brofenbrenner indicated, children do not necessarily have to be active participants of the exosystem, but events occur in the exosystem, such as family poverty, parental unemployment and violence in their communities to form part of the child's broader ecosystem and therefore may affect the child's development. It becomes important, therefore, to understand how khoroo social workers' perceive protective factors located in the child's exosystem, including how intervention with parents or communities translates into the strengthening of child protective environments.

Bronfenbrenner (1979) further defined the overarching system of human ecology, which is the "macrosystem".

> The macrosystem refers to consistencies in the form and content of lower-order sub-systems (micro-, meso-, and exo) that exist, at the level of the subculture or the culture as a whole, along with any belief systems or ideology underlying such consistencies. (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 26).

These belief systems inform the content all of micro, meso and exosystems. He explained that certain types or blueprints of the culture exist in each of the settings in society and when the structure of the settings is changed, it produces corresponding changes in behaviour and development. This description is supported by the following example:

> A severe economic crisis occurring in a society is seen to have a positive or negative impact on the subsequent development of children throughout the life span, depending on the age of the child at the time that the family suffered financial duress. (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 4).

Understanding khoroo social workers' perceptions of macrosystem protective factors, therefore, provides insight into target areas for the further development of social work education and practice. If khoroo social workers can learn about the positive benefits of targeting interventions at the political and ideological levels of a child's system, with a view to positively affecting children's lower-order sub-systems, then a child protective system is more likely. This can include, as one example, capacity building and health promotion activities aimed at changing cultural practices related to the physical discipline of children.

In addition, three other concepts from Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory of human development: ecological transition, human development and ecological validity were relevant for the current study. Besides introducing each system of the ecological environment or the structure of the ecological model, Bronfenbrenner (1979) identified "a general phenomenon of movement through ecological space" (p. 26) which he termed "ecological transition" and defined as follows:

> An ecological transition occurs whenever a person's position in the ecological environment is altered as the result of a change in role, setting, or both (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 26).

Bronfenbrenner (1979, pp. 26-27) noted ecological transitions occur throughout the life span as the result of changes in roles and settings reflecting effects of both biological functions and environmental circumstances. He argued that every ecological transition has both consequence and is the instigator of developmental processes. In this sense, he highlighted the primary focus of ecology of human development as follows:

> As the examples indicate, the transitions are a joint function of biological changes and altered environmental circumstances; thus they represent examples par excellence of the process of mutual accommodation between the organism and its surroundings that is the primary focus of what I have called the ecology of human development. Furthermore, the alterations in the milieu can occur at any of the four levels of the ecological development. (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 27)

The primary focus of the ecology of human development placed the emphasis on influences of children's surroundings on the development and position of the growing child. Bronfenbrenner (1979) suggested look at effects of the changing contexts when the child moves from one system to other one. Thus, the ecological transition becomes a platform "for the occurrence and the systematic study of developmental phenomena" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 27). What this means for the current research is that khoroo social workers have the capacity to change their own ways of perceiving protective factors due to changes in their own environmental circumstances.

Another important concept of the ecological theory of human development is the concept of human development. According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), "the development never takes place in a vacuum, it is always embedded and expressed through behaviour in a particular environment context" (p. 27). Below is Bronfenbrenner's original definition of human development:

> Human development is the process through which the growing person acquires a more extended differentiated, and valid conception of the ecological environment, and becomes motivated and able to engage in activities that reveal the properties and sustain, or restructure that environment at levels of similar or greater complexity in form and content. (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 28)

Bronfenbrenner highlighted three features [concepts] in this definition: (1) changes in person's characteristics that will be reorganized continuously over time and space; (2) developmental change that take place concurrently in two

different domains including the extension of perception or action; and (3) from the theoretical framework, each of these domains has a structure that is isomorphic with the four levels of the ecological environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 28). Bronfenbrenner' description about the perceptual and action domains provides two-sided perspectives of human development. At the perceptual sphere, the question focuses on "to what extent the developing person's view of the world extends beyond the immediate situation to include a picture of other settings?"(Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 28). The picture of other settings covers the places where the person functions, establishes relations with other settings and experiences external influences that may shape patterns of his/her social organization, belief system, and life style. In contrast, in the action sphere, the issue focuses on the person's capacity and functions to be effective, providing feedback about the nature of the system from one level to another, and enabling the system to continue to function, recognizing an existing one or creating a new one to fit the desirable order of the system (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The researcher found these two domains of the ecological theory of human development to be helpful in examining the research findings of the two spheres of perception and action.

Finally, it was important to the current research to understand the concept of ecological validity:

> Ecological validity refers to the extent to which the environment experienced by the subjects in a scientific investigation has the properties it is supposed or assumed to have by the investigator. (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 29)

Bronfenbrenner (1979) acknowledged the difference between the classical definition of validity and ecological validity as he explained below:

> In the classical definition, validity is ultimately determined by the nature of the problem under investigation; in contrast, ecological validity as heretofore defined appears to be determined once and for all by the setting in which the study is conducted, without regard to the question under investigation. (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 29)

He expanded the traditional definition of validity and emphasised the new focus of his definition which applied the term "validity" "only to the measurement procedures employed in research operations" (p. 29). As Bronfenbrenner (1979)

emphasized, the term "experience" indicates the importance of phenomenological views in ecological research. At the same time he advised:

> to refer to ecological validity when there is discrepancy between the subject's perception of the research situation and the environmental conditions intended or assumed by the investigators… it was not only desirable, it was essential to take into account in every scientific inquiry, human behaviour and development and how the research situation was perceived and integrated by the subjects of the study. (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 30)

Later, Bronfenbrenner extended his ecological theory of human development adding biological components and called the theory the "bio-ecological model" (Ceci, 2006). This model was described by Moen (1995) as having the following characteristics that interplay with each other: (a) characteristics of the person, (b) the affecting social context, (c) developmental process, and (d) over time towards a bio-ecological approach. The details of Bronfenbrenner and Ceci's (1994) proposed bio-ecological model, which located the system as " a whole" that included components of social, ecological and biological aspect of the human being and its environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 25), were incomplete in terms of evidence and argument. This model is beyond the theoretical framework of the current study.

Implication of the ecological theory of human development

As Moen (1995) noted, the ecological model of human development is well suited to addressing the task of understanding child abuse. A number of child maltreatment research studies selected the ecological model of human development as their theoretical framework (Belsky, 1993; Freisthler, Merritt, & LaScala, 2006; Garbarino, 1977; Garbarino & Kostelny, 1992; Moen, 1995). Learning from these studies, the researcher chose the ecological theory of human development to find out the distribution of perceived protective factors at different ecological levels such as the micro, exo and macrosystems by linking it with cultural, demographic and educational characteristics of social workers. Child maltreatment research often focuses on associations between risks or protective factors of child maltreatment and individual, demographic and socio-economic characteristics of children, families, and communities who are exposed to or being exposed for child maltreatment.

One of the first scholars to apply the ecological model of human development to child maltreatment research was Garbarino (1977). He highlighted the following four essential elements of an ecological approach, supporting Bronfenbrenner's concepts of the ecological theory of human development:

> First, the ecological approach focuses on the progressive, mutual adaption of organism and environment; Second, it conceives of the environment topologically as an interactive set of systems "nested" within each other, and sees the interdependent interaction of systems as the prime dynamic shaping the context in which the organism directly experiences social reality; Third, it focuses "social habitability" - the question of environmental "quality" and the means of achieving it and fourth, it asserts the need to consider political, economic and demographic factors in shaping the quality of life for children and families. (Garbarino, 1977, p. 722)

These four elements indicated different factors at each of four levels of the ecological model. Garbarino (1977, p. 722) noted that these factors reflect developmental dynamic: there is no "pure context-free" development. He indicated that the factors of the ecological systems are not stable; they contribute dynamics to the development of human being, as noted in his statement that the contextual changes lead to the developmental dynamics.

Belsky (1980) contributed to the ecological model by adding one more level, the ontogenic level, borrowing the idea from Tinbergen's work of 1951 and combining the theoretical models of Bronfenbrenner and Tinbergen (Scannapieco & Connell-Carrick, 2005, p. 26). The human ecological model was explained as consisting of four systems: ontogenic, microsystem, exosystem and macrosystems. Belsky (1993) stated that child maltreatment takes place depending on the balance of stressors and supports or of potentiating (i.e., risk) and compensatory (i.e., protective) factors. According to Belsky "when stressors (of a variety of kinds: parent, child, social conditions) outweigh supports (also of a variety of kinds), or when potentiating factors are not balanced by compensatory ones, the probability of child maltreatment increases" (1993, p. 413). Belsky also encouraged a focus on compensatory and protective factors noting that "it might be disappointing from the standpoint of scientific predication because of the too many paths to child abuse and neglect, however it is promising from the standpoint of prevention and remediation" (p. 413). In terms of the current study, perceptions that lead to incomplete understandings of child

protective factors and the interacting stressors at each the levels of a child's ecological system may render well intentioned interventions obsolete if the interaction between system levels is not well understood.

Based on the previous studies the ecological model of child maltreatment includes the four systems of human ecology and is often explained in the following ways (Belsky, 1993; Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Garbarino, 1977):

(1) Understanding the characteristics of the individual, her and his experience of being abused and neglected, that will allow researchers to explain the factors related to the characteristics of the child victim or perpetrator at the individual level. These factors are called "ontogenic factors";

(2) Studying how different systems affect the individual will provide understanding of the child's interaction with immediate environment such as parents, family, which are called "microsystem" including the mesosystem. As Bronfenbrenner (1979, p. 25) stated, "the mesosystem is identified as a sub-system of the microsystem";

(3) Examining the social "habitability" of an environment [quality of an environment] will allow researchers and practitioners to understand the factors related to the broader community system called "exosystem" and its impact on children's families; and

(4) At the end, examining cultural, political, economical, and demographic conditions that allow the researcher to understand the factors related to the impact of larger socio-political and cultural environments called the "macrosystem".

This ecological model with four systems of human ecology has been termed the "human ecological model", the "socio-ecological model" and "developmental transactional model" and applied in studies of different fields such as psychology, social work, education, public health and nursing. Scholars have highlighted both advantages and weakness of this theoretical framework. For instance, Benzies and Mychasiuk (2009) highlighted the following advantages of using socio-ecological model as the theoretical framework:

A socio-ecological model (Bronfenbrenner 1979) with the concepts of

> interdependence, homeostasis, and feedback was the theoretical framework used to understand organise protective factors across individual, family and community levels. (Benzies & Mychasiuk, 2009, p. 103)

The ecological model is considered useful for transactional and multilevel explanations rather than explanations of single cause or single focused processes (Benzies & Mychasiuk, 2009; Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000; Brooks-Gunn, 1995; Drake & Pandey, 1996; Ernst, 2000; Garbarino, 1977; Kohrt et al., 2004). However, some limitations were identified through empirical testing and validation. The strengths and weaknesses were cited in the work of Scannapieco and Connell-Carrick (2005) as follows:

> Despite limitations in its capacity due to its descriptive nature and its difficulty to test empirically, the ecological model is accepted in the field as the most explanatory model of maltreatment. Even with the difficulty in empirical validation, this perspective guides maltreatment research and practice. (Scannapieco & Connell-Carrick, 2005, p. 26).

Subsequently, scholars found the human or socio-ecological model as the suitable theoretical model for explaining child maltreatment in the context of children and families (Benzies & Mychasiuk, 2009). Many scholars used and enriched the human or socio-ecological model in their studies by examining various factors at different levels of the ecological framework or its collaboration with theoretical frameworks (Belsky, 1993; Scannapieco & Connell-Carrick, 2005). The researcher found that the ecological model was suitable for the current study, in particular to provide an overview of the distributions of perceived protective factors at each system of the ecological model.

Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory of human development introduced a new perspective for studying interactions between the developing person and his or her environment. In the ecological theory, the child is seen as a growing person who interacts with its environment that is defined as a set of nested structures of ecological systems including micro, meso, exo and macrosystems. The developmental changes of the growing person were explained in two domains of human development: perceptual and action oriented changes. The ecological theory of human development, termed variously as the "socio-ecological model" or the "human ecological model", has been applied in the studies of child maltreatment to examine the understandings of child abuse in connection with

risk and protective factors within different ecological systems. Relevance for the current research are the khoroo social workers' perceptions of protective factors, which are ordered in the research findings accordingly. In addition, khoroo social workers' own location in an ecological system in many respects overlaps and interacts with the systems of the children and families that are the subject of their interventions. The khoroo social workers' lived experience in an ecological system from birth through to adulthood, therefore, influences their perceptions of the phenomena.

Phenomenology

Phenomenology is a qualitative research approach which aims to understand the meanings and essences of lived experiences of individuals (Crbich, 2007). Within the nature of the interpretive characteristics, phenomenology focuses on "exploration of the way people interpret and make sense of their experiences in the worlds in which they live, and how the contexts of events and situations and the placement of these within wider and social environments have impacted on constructed understanding" (Crbich, 2007, p. 8). Phenomenology is defined as the theoretical perspective that attempts to generate knowledge about how individuals experience things (Hesse-Biber & Leavy 2005) and was developed into a research methodology for understanding the lived experiences of individuals or several people in relation to a concept or phenomenon of interest (Liamputtong, 2009) in descriptive and interpretive inquiries (Lopez & Willis, 2004). Applying phenomenology to help understand khoroo social workers' perceptions of child protective factors cannot be done without understanding their own lived experience in an ecological system that is overarched by intermingling values, beliefs, ideology and politics.

Historically, phenomenology emerged from European philosophy in the early 1900s (Grbich, 2007) with Edmund Husserl one of the main figures. This initial period of development is called the period of classic and transcendental phenomenology. Husserl introduced the method of classical phenomenology, calling it "the science of the essence of consciousness" (Crbich, 2007, p. 8). Husserl argued that the relationship between perception and its object is not passive. Gubrium and Holstein (2000) explained his argument in the following

way:

> Husserl argues that the relation between perception and its objects is not passive. Rather, human consciousness actively constitutes object of experience. It does not stand alone, over and above experience, more or less immaculately perceiving and conceiving objects and actions but, instead, exists always already from the start – as a constitutive part of what it is conscious of (p. 488).

Gubrium and Holstein (2000, p. 488) added, "consciousness constructs as much as it perceives the world … Husserl's project is to investigate the structures of consciousness that make it possible to apprehend an empirical word". Human consciousness is explained as an active consciousness that perceives and conceives actively objects and experiences, even a part of what it is conscious of (Gubrium & Holstein, 2000).

Grbich (2007, p. 85) noted: "Husserl saw meaning as being created by the mind through actions which have been directed towards these objects via a process of intentionality using concepts, ideas and images to form meaning for that individual". Husserl's argument is seen as similar to the recent constructivist view that "consciousness constructs as much as it perceives the world" (Liamputtong, 2013, pp. 7-8). In this sense, Husserl's phenomenology is also considered a foundation for the descriptive tradition of phenomenology (Lopez & Willis, 2004).

"Husserl's search for the essential foundation of knowledge in experience" was the endeavour to be free from presuppositions (Gubrium & Holstein, 2000, p. 488). In other words, the only useful way of doing critical reflection or understanding the meaning of experience as separate from the outside world was to engage in a phenomenological reduction or "bracketing" (Crbich, 2007) or to "think away the everyday world of the natural world and concentrate upon the inner [pure] consciousness of the individual ego" (Crbich, 2007, p. 85). This disconnected consciousness was seen to allow a focus on "a dual state of conscious awareness and reflective consciousness in which the essence of the phenomena will become evident" (Gubrium & Holstein, 2000, p. 488). In this sense, "some researchers advocate for descriptive phenomenologists not to conduct a detailed literature review prior to initiating the study and not to have specific research questions other than the desire to describe the lived experience

of the participants in relation to the topic of study" (Lopez & Willis, 2004, p. 727). The concept of studying pure consciousness that separates consciousness from the outside or natural world has been challenged and criticized as impossible; however, key concepts of classical phenomenology still occupy an important place in phenomenological studies in some degree.

In the current thesis, it was considered impossible to separate khoroo social workers' perceptions of protective factors, which are value laden, from the outside world. For this reason classical phenomenology was considered inadequate. The ecological theory helped to situate the khoroo social workers inside a system – their world. Interpretation by the researcher makes possible an understanding of the khoroo social workers' perceptions or consciousness, as being subjective experiences located in both their subjective and objective worlds.

Existential phenomenologists, such as Jean-Paul Sartre, Martin Heidegger, and Maurice Merleau-Ponte challenged Husserl's essence of consciousness (Grbich, 2007). Existential phenomenologists proposed to "see consciousness not as separate entity but as being linked to human existence, particularly in relation to the active role of the body and to freedom of action and choices. In this sense, essences became part of human experiences" (Grbich, 2007, p. 90). According to Grbich (2007, p. 91), the existential phenomenologists disagreed with Husserl's complete phenomenological reduction stating: "the complete reduction is impossible because one must first experience oneself as existing in order to experience other aspects. As individuals we are inseparable as a part of the world." Basically, the existential phenomenologists made phenomenology more socially oriented than focused on an isolated individual's consciousness, and this shift allowed phenomenologists to uncover meaning first and to be real instead of being in the state of pure abstraction (Crbich, 2007). Some concepts of existential phenomenology that encourage a linkage between the meaning of the perceptions and human experience were found to be applicable to the current study.

Hermeneutic phenomenology is another stream of phenomenology that brought phenomenology from descriptive inquiries to interpretive inquiries. Martin Heidegger is the main figure of hermeneutic phenomenology. He was a student of Husserl who challenged some of Husserl's assumptions about how

phenomenology could guide meaningful inquiry (Lopez & Willis, 2004). Heidegger took the term of hermeneutics from his theological studies and added the additional meaning of interpretation to it by stating: "the meaning of phenomenological description lies in interpretation" (Crotty, 1998b, p. 98). Heidegger was interested in ontology or the study of being, and defined phenomenology as "our way of access to what is to be theme of ontology, and it is our way of giving it demonstrative precision", and, "ontology is possible only as phenomenology" (Crotty, 1998b, p. 98).

Heidegger used the term "being in the world" in his hermeneutic inquiry and emphasized looking at individuals' narratives that will tell what he or she experiences every day. According to Koch (1995), two important notions, the historicality of understanding and the hermeneutic circle were essential for Heidegger (p. 831). "Heidegger declares nothing can be encountered without reference to the person's background understanding, and every encounter entails an interpretation based on the person's background, in its 'historicality'" (Koch, 1995, p. 831). The framework for interpretation is understood as the preconception in which we grasp something in advance (Koch, 1995, p. 831).

Freedom is an important concept in interpretive phenomenological inquiry which allows researchers to look at people's experiences in connection with social, cultural, and political contexts (Lopez & Willis, 2004). The idea of freedom is derived from the term, "situated freedom" in existential phenomenology, but is opposite to Husserl's concept of "radical autonomy", according to Lopez and Willis (2004). Situated freedom means the individual's freedom of making a choice, but it is not to be defined as absolute because freedom is framed by the specific conditions of her or his daily life (Lopez & Willis, 2004, p. 729). In this sense, Lopez and Willis drew from the description on hermeneutic phenomenology by Canadian sociologist, Dorothy Smith (1987), to explain:

> The hermeneutic phenomenologist, rather than seeking purely descriptive categories of the real, perceived world in the narratives of the participants, will focus on describing the meaning of the individuals' being-in–the-world and how these meanings influence the choices they make. This might involve an analysis of the historical, social, and political forces that shape and organize experiences (Lopez & Willis, 2004, p. 729)

By highlighting the differences between descriptive and interpretive phenomenological traditions, Lopez and Willis provided examples of two different approaches of phenomenology. While the descriptive phenomenologists have general questions of the status of being mother or wife for example, the interpretive phenomenologists ask more detailed questions around descriptions of a typical day of being a mother or wife and they encourage the participants to describe interactions, workload, relations with others and lived experience in the context of daily work practices and socialization (Lopez & Willis, 2004, p. 729). To make meaningful inquiries, Heidegger and other hermeneutic phenomenologists emphasized the value of background information and previous understanding and knowledge about the context by stating that it is impossible to have a mind free from the background that led the researcher to consider this topic worthy of research in the first place (Lopez & Willis, 2004). Koch also supported this difference when he compared Heideggerian phenomenology with Husserlian phenomenology. Koch provided the following criticism of Heidegger to distinguish two different approaches of phenomenology to bracketing:

> Heidegger criticises both the objective and subjective positions of Cartesianism. He criticizes in particular the notion that meaning is totally neutral and unsullied by the interpreter's own normative goals or view of the world. The interpreter inevitably brings certain background expectations and frames of meaning to bear in the act of understanding. These cannot be ignored, forgotten or bracketed (Koch, 1995, p. 832).

As Koch noted, Heidegger's interpretative phenomenology gives emphasis on background understanding to interpret the phenomenon, and does not require bracketing and ignorance of background. This emphasis of valuing background understanding of the phenomenon brought descriptive phenomenology into the new direction of interpretative phenomenology which supports the notion that "one's description" is not separable from "one's own interpretation" (Koch, 1995, p. 833). This phenomenological approach also put both the description and the interpretation of the phenomenon on the discussion table. Thus, personal knowledge gathered through literature reviews and personal experiences are valued in hermeneutic or interpretative phenomenology to make the inquiries more meaningful (Koch, 1995; Lopez & Willis, 2004).

The initial attempt of phenomenology to look at the individual's experience has

been diversified over time to examining different subjects individually or by groups. According to Grotty (1998b), "'new' phenomenology is not first-person exercise…[it] attempts to gather the experience of others in a way that safeguards its subjective character"(p. 155). Grotty reported that the new phenomenology is more connected with the transfer of phenomenology from Europe into North America. The changes of new phenomenology allow the researcher the possibility of "putting oneself in the place of others to see things from their perspective" (Crotty, 1998a, p. 156). The vocabulary of phenomenology stressing words such as experience, phenomenon, reduction, bracketing and intentionality still remains important through the changes of shifting from one developmental phase to another or moving from one continent to other (Crbich, 2007; Mitchell, 1979).

As Gubrium and Holstein (2000) reported, Schutz, a social phenomenologist, argued for a focus on the ways of the life world – the world that every individual takes for granted and is experienced by its members. He recommended "bracketing" first for studying members' attention to this life world. Bracketing means, "the analyst must temporarily set aside belief in its reality" (Gubrium & Holstein, 2000, p. 489) because he, like other phenomenologists, assumes that the life world exists before members were present and it will be there after they depart. Bracketing their own beliefs makes it possible for scientific observers to view the constitutive processes –the how – by which a separate and distinct empirical world becomes an objective reality for its members (Gubrium & Holstein, 2000).

In the modern context, phenomenologists are interested in questions such as how a person experiences a phenomenon such as motherhood, living with HIV/AIDS, depression, dying, divorce etc. to identify lived experience rather than second hand experience (Liamputtong, 2013, p. 8). Researchers who use phenomenology as their theoretical framework aim to "understand and describe the participants' experiences of their everyday world as they see it" (Creswell, 2007; Liamputtong, 2013, p. 8). Liamputtong (2013) said that to examine the construction of aspects of lived reality, "the researchers are required to bracket that reality …[by]… suspending any prejudgements about the reality, that they may see it as the participants would see it" (p. 8). Bracketing is also defined as "a methodological

device of phenomenological inquiry that requires deliberately putting aside one's belief about the phenomenon under investigation or what one already knows about the subject prior to and throughout the phenomenological investigation" (Chan, Fung, & Chien, 2013, p. 1). Chan and his colleagues (2013) noted that "in the hermeneutic or interpretive phenomenology it is acknowledged that pre-understanding cannot be eliminated or 'bracketed', which reflects Koch's statement" (p. 2). Other researchers reported that the technique of bracketing is found to be inconsistent and problematic (Chan et al., 2013; LeVasseur, 2003; Lopez & Willis, 2004).

Phenomenology has been used to understand meaning and essences of the understandings and lived experiences of individuals. Through its development, phenomenologists from different streams extended classic phenomenological concepts that focused on pure consciousness and own experiences by introducing broader concepts of understanding one's own and someone else's experiences within their background and contexts. This evolution made phenomenology a useful theoretical lens that allows social researchers to put themselves in the place of the researched individuals or groups to see things from their perspectives.

Implication of two different theories in one study

As Greene (2002) noted about the advantage of using mixed methods in social inquiry, the researcher believed the use of qualitative and quantitative methods, and the two theories, ecological theory of human development and phenomenology, would allow a deep understanding of khoroo social workers' perceptions of protective factors. The researcher selected a modest mix of two theories, which allowed keeping the boundaries of two distinct theories separate on the one hand, and creating one theoretical framework that allowed for some mixing of the two extensions on the other.

The first theoretical extension of the ecological theory of human development was selected as a guide to overview the participant social workers' perceived protective factors at different ecological systems including micro, exo and macrosystems. This analysis of perceived protective factors in four ecological systems is different from the usual examination of protective factors in connection to child maltreatment rates that are based on actual measurement of

existence of those factors and child maltreatment rates. Instead, the researcher used the ecological theory to examine associations between the social workers' background and the social workers' perceived agreement with protective factors at different ecological systems. The ecological theory was seen as the guide to look at the distribution of social workers' perceived protective factors in connection with the social workers' background in order to produce representable figures of social workers' views.

Phenomenology was used as another theoretical extension to understand social workers' perceptions at the deeper level, but which drew from understandings of the researcher's and the researched own locations in overlapping systems that shared may characteristics, particularly at the macrosystem level. The researcher found that a phenomenological view of understanding someone else's experiences from the perspective of the other was appropriate to discovering the meanings and attributes they ascribed to descriptions provided of protective factors. In this sense, the researcher believed that the use of the additional phenomenological lens would enrich the quantitative findings related to khoroo social workers' perceptions of protective factors.

Summary of the chapter

In this chapter the researcher briefly explored two distinctive theories, the ecological model of human development, and phenomenology. The ecological theory of human development was developed by Bronfenbrenner who addressed the interactions between children and their environment at four nested systems called the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem. To explain these complex interactions between children and their environment he introduced a number of ecological concepts including ecological transition, human development and validation. For him "the process of mutual accommodation between organism and its surroundings" was the focus of his theory. It was also a reason to call the theoretical model the "ecology of human development". Changes or developments in roles and settings of children's environments were also considered inevitable. In particular, the developmental changes of the growing person were explained in two directions, the perceptual and the action oriented domains that provided two different perspectives of human development.

In the Mongolian contexts, the perceptions of social workers are difficult to understand without considering their own development within a cultural and political context in a given society – e.g., the sub-system known as the macrosystem.

Bronfenbrenner's ecological model has been applied in child maltreatment research extensively to identify various risks and protectiveness of child maltreatment and to examine associations between risk or protective factors at different ecological levels and child maltreatment rates. The scholars noted that the ecological model is well suited to providing multilevel and transactional explanations of child maltreatment. It was also noted that factors of the ecological system are dynamic and child maltreatment takes place depending on the balance of risks and protective factors. Therefore, the focus on protectiveness of children and their environment has become keys to prevent from child maltreatment.

The second theory introduced in this chapter was phenomenology. Over a hundred years, the concept of phenomenology has been changed and extended in broader ways to understand meanings and essences of people's understanding and their lived experiences. Phenomenology is used to generate knowledge about how people experience things. But, phenomenological ways of understanding one's own and other's experiences differ depending on the tradition of phenomenological streams. For instance, while the descriptive tradition of phenomenology suggests understanding the meaning of experiences separately from the outside of world or of presumptions, the interpretive tradition of phenomenology advises to explore the background and pre-understanding of the context in which the person's world and experiences had developed.

Further, the phenomenological approaches have diversified from the first person experience to the experience of others or from individual centred to individuals and groups being in the world centred. The transition from personal focus to social oriented focus made new phenomenology more interpretive than descriptive and led it to become more popular than classic phenomenology. Researchers who use phenomenology in their research aim to "understand and describe the research participant's experiences of their everyday world as they see it". These descriptive and interpretive traditions of phenomenology render social

enquiries more meaningful in terms of understanding others' experiences in connection with background and contextual knowledge. At the conceptual level, the researcher in this current study did not mix extensively the concepts of phenomenology with the concepts of ecological theory on human development to explore social workers' perceptions; instead she used ecological systems theory to explore the perceptions of khoroo social workers, then phenomenology to build upon and support interpretation of those responses. The details of the mixed methods used in this study are described in the next chapter of Methodology.

CHAPTER 5: Methodology

In this chapter the researcher focuses mainly on the descriptions of the two different research methods that will help to achieve the aim of understanding Mongolian social workers' perceptions of protective factors in line with their background. The first section presents the research assumptions, research aim and research questions, which were introduced in the Chapter 1. A description follows of how the two methods were mixed, including the rationale behind the decision to mix two distinct research methods. The section provides an overall picture of the explanatory sequential design, and designs of both quantitative and qualitative research parts. The section on methodological aspects will introduce quantitative and qualitative recruitment and sampling strategies, ethical considerations, methods of data collection and analysis of each of the quantitative and qualitative research parts, the validity and reliability of research findings and, finally, limitations of the current study.

Research assumptions

Based on the literature reviews on the protective factors of children under 6 years of age and studies on social work and social workers' perceptions, the researcher of the current study formed the following assumptions regarding social workers' perceptions:

1. Qualified social workers more frequently agree with protective factors.

2. Social workers' education and experience in social work practice are more likely associated with their agreement with protective factors than their age or gender.

To examine these assumptions, the researcher conducted the mixed methods research with the explanatory sequential design under the following aim.

Research aim

The research aimed to examine social workers' perceptions of the protective factors of children under six years of age in light of the social workers'

demographic, educational and professional backgrounds.

Research questions

The main research question of the current study is "In what ways are social workers' perceptions of child protective factors associated with their background?"

To respond to the main research question, the researcher addressed four research sub-questions. These questions are as follows:

- What are the most agreed upon and least agreed upon protective factors?
- What are the associations between demographic, educational and occupational characteristics of social workers and protective factors?
- How do social workers describe the most and least agreed upon protective factors?
- Why are some protective factors agreed as more frequently than others?

The research sub-questions guided the two distinct research phases. The first two research sub-questions guided the quantitative research phase and the last two research sub-questions guided the qualitative research phase. The designs of each of the distinct research strands are explained below following the description of selecting mixed research design.

Research design

Rationale of selecting mixed method research design

The practice of using mixed methods has become popular in recent years (Barata & Yoshikawa, 2014). The benefits of various mixed methods include, "to better understanding the complexity of the social phenomenon being studied" (Greene, 2007, p. 20); or "bringing together a more comprehensive account in the area of research employed" (Creswell & Clark, 2011, p. 62). These benefits of better understanding, completeness and explanations led the researcher to select the mixed methods as her research design for the current study.

The researcher selected a mixed method with the explanatory sequential design with the aim of examining the distribution of perceived protective factors that protect small children from maltreatment in connection with backgrounds of social workers. The purpose of using the explanatory sequential design for the current study was to explain the results of the quantitative phase by using the results of the qualitative research phase (Creswell & Clark, 2011, p. 82) in order to obtain a depth understanding about social workers' perception of protective factors. The researcher was also interested to find out the trend of perceived protective factors and its association with social workers' backgrounds. Rather than using just one strand, the mixed methods with the explanatory sequential design was the appropriate method to explain the distributions of the most and least agreed perceived protective factors as well as the significant relationships between social workers' perceived agreement and their backgrounds in more depth by using an exploratory approach in the qualitative phase.

Creswell and Clark (2011, p.64) suggested four aspects that should be considered in choosing an appropriate mixed methods design: (1) the level of interaction between two different research strands, (2) the relative priority of the two strands, (3) the timing of the strands, and (4) the procedure of mixing the strands. In regard to the level of interaction between the quantitative and qualitative research parts in the current study, some interactions between two strands occurred during data collection and interpretation of the findings. The researcher considered findings of both quantitative and qualitative parts as equally important. However, due to selecting the sequential timing design for the current study, the findings of the quantitative phase informed the second phase of collecting and analysing qualitative data. The mixing procedure between the two strands occurred at least twice: once when the preliminary results of quantitative analysis contributed to revising the interview questions and once during the interpretation of the findings of the two strands. Details about how the mixing occurred are given in the following section.

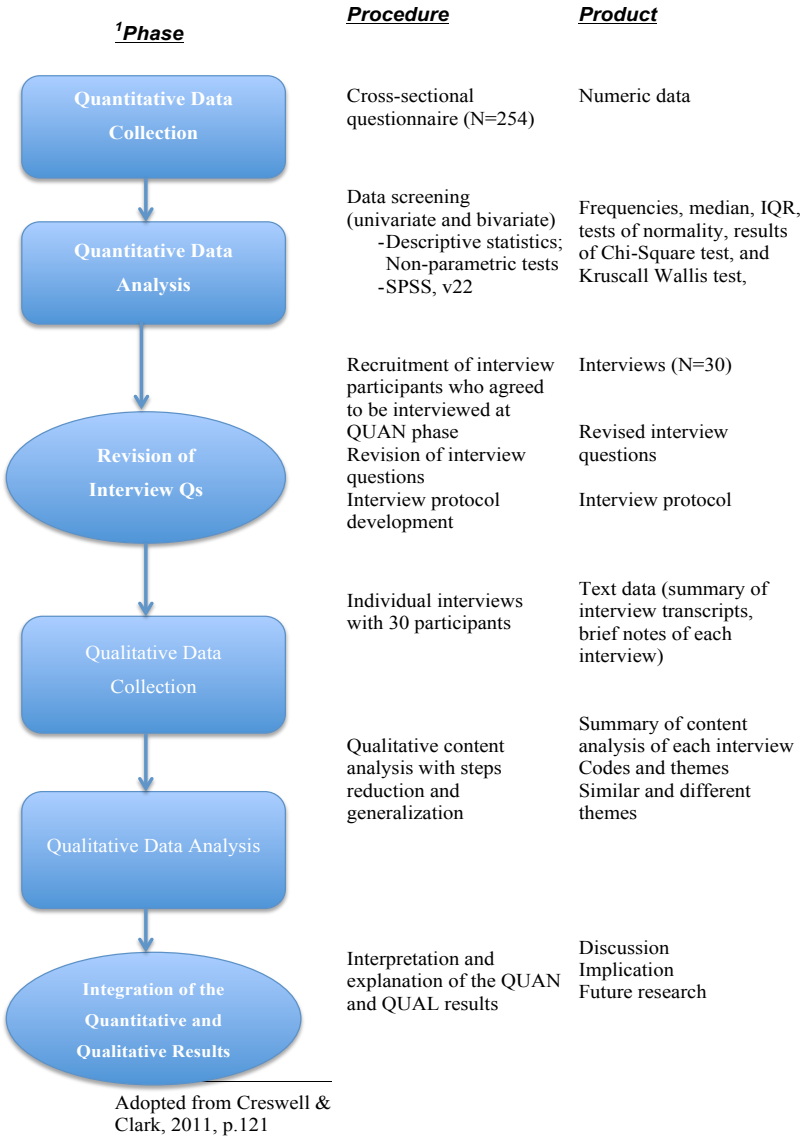
Description of using the explanatory sequential design

As Creswell and Clark (2011, p. 71) explained, the mixed method with

explanatory sequential design occurred in two distinct interactive phases. The first phase was the collection and data analysis of the quantitative data, which had the priority for addressing the research question. The second phase of qualitative data collection and analysis followed the first phase based on the results of the quantitative analysis. Finally, "the researcher interprets how the qualitative results help explain the initial quantitative results" (Creswell & Clark, 2011, p. 71). Choosing the mixed methods with explanatory sequential design allowed the researcher to use two different philosophical assumptions separately for the quantitative and qualitative phases. The scholars who wrote about mixed methods recommended using different theoretical assumptions for each of the phases. Cresswell and Clark (2011) explained the rationale of using different assumptions within each phase of the explanatory sequential design as follows:

> We encourage researchers to consider using different assumptions within each phase: that is, since the study begins quantitatively, the research typically begins from the perspectives of postpositivism to develop instruments, measure variables, and assess statistical results. When research moves to the qualitative phase that values multiple perspectives and in depth-description, there is a shift to using the assumptions of constructivism. (Creswell & Clark, 2011, pp. 82-83)

Consistent with the suggestion of Creswell and Clark (2011), the researcher used the ecological theory of human development to design the questionnaire that measured quantitatively social workers' perceived agreement with twenty selected protective factors that belong to different ecological systems. Since the purpose of the second phase, the qualitative study, was to explain the findings of the quantitative phase, the researcher used some elements of phenomenological enquiry in designing the interview questions. Details of designing the quantitative and qualitative research parts are described in later sections. Figure 5.1 outlines the current study with explanatory sequential design.



Adopted from Creswell & Clark, 2011, p.121

Figure 5.1. Explanatory sequential design of the current study (Creswell, 2011, p. 121).

Following the procedure of mixing two different research methods, the researcher first carried out the quantitative study by collecting data from 256 social workers via a questionnaire and then conducting a preliminary data analysis of the questionnaire using the statistical software of SPSS, contributing to the main

research question: In what ways are social workers' perceptions of child protective factors associated with demographic, educational and occupational background?

To answer this main research question, the data collection and analysis of the quantitative research addressed the following two sub research questions: What are the most agreed upon and least agreed upon protective factors? What are the associations between demographic, educational and occupational characteristics of social workers and perceived protective factors?

To respond to the first research sub-questions, the research individually examined the distributions of twenty perceived protective factors in addition to examining social workers' characteristics of demographic, educational and professional background.

After examining the distributions of each of twenty protective factors, the researcher examined the associations between each protective factor and the demographic, educational and occupational characteristics of social workers. The researcher used non-parametric statistical methods to examine associations at bivariate level.

In the second phase of the study, qualitative data collection and analysis focused on further explanations of the findings of the quantitative data analysis. This was done in order to expand findings of the quantitative research part and to gain a better understanding of the social workers' perceived protective factors in a broader context. The researcher connected the data which was analysed from the quantitative data collection with the data collection for the qualitative to explain quantitative significant and non-significant results as Creswell (2011) explained. Following Creswell's description of the connectedness in the mixed methods, the researcher updated initial interview questions on the basis of findings of the quantitative data. In this case, the interview questions became more specific and focused on certain protective factors and understanding about those factors identified as a result of quantitative data analysis. This process provided the opportunity to link the results of two different research methods in sequential order and to provide more descriptive findings of the current study.

Reflecting the findings from the quantitative data analysis, the researcher then conducted interviews with 30 participants who had indicated on their questionnaire that they agreed to be interviewed. Qualitative data analysis was carried out at the next stage by using basic phenomenological procedure to explain some findings of quantitative data analysis in greater detail. In other words, quantitative and qualitative data were collected and analysed sequentially in terms of mixing timing and data following the explanatory sequential design of the mixed methods.

A detailed description of the quantitative and qualitative research designs is presented in the next section.

Design of the quantitative research phase

The researcher developed the questionnaire in order to collect quantitative (numeric) data using 27 variables (Appendix 1). These variables were divided into two sections in the questionnaire in the following ways (Appendix 2):

(1) Section One contained questions that addressed the demographic and educational data of the research participants-social workers; and

(2) Section Two focused on the degree of the social workers' agreement with twenty individually listed factors.

Questionnaire sections: One and Two:

Variables in the questionnaire in Sections One and Two were selected from previous studies on social work training in Mongolia and child protective factors. The variables in Section One were all independent variables that indicate demographic, educational and occupational characteristics of the research participants, social workers (Appendix 1). Variables of gender and age indicated the demographic characteristic of the research participants. Four variables defined the educational characteristics of the research participants: the highest education obtained, profession by educational diploma, attendance in social work training and type of social work training attended. Current occupation and length of work experience at current position defined the occupational characteristics of the research participants.

For Section Two the researcher selected twenty protective factors for infant, toddlers and pre-school age children from the previous studies discussed in the literature review. These factors were then divided into 4 groups: child related factors, parents and family related factors, community factors and cultural factors reflecting the ecological theory of human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) and developmental ecological perspectives (Belsky, 1993; Garbarino, 1977). The researcher identified the factors in ways that were easy to understand rather than calling them factors of the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem. Due to the extensive developmental and survival needs of young children under six years, the number of factors related to child, family and parents that were included in the questionnaire was higher than the number of cultural factors.

To measure the degree of agreement with the given factors, the researcher used a 5-point scale, the Likert scale. Rensis Likert developed the Likert scale in 1932 as a part of his PhD dissertation titled "A technique for the measurement of attitudes" (Esterman, 2003, p. 46). Since its development, the Likert Scale has been used widely for attitude measurement (Esterman, 2003; Sarantakos, 2005). Learning from the scholars who wrote about the popularity of the Likert scale and optimal response categories of the scale, the researcher found that five-answer response categories are appropriate for measuring the level of agreement with the factors that protect children from the maltreatment.

Sarantakos (1998. p. 89) noted that the Likert scale "consists of a set of items of equal value and a set of response categories constructed around a continuum of agreement/disagreement to which subjects are asked to respond". Thus, social workers' opinions on agreement with the selected twenty factors were measured on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 was "strongly disagree" and 5 was "strongly agree". The term, "undecided" was translated into the Mongolian language as meaning "unsure" carrying the meaning that the respondent is in the middle of position of "agreeing" and "not agreeing" with the given factor (Appendix 2). The quantitative data of the questionnaire was entered into SPSS, version 22 and data analysis.

Design of the qualitative research phase

The qualitative research design of the current study was guided by a phenomenological view, which reflected both the descriptive and interpretive traditions of phenomenology. Among the several guidelines for conducting phenomenological studies, the researcher chose Crotty's five-step method as a main guideline and considered other phenomenological guidelines as complementary references to the study (Creswell, 2007; Crotty, 1996, 1998a; Hycner, 1985). According to Crotty, the following five steps are advisable when carrying out phenomenological studies (Crotty, 1996, 1998a):

> Step 1: Determine as precisely as possible what phenomenon we are focusing on;
>
> Step 2: Consider the phenomenon precisely as phenomenon;
>
> Step 3: Describe what has come into view for us;
>
> Step 4: Ensure the phenomenological character of this description;
>
> Step 5: Determine the essence for the phenomenon, i.e. the element or elements in the phenomenon as phenomenon that makes it precisely what it is.

In the first step, the researcher selected eight perceived protective factors as key phenomenon and aimed to find out what these protective factors meant to the research participants. The four most agreed and four least agreed protective factors were selected from the findings of the quantitative analysis. The four most agree upon were: "Happy relationship of parents", "Maternal warmth", "Quality of child rearing conditions", and "Cultural value of protecting children". The four least agreed upon were "A child who is perceived as adorable", "A child who has competent behaviour", "Gender of the child" and "Cultural value of non-physical punishment". Since the researcher had decided to consider both descriptive and interpretive aspects of phenomenology for her study, instead of pure descriptive or classical phenomenology, the researcher used the literature review and findings of the quantitative data analysis as the starting points to determine the phenomenon.

In the second step, focussing on considering the phenomenon precisely as phenomenon, the researcher made a distinction between the terms of perceived protective factors and actual protective factors. The researcher clearly stated that

the study focused on other persons' perceptions, not her own perceptions. The researcher made it clear that her own position was to put aside or shut down listening to her own prior understanding, experience and judgements about protective factors in the stages of data collection and data analysis in order to be open and curious about new descriptions and meanings of perceived protective factors. This process was taken from LeVasseur's notion of "bracketing":

> If, out of our view, someone were to put an object inside a paper bag, the bag might act as a temporary bracket, because it could prevent us from knowing and labelling the object by sight. If we placed out hand into the bag and could not yet recognize the object, we would have a fresh experience of the object without the interference of our prior assumptions and knowledge. Thus, its qualities of roundness or roughness might become more apparent to us. Its contours, texture, and temperature would be part of our experience. Let us say that in a few a moments, we recognized the object, and our prior knowledge came flooding back into conscious. "Oh, it is just a bird nest!" we might exclaim. However, in the short interval in which we were poised between perception and recognition, we would have possessed fresh experience. (LeVasseur, 2003, p. 418)

The researcher found LeVasseur's example of bracketing clearly described her approach in her study and was supportive of LeVasseur's belief in "the dialectic between this momentary new impression and our old understanding [that] constitute something similar to the hermeneutical circle" (LeVasseur, 2003, p. 419). She did not, however, conduct hermeneutic phenomenology in her qualitative data analysis.

For the third step, the researcher aimed to describe what had been learned from the research participants in the findings of Section One. She tried to explore the meaning and protective elements of the perceived protective factors from the perspective of the research participants. The researcher used Crotty's advice to describe what had been learned and share the research findings in line with the theoretical framework and previous studies in the discussion chapters of this thesis.

In the fourth step, the researcher aimed to ensure the descriptions of perceived protective factors were based on the experiences of the research participants. To do that the researcher asked several additional questions related to the application of protective factors in daily practice in order to understand contexts, descriptions

and meanings of the protective factors as shared by the research participants.

At the fifth and last step, the researcher explored the elements of each of the eight selected protective factors defined by the researcher participants as most and least agreed. The essence of the perceived protective factors and the implications of these factors in social workers' practice were determined. Crotty noted that "the essence of phenomenon is the element or elements in the phenomenon as phenomenon that make it precisely what it is" (Crotty, 1998a, p. 157). The researcher used semi-structured interviews with open-ended question to find the essences or attributes contributing to the description of the selected protective factors.

The structure of semi-structured interview locates between the complete standardized and complete unstandardized interview structures. For the semi-structured interview the questions were predetermined and developed prior the interview (Berg, 2009). The choice of the semi standardized interview structure provided the researcher a freedom to re-order the questions and change or adjust words in the questions to make the questions of protective factors clearer for research participants. Some of the terms related to protective factors seemed to be new or unclear for some of the research participants. To explain about a protective factor, the researcher always used the same standard explanations consistent with the definition found in the literature review.

The researcher asked a number of questions to obtain further explanations of essence or attributes of the quantitative key findings (Appendix 4). The main questions were "What came up in your mind when you heard about …[name of protective factor, for example, maternal warmth]?" How would you describe … for example, maternal warmth?" "What made social workers to select family related protective factors more often than others?" The questions were formulated based on Crotty's advised list of questions in phenomenological studies. The semi-structured interview questions obtained further explanations about key findings of the quantitative phase related to the most and least agreed protective factors and significant associations between social workers' perceptions and their backgrounds.

Recruitment and sampling

Recruitment

The research participants were recruited in two stages following the research design. In the first stage, the researcher approached the participants through city or district government officials at periodical meetings or training for khoroo social workers and welfare officers with the permission of the senior officials of the State Office for Social Welfare and City Governor's Office. The researcher visited 15 meetings of nine districts and approached 256 social workers and welfare officers from 1 February 2012 through 25 April 2012 (Appendix 5). At the meeting or training, the government official who was organising the meeting or training invited the researcher to introduce the study and make the request for the social workers to fill out the questionnaire. The researcher then briefly explained the study, shared the information sheet, explained and distributed an envelope with the information sheet, the supervisor's letter of introduction, the invitation for further interview and a questionnaire to each of the participants who were attending that meeting or training. All participants were invited to fill in the questionnaire and answer the invitation for a further interview by giving permission for future contact. The participants were asked to put the material in separate envelopes (the questionnaire into a big envelope and the invitation into a small envelope) regardless of whether they filled in the responses or not in order to protect from peer pressure and ensure voluntary participation. Participants were requested to drop the envelopes in the paper box prepared by the researcher before they left the room. This recruitment was repeated several times until the researcher completed the data collection from nine districts of Ulaanbaatar city.

At the second stage of data collection, the researcher approached the participants who had left their contact address with the questionnaire indicating agreement that they could be approached. There were 62 envelopes which contained participants' agreement and contact details. The researcher put numbers on the outside of each of the these 62 envelopes and divided the envelopes into two groups (group 1 with odd numbers and group 2 with even numbers). The researcher approached all the participants with odd numbers asking them whether they were still available for an interview. Then the researcher called the participants with even numbers asking the same question about availability to

participate in an interview. When the participants confirmed their interest to participate in the interview, the researcher and participant mutually agreed upon a time and place to conduct the interview.

Sampling

The researcher used multi-phase sampling with a combination of purposive and accidental sampling methods for collection of the research data. These methods belong to non-probability sampling. Although the purposive sample method is called "judgemental sampling" (Sarantakos, 2005), the researcher chose this combined sampling method because she believed that khoroo social workers dealt more often with issues of families and young children than other groups of social workers in Ulaanbaatar. According to Sarantakos (2005, p. 163), the "accidental procedure employs no systematic techniques to choose the respondents; instead the sample units are those people who 'accidentally' come into contact with the researcher." Both methods belong to non-probability sampling, which does not ensure representativeness. However, the researcher estimated the representativeness prior to data collection.

According to government statistics, there are 152 khoroo in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia and each of these khoroo has at least one social worker and one welfare officer in their employment. A total of 304 khoroo social workers and welfare officers are employed in the 152 khoroo of Ulaanbaatar city. This number of 304 was counted as an estimated population of khoroo social workers and welfare officers. The number of social workers in Mongolia varies, and no exact figure is available. Various publications and other sources indicate that from 2000 to 2200 social workers work in different fields of social work (Sandagsuren, 2014, personal communication). In this case, the estimated number of 304 research participants was found sufficient to represent a population of social workers in Mongolia according to Krejcie and Morgon's table of determining sample size of a given population (Sarantakos, 1998, p. 163).

The researcher expected to reach all the participants (target population) when the city or district welfare officers organized periodical meetings or training sessions for khoroo social workers and welfare officers. Following the process of the accidental sampling method, the researcher did not use any names, numbers or

letters to select the participants. The researcher visited once each of the nine district meetings or training sessions for khoroo social workers and welfare officer separately in order to avoid requesting participants to fill out the questionnaire twice.

Although representativeness of sampling or sample size is not considered significant in the accidental sampling method employed for this study, the researcher was able to reach 85% of the estimated population of khoroo social workers and welfare officers, which represented 304 khoroo social workers. The main reason with this high response rate was that the study on protective factors is one of the under-researched themes among Mongolian social workers to the extend of the researcher's knowledge. The researcher observed that most of the social workers seemed to be curious about and interested in the information included with the questionnaire. The second reason for reaching such a high rate of the targeted population was that the researcher combined accidental sampling with the purposive sampling method.

> In this technique the researcher purposely chooses subjects who, in their opinion, are relevant to the project. The choice of respondents is guided by the judgement of the investigator. For this reason it is also known as judgemental sampling. (Sarantakos, 2005, p. 164)

Thirdly, the way of requesting that the social workers complete the questionnaires was arranged during work time when the social workers attended professional training and meetings. Additionally, each of the participants was provided with the envelopes that allowed the participants to return the questionnaire regardless of whether they filled in the questionnaire or not. A number of participants, however, did not answer all questions in the questionnaire. The missing data in the questionnaire indicates these incomplete responses. If the researcher had excluded the questionnaire forms with missing data, she would have had only 186 samples, which is a 72% response rate. The researcher decided to include the entire questionnaire regardless of the degree of the completeness (except for two completely blank ones) in order to prevent losing the data gathered through the data collection at the first, quantitative phase.

The sampling for the qualitative data collection also used the convenience or accidental sampling methods with those who agreed to be interviewed. The

researcher found that 62 social workers included their contact details or email addresses at the end of questionnaire. She arranged meetings with 30 social workers from those 62 who agreed to be interviewed. Details of the recruitment and sampling procedure including ethical considerations are described in the next section.

Ethical considerations

Prior to starting the fieldwork aspect of the study, the researcher submitted a request for the approval from the Social Behavioural Research Ethics Committee of the Flinders University and was granted ethical approval of the research (5452 SBREC) at the end of 2011(Appendix 6). All ethical issues were then reviewed and clarified in systematic ways and addressed in an ethically appropriate manner. The specific ethical issues included ensuring a voluntary and non-harmful recruitment procedure of research participants, ensuring informed consent for both the questionnaire and interview participants, ensuring confidentiality and anonymity, sharing benefits and risks of the research with the research participants, and ethical management of data. As a professional social worker and children's rights advocate, the researcher followed the ethical ideals of the profession of social work and human rights principles throughout the research process. Further details of the ethical processes approved by the ethics committee are described as follows.

Ensuring voluntary and non harmful recruitment procedure of the research participants:

During the recruitment, the researcher introduced her study as was also explained on the information sheet and information letter of introduction by the supervisor (Appendices 7 and 8). After an introduction about the research, the researcher distributed an envelope, which included a copy of the letter of introduction, an information sheet, a questionnaire, an invitation to participate, and another small envelope. The researcher invited all of the participants to fill out the questionnaire and also invited them to provide their contact details on the invitation form if they agreed to be approached for a further interview (Appendix 3). She also asked everyone to place the questionnaire in the large envelope and the form for their contact details into the smaller box regardless whether they filled in the questionnaire or not. Providing two separate envelopes was done to

separate the questionnaire from the form where the participants had identified themselves. The researcher believed this process would support a voluntary participation for the social workers. The researcher asked participants to drop both the large and small envelopes into a box prepared by herself. Once all the participants left the room, the researcher collected all the envelopes from the box. This was process repeated several times until the researcher collected data from social workers and welfare officers at nine districts of Ulaanbaatar.

The first 30 participants were contacted by phone calls and the researcher arranged a meeting at a mutually agreed time in the place where the researcher planned to conduct the interviews. When the researcher reached the first 30 participants, only half of them were available and were willing to participate further via an interview. The rest did not answer the phone, were busy or had moved to another position. To conduct interviews with 30 participants, the researcher then started again contacting the rest of the participants whose addresses were in the envelopes with odd numbers. Of the 62 participants who had left their contact details, more than 40 were available for an interview but it eventuated that only 30 of them came to the interview.

Ways of seeking informed consent from both the questionnaire and interview participants

The free consent of the participants was achieved by clearly stating on the information sheet that the participation was voluntary and asking the participant to read that sheet before she/he completed the questionnaire. The informed consent for the questionnaire was discussed at the beginning of the questionnaire (Appendix 2). Before each interview began, the researcher explained the research process and the consent form for the interview and gave the participants plenty of time to read the form before signing it (Appendix 9). The researcher also obtained permission to use a tape recorder. She informed the interview participants that they could withdraw at anytime from the session without any disadvantage. During all these explanations, confidentiality and anonymity assurances were highlighted as well.

Ensuring confidentiality and anonymity

The researcher provided information about confidentiality and anonymity

assurances via the introductory letter from her supervisor and the information sheet. The information sheet also informed the participants that no information that identified the name of the participant would be associated with the questionnaire. They were told that all completed questionnaires would be retained and would not be accessible for public view. For the interview participants, the researcher explained that she would respect the confidentiality of information provided by the participants, and explained about the exception related to the disclosure of child abuse or domestic abuse. During the interviews, the researcher gently reminded the interviewee, "Please focus on a general understanding and share your opinion about protective factors and perceptions of social workers based on your closed cases or experiences that protected children and families from child maltreatment." If there was any information in the questionnaire or interview transcript that could lead to identification of participants, the researcher removed that identifying information from the data.

Weighing benefits and risks of the research to the research participants

The researcher hoped that the current research study would contribute to the improvement and upgrading of social work education and practice around working with children and families in Mongolia. In the researcher's view, the social workers' perceptions of protective factors in connection with their background had not been studied in the context of Mongolia. The researcher believed that completing a questionnaire on protective factors would be educational and inspiring for those social workers who had not thought about protective factors before. The research was considered to be low risk research that would not burden anyone other than incurring some minor inconvenience, which was outweighed by the benefits.

At the second phase of the data collection, the interviews with social workers went smoothly. The researcher interviewed trained social workers and the interview questions addressed the strengths, skills, and experiences that empower and encourage social workers and welfare officers to work effectively with their clients. Although some personal or sensitive issues were raised, these issues were no more of a risk to social workers than those found in the normal course of their work.

Managing and keeping research data safely

Since all the data for the quantitative research section was anonymous, the participants who completed the questionnaire were not able to influence the data once the envelope with the questionnaire inside was returned to the box. The participants who were interviewed were not able to see the information that was recorded in summary and without any identifying details. Since both quantitative and qualitative data were collected in the Mongolian language, the researcher summarized the interview data and translated it into English herself without involving a third person. Currently all data of both quantitative and qualitative research sections are stored in a de-identified form. All research data are kept in a locked cabinet and electronically it is in password-protected form.

Since ethical approval was granted for the research, all issues of the ethical considerations were regularly reviewed and reported by the researcher. The researcher ensured the implementation of relevant regulations concerning ethical issues related to research involving human subjects, under the supervision of her two supervisors and the ethics committee of the University.

Data collection methods

Quantitative and qualitative data were collected for the study. The quantitative data was collected via the questionnaire and qualitative data was collected via interviews.

The researcher approached questionnaire respondents, khoroo social workers, at the beginning or end of their periodical administrative meeting and training organized by district and city offices starting from beginning of February 2011 through mid May 2011. It was expected that all khoroo social workers would be approached by the researcher because attendance at the meetings or training sessions that the researcher attended was a part of duties of social workers. The voluntary participation was explained with the researcher's request for volunteers to participate in the study,

It took approximately 15 to 20 minutes to fill out the questionnaire for khoroo social workers. In total, 256 khoroo social workers were asked to fill out questionnaire. Two envelopes with empty questionnaires were returned. The

sample size then became 254 (N=254). This size fluctuated slightly in the examination of the distribution for each protective factor and demographic characteristics, depending on number of the participants who answered the particular question/item.

Participants who responded to a questionnaire

Tables 5.1a and 5.1b show the age and length of work experience in their current position of the research participants involved in the questionnaire. The mean of questionnaire participants' age was 33 years (SD=8.107) with ranges from 23 to 56 years of age. The mean of work experience, at their current position of khoroo social workers and welfare officers, was 3.62 years (SD=3.546) with ranges from 1 to 21 years (Table 5.1a).

Table 5.1a. Age and length of work experience at the current position of the questionnaire participants

Characteristics	**N**	**Minimum**	**Maximum**	**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**
Age (SW & WO) (years)	249	23	56	33.53	8.107
Length of work experience (years)	242	1	21	3.62	3.546

The demographic characteristics of the questionnaire participants include gender, age group, current occupation, and educational background, which indicates the highest education obtained, profession by educational diploma, attendance in social work training and types of social work training of those who attended (Table 5.1b).

Table. 5.1b. Demographic characteristics and education background of the questionnaire participants (N=254)

Demographic Characteristics and Current Work Experience		**n (%)**
Gender	Female	204 (80.3%)
	Male	49 (19.3%)
	No response	1 (0.4%)
Age group	20-29 years of age	106 (41.7%)
	30-39 years of age	85 (33.5%)

	40-49 years of age	40 (15.7%)
	50-59 years of age	18 (7.1%)
	No response	5 (2.0%)
Current occupation	Khoroo social worker	119 (46.9%)
	Khoroo welfare officer	134 (52.8%)
	No response	1 (0.4%)
Length of work experience at current position	1-5 years	198 (77.3%)
	6-10 years	27 (10.5%)
	11-15 years	12 (4.7%)
	16-20 years	3 (1.2%)
	20-25 years	2 (0.8 %)
	No response	14 (5.5%)
Educational Background		**n (%)**
Highest education obtained	Diploma	20 (7.9%)
	Bachelor	204 (80.3%)
	Master	27 (10.6 %)
	Others	1 (0.4%)
	No response	2 (0.8)
Profession by Educational Diploma	Social worker	50 (19.7%)
	Public administrator	33 (13.0%)
	Teacher	30 (11.8%)
	Psychologist	2 (0.8%)
	Sociologist	3 (1.2%)
	Lawyer	54 (21.3%)
	Accountant	23 (9.1%3)
	Engineer	9 (3.5%)
	Other	48 (18.9%)
	No response	2 (0.8%)
Attendance in Social Work Training (N=248)	Yes	218 (85.8%)
	No	25 (9.8%)
	No response	11 (4.4%)
Types of social work training attended	SW Certificate training with 3 phases	96 (37.8%)
	SW Training from 45 days until 3 months	33 (13.0%)
	Voucher training	28 (11.0%)
	Workshop and Seminar	80 (31.5%)
	No training	2 (0.8%)
	No response	15 (5.9%)

Participants who were interviewed

The researcher attempted to contact around 62 khoroo social workers from the contact details of those who indicated agreement to be approached further for an interview. By the time of the interviews, four months later, only 32 social workers were still interested in participating in the interview. The researcher made arrangements to meet these 32 social workers individually, but two social workers could not attend the meeting. All interviews were carried out in a room in an office of the Save the Children or Japan in Mongolia agencies. Each interview took approximately one to one and a half hours.

Tables 5.2a shows the mean age and length of work experience of the interview participants. The average age of the interview participants was 36 years of age with ranges from 22 to 50 years of age. The difference between the average age of the questionnaire participants and the interview participants was 3 years. The difference between the mean of length of work experience between the questionnaire participants and the interview participants was 2 years. This difference implies that more mature social workers with more work experience were more willing to participate in individual interviews than social workers of a younger age and with less work experience.

Table 5.2a. Age and length of work experience at the current position of interview participants (N=30)

Characteristics	**N**	**Minimum**	**Maximum**	**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**
Age (SW & WO) (years)	28	22	50	36.46	8.266
Length of work experience (years)	30	1	12	5.6	3.747

Table 5.2.b shows the demographic and educational characteristics of the interview participants

Table. 5.2b. Demographic characteristics and education background of the interview participants (N=30)

Demographic Characteristics and Work Experience		**n (%)**
Gender	Female	26 (86.7%)

	Male	4 (13.3%)
Age group	20-29 years of age	7 (23.3%)
	30-39 years of age	11(36.6%)
	40-49 years of age	11 (36.6%)
	50-59 years of age	1 (3.5%)
Current occupation	Khoroo social worker	18 (60%)
	Khoroo welfare officer	12 (40%)
Length of work experience at current position	1-5 years	19(63.3%)
	6-10 years	5 (16.7%)
	11-15 years	6 (20%)
Educational Background		**n (%)**
Profession by Educational Diploma (N=30)	Social worker	5 (16.7%)
	Public administrator	2 (6.7%)
	Manager	2 (6.7%)
	Sociologist	2 (6.7%)
	Philosopher	1 (3.3%)
	Politician	1 (3.3%)
	Lawyer	5 (16.7%)
	Economist	3 (10.0%)
	Accountant	2 (6.75%)
	Journalist	2 (6.7%)
	Teacher	4 (13.3%)
	Technician	1 (3.3%)
Attendance in Social Work Training (N=30)	Yes	27 (90.0%)
	No	3 (10.0%)
Types of social work training attended (N=30)	SW Certificate training with 3 phases	19 (63.3%)
	SW Training from 45 days until 3 months	16 (53.3%)
	Voucher training	10 (33.3%)
	Workshop and Seminar	28 (93.3%)

Data analysis

Data analysis was carried out in two phases: quantitative and qualitative analysis. Data analyses of these two phases are described below.

Quantitative data analysis

In the first phase, the researcher carried out descriptive statistics analysis of the

questionnaire data by the statistical software of SPSS. This includes univariate and bivariate analysis defining the level of agreement with each of the protective factors and investigating associations between background characteristics of social workers and levels of agreement with protective factors respectively.

Univariate analysis

The researcher carried out the descriptive analysis to define the distributions of each of the perceived protective factors and background of the participants using SPSS descriptive statistics. The results of the descriptive statistics, frequencies, median, interquartile range and mean scores of each protective factors were defined and examined.

A significant amount of literature suggests that Likert scale items should be analysed as ordinal variables not as interval or continuous variables and the distribution of items should be tested with non-parametric tests. Therefore, the researcher treated both the scale items (perceived protective factors) as ordinal variables and calculated the frequencies to look at the overall distributions of the variables. To look at a total agreement with each of the protective factors, frequencies and percentage of strongly agreed and agreed were added and displayed in the Table 4.1. A total disagreement was also composed as the sum of strongly disagree and disagree. Frequency and percentage measured by five levels were used for the descriptive analysis, such as calculating median, IQR, test of normal distribution (Appendix 10).

In addition, the median and Inter-Quartile Range (IQR) were calculated to find out the central tendency and dispersion instead of calculating mean score. The differences between the central tendency and interquartile range are described as follows:

> The median is a measure of central tendency: very roughly speaking, it shows what the "average" respondent might think, or the "likeliest" response. The IQR is a measure of dispersion: it shows whether the response are clustered together or scattered across the range of possible responses. A relatively small IQR is an indication of consensus. By contrast larger IQRs might suggest that opinion is polarised, i.e., your respondents tend to hold strong opinions either for or against this topic. (Kostoulas, 2014)

To check the possibility of using the mean scores for further statistical analysis,

the researcher tested the distribution of each of the twenty protective factors by defining mean scores, skewness, kurtosis and median. In addition to examining the normal distribution of each of the protective factors the researcher used the test of normality, Kolmogorov –Smirnov Z test.

> Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z test evaluates statistically whether the difference between the observed distribution and a theoretical normal distribution is small enough to be just due to chance. If it could be due to chance we would treat the distribution as being normal. If the difference between actual distribution and the theoretical normal distribution is larger than is likely to be due chance (sampling error) then we would treat the actual distribution as not being normal. If Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z test yields a significant level of less than 0.05 it means the distribution is probably not normal. (Vaus, 2009, pp. 76-77)

The Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z test examines the difference between the observed distribution and theoretical normal distribution. The result of this text indicates whether the distribution is normal or not.

Test of normal distribution

Though "non-parametric techniques do not have [such stringent] requirements and do not make assumptions about the underlying population distribution", to be normally distributed, the researcher calculated the mean, standard deviation, skewness and kurtosis to check the normal distribution of each scale items for further possible factor analysis as well by SPSS, version 22. It was found that the mean scores were not the same as the medians and skewness and kurtosis did not meet the criteria of zero. This indicated that all the scale items were not normally distributed (Appendix 11). Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z test results showed that the differences between the actual distributions and the theoretical distributions were significant statistically. This indicated that the distributions of all the scale items were not normally distributed (Vaus, 2002, p. 77).

The researcher carried out Chi-Square and the Krustal-Wallis tests to determine associations and differences among the scale items and background data of the respondents.

Bivariate analysis

A bivariate analysis was undertaken to identify relationships between demographic characteristics such as age, work experience, occupational positions

held and educational background with each of the protective factors. The researcher used non-parametric statistics including Chi-Square, Fisher's exact test and Kruscal-Wallis tests.

The Chi-Square tests were used to examine:

a) relationships between gender and each of the protective factor,

b) relationships between current occupation and each protective factor.

> The Chi-Square test is used when we are treating both the independent and dependent variables as nominal level… The Chi-Square test assesses which frequencies you observe in your table results differ from what you expect to observe if the distribution was created by chance. (Rubin & Babbie, 2011, p. 557)

Gender and current occupation held by the research participants were treated as independent variables at the nominal level for the current study. Each of the protective factors was treated as dichotomous dependent variable at the ordinal level. The differences between what the researcher observed in the results and what she expected to observe were examined and significant differences were noted in the findings of quantitative analysis.

When the degree of freedom is 1, a Chi-Square test assumes that each cell has an expected frequency of five or more; however, some scholars state that this normality assumption is conservative.

> An assumption is made when using the Chi-Square distribution is as an approximation to the distribution of X^2, is that the frequencies expected under independence should not be too small. This rather vague term has historically been interpreted as meaning not less than five, although there is considerable evidence that this rule is very conservative. (S. Landau & Everitt, 2004, p. 64)

When the researcher observed that the normality assumption for the Pearson's Chi-Square test was violated, the Fisher's Exact test was applied because it had no assumption that expected frequency should be five or more. As well, the Fisher's Exact test compensated for small number cell sizes in the data and enabled an absolute value to be determined that would have resulted in a null hypothesis had a Chi-Square analysis been used alone (Pallant, 2013).

The Kruscal-Wallis test was used to examine: a) the relationship between age

groups and protective factors (separately); b) the relationship between education background and protective factors (separately).

> The Kruskal-Wallis Test is the non-parametric alternative to a one way between groups analysis variance. It allows you to compare the scores on some continuous variable for three or more groups; ….it allows you to compare more than just two groups. Scores are converted to ranks and the mean rank for each group is compared. (Pallant, 2013, pp. 240-241)

> The Mann-Whitney U test actually compares medians. It converts the scores on continuous variable to ranks across the (two) groups. It then evaluates whether the ranks for the two groups differ significantly. As the scores are converted to ranks the actual distribution of the scores does not matter. (Pallant, 2013, p. 235)

The mean rank is not the mean score; this is a conversion of distribution of the actual scores to ranks across the groups. The Kruskal -Wallis Test compares medians of three or more groups (Pallant, 2013, p. 241).

Cohen clarified that a non-significant result should never be interpreted as either "no difference between means" or "no relationship between variables" (Field, 2009). Accordingly, the researcher made no interpretation for non-significant results that related to the associations between the education of workers and agreement of each of the protective factors.

Qualitative data analysis

The researcher used Crotty's five-step method to analyse data that was collected through a semi-structured interview (Crotty, 1998a). Since Crotty's five-step method was explained in detail in the section on the design of the qualitative research the researcher will focus here on the data analysis. As part of the format of structured interviewing, the researcher asked the same set of pre-established questions (Appendix 4). During the interviews, the researcher used the same standard explanations and did not suggest any answer and tried not to give her own views or opinions. The average length of the interviews was one hour. The researcher used a digital recorder to record interviews after obtaining the written permission of the respondents.

The first fifteen interviews were transcribed in detail. After an analysis of these first fifteen transcripts, the researcher identified commonly occurring themes and her analysis focused on these themes. Once the main themes were identified, the

researcher started searching for new themes for the selected phenomenon from rest of the interview records. Then, the main themes related to the selected protective factors were translated from the Mongolian language to English language.

As Berg (2009, p. 147) says, "good qualitative research, like quantitative research, is based on calculated strategies and methodological rigor". In this sense, the content of the interviews were reduced by a phenomenological analysis focusing on the meanings of the selected protective factors. As previously mentioned, eight protective factors were selected from the analysis of the data quantitative analysis and each of these factors was treated as a unit or construct of the qualitative analysis.

> Strauss (1990) explains that these [sociological] constructs tend to be based on a combination of things, including the researcher's scholarly knowledge of the substantive field under study. The result of using constructs is the addition of certain social scientific meanings that might otherwise be missed in the analysis. Thus, sociological constructs add breadth and depth to observation by reaching beyond local meanings and understanding to broader social scientific ones. (Berg, 2009, pp. 345-346)

Each of the eight selected protective factors (four most agreed and four least agreed protective factors) contained a number of themes and phrases that defined those factors. The common themes were found to explore the understanding of the research participants' everyday world as they see it. Then the researcher interpreted the social workers' descriptions and explanations of the quantitative findings in line with their demographic, occupational and educational backgrounds. This interpretation is presented in the discussion chapter.

Validity and reliability

Validation and reliability of the questionnaire

Validity is one of the essential methodological elements that measure the accuracy of the research findings. As Sarantakos (1998, p. 78) defined it, "validity means the ability to produce findings that are in the agreement with theoretical or conceptual values; in other words to produce accurate results and to measure what is supposed to be measured". Sarantakos (1998) talks about two ways of checking the validity of the instruments in quantitative research including

empirical validation and theoretical validation. The researcher considered both empirical and theoretical validations to test the validity of the questionnaire.

The questionnaire used in the current study collected the quantitative data by two sections of the questionnaire (Appendix 2). The first section focused on demographic and educational data of social workers and welfare officers; and the second section focused on social workers' opinion about/agreement with the perceived protective factors against child maltreatment.

In terms of theoretical validity of the two parts of the questionnaire, the researcher tested the face and content validity by sharing the questionnaire with five Mongolian social workers and non social workers requesting them to fill out the questionnaire and provide their feedback. On the basis of their feedback, the researcher made minor changes and improved the wording to fit into a Mongolian context. For example, one respondent without a social work background answered " Year of the Dog" to the item of "Age by years" giving her age by the Chinese Zodiac year. Subsequently, the researcher changed the wording of the item of "Age by years" by taking off the word "by years" and then wrote "years" and "months" with spaces between them. During the data collection, no one provided a zodiac year for their age and all participants put figures for the question of age and put the length at their current position by counting the year and month. Due to time constraints, the researcher could not test the questionnaire extensively for construct validation with different groups prior to the fieldwork. The findings of the quantitative data analysis however, indicated the differences in agreements with the protective factors by age groups, and occupations, and length of working experiences. This would have helped obtain the construct validity but, to confirm the construct validity, it should be tested again with other groups in the future.

In terms of reliability of the questionnaire, using SPSS, version 22, the researcher tested internal consistency coefficient of the child protective factor scale, which contained 20 items in Section Two of the questionnaire. The Cronbach alpha coefficient for the twenty items of protective factors was equal to 0.805, which is relatively high. Cronbach alpha is commonly used indicator of internal consistency the questionnaire constructs. Ideally, the reliability coefficient of 0.7 or higher is considered as acceptable in social science research (Pallant, 2013, p.

101).

Validation and reliability of the qualitative research part

Qualitative researchers consider validity an important methodological element just as quantitative researchers value validity in their research. According to Sarantakos (1998), the different terms such as credibility, trustworthiness and authenticity, which are used in the qualitative study, refer to validity (p. 80). In qualitative research these terms refer to the accuracy of qualitative research findings and their interpretations. The following types of validation can be used to measure the validation of the qualitative study: cumulative validation, communicative validation, argumentative validation, ecological validation and other tactics (Sarantakos, 2005).

In terms of cumulative validation, many findings of the current study were consistent with the findings of previous studies. The findings about the educational and qualification backgrounds and working conditions of khoroo social workers were consistent with other studies that have been undertaken among khoroo social workers and social workers in general. Due to the design of the current study, communicative validation was not achieved. In accordance with the research design and procedures approved by the Flinders' ethics committee, the researcher was not allowed to re-enter the field and arrange second or third interviews with the research participants. In terms of ecological validation, the researcher examined the perception of social workers in connection with the social workers' background information at various levels starting from their personal demographic characteristics to their occupational positions in the larger context.

The researcher used two methods with different origins to view the scope and meanings of the selected protective factors from two different angles although these two methods were designed in the sequential order. As part of the mixed method, the findings of one study was followed and expanded by another one. The advantage of using two methods and triangulation of research findings are described as follows:

> Qualitative methods and approaches, which focus on particular phenomena and processes and their unique contexts, can help to

> overcome the biases inherent in universalizing, variable-oriented quantitative methods. (Maxwell & Mittapalli, 2010)

Using the mixed methods is a complementary approach. It helps to overcome the theoretical and methodological issues when one method has a limitation and the can help to overcome that issue by offering an alternative way. In the case of qualitative research, other researchers can assist in testing the quality of the data analysis and interpretations via triangulation. However, there were some limitations in the current study. These limitations are discussed in next section.

Limitations

The researcher found several limitations in the current study. These were the possible effects of social desirability, the biases related to the inclusion of positive factors in the questionnaire, the selection of interview participants and the cultural biases of understanding and interpreting qualitative findings when measuring social workers' perceived agreement with the protective factors. The strengths of using the mixed methods design and awareness of these limitations made the researcher cautious during the data collection, analysis and reporting phases.

The type of measurement of social workers' perceptions in this study was the social workers' perceived agreements with the protective factors that were listed in the questionnaire. Although the previous study suggests understanding protective factors in the context of patterns of risks (Little, Axford and Morpeth, 2004, p.108), the questionnaire contained the factors, which were formulated positively as protective factors rather than risk factors. The researcher was aware about that agreeing with the positive factors could create response and social desirability biases. The researcher also did not measure the actual existence or functions of the protective factors in children's environment as the constructs of the protective factors would have required different definitions and measurement processes using other inventories. But, being aware about potential protective factors in a local context was understood to be helpful to comprehend overall trends of potential protective factors and develop preventative measures in the future.

The researcher relied on social workers' opinions about the protective factors in order to find the perceived distribution and trend of the protective factors. This

choice created a limitation of looking at the actual distributions of and different views about the protective factors in the local context. To the extent of the researcher's knowledge, there is no study on protective factors of Mongolian children's environment. Thus, it was understood that the perception of social workers is worth studying. From social work perspective it was believed to be beneficial to social work educators and practitioners to understand social workers' perceptions about protectiveness of children's environment to prevent children under 6 years of age from child maltreatment.

Anticipated social desirability bias was another limitation. The contents of the questionnaire and semi-structured interview were addressed to gather data on the social workers' awareness about protective factors and work experience. As Rubin and Babbie (2011) noted, social desirability bias often occurs when the researcher is interested in knowing someone's information, knowledge and expertise in the following way:

> Whenever you ask people for information, they answer through a filter of concern about what will make them look good. This is especially true if they are being interviewed in a face to face situation. (Rubin & Babbie, 2011, p. 190)

To reduce the bias of social desirability, the researcher used an anonymous questionnaire and asked each participant to put back the filled questionnaire form in the envelope and drop them in the box before the researcher got access to the questionnaire. To avoid making the participants to feel ashamed because they did not know about protective factors, the researcher grouped the protective factors into four groups giving the idea about what factors look like. For example, the twenty protective factors were grouped into four groups: child related factors, family and parents related factors, community factors, and cultural factors, instead of using the names of ecological systems.

The researcher selected randomly interview participants from the questionnaire participants who agreed to be approached for an interview. To do that, she put numbers on the outside of each of 62 envelopes with details of the participants who agreed to be approached for the interview. First, she selected the envelopes with odd numbers and approached all of the participants with odd numbers asking about availability to participate in an interview. After approaching all the

participants with odd numbers, she started contacting the participants with even numbers asking the same question until the number of interviews reached 30. This random selection method assisted the researcher to avoid creating the bias on the selection of the interview participants.

As Rubin and Babbie (2011, p. 192) noted, during the interviews research participants have a tendency to exhibit a more favourable impression of themselves than when they report about themselves in written form. Therefore, during the interview the researcher started asking participant's help in interpreting the most prevalent and significant results of the quantitative analysis and requested them to help interpret the findings. However, there were also some questions asking for their descriptions of the certain protective factors. Having obtained the questionnaire findings about the social workers' perceptions of most and least agreed protective factors and their associations with background data of the questionnaire participants, the researcher was keen to understand their perceptions about the factors and practice experiences through the interviews.

Cultural bias was another limitation. Some concepts of protective factors such as non-corporal punishment of children seemed to be very new and sound very western. To reduce cultural bias and lack of understanding of specific terminology the researcher provided additional comments next to the questionnaire items (Appendix 2). For example the item related to adequate formal support had added explanatory words such as "social service and assistance" and "social policy". During the interviews, the researcher linked the questions with the results of preliminary data and provided explanations and examples from the survey findings when the interview participants clarified the questions.

Summary of the chapter

Using the explanatory sequential mixed methods design, the current study aimed to examine social workers' perceptions of protective factors for children under six years of age in line with social workers' demographic, educational and occupational backgrounds. The section on Methodology covered descriptions of the several methodological sections such as research design, recruitment and

sampling, data collection methods, data analysis, validity and reliability and limitations of the current study. Each of these sections explained different features of the quantitative and qualitative phases. The rationale of using explanatory sequential design for the current study was to extend the results of quantitative phase by using findings of the qualitative phase in order to obtain an in-depth understanding about social workers' perceptions of protective factors. In this sense, the quantitative findings led qualitative data collection and analysis. Consistent with the explanatory sequential design, two distinct phases interacted during the data collection and interpretation of the findings.

In the first phase the quantitative data was planned to be collected from 300 frontline khoroo social workers in Ulaanbaatar city, Mongolia via the questionnaire. The purpose of the quantitative phase was to examine the distributions of social workers' perceived protective factors and to test whether social workers' perceptions of protective factors were associated with their demographic, educational and occupational backgrounds. In the second phase, the qualitative data was planned to be collected through 30 semi-structured interviews from 30 participants of the same research population to extend explanations of the quantitative results. During the qualitative phase, it was planned to explore the most and least agreed protective factors and significant associations between social workers' perceptions and their background.

Having the ethical approval from the ethics committee ensured the specific ethical issues including a voluntary and non-harmful recruitment procedure of both questionnaire and interview participants, ensuring informed consent for the research participants, ensured confidentiality and anonymity, shared benefits and risks of the research with the participants and ensured the ethical management of data. The subsections on ethics in this chapter described each of the specific ethical issues in detail. As a qualified social worker and researcher, the researcher ensured the implementation of the ethical regulations related to research involving human subjects under direct the supervision of the faculty and the ethics committee of the Flinders University.

The quantitative data was collected from 254 participants to obtain data about the demographic background of khoroo social workers and welfare officers and their

perceptions of protective factors. To examine the distributions of perceived protective factors, the researcher carried out descriptive statistical analysis including univariate and bivariate analysis. The univariate analysis allowed examining distributions of each of social workers' background data (independent variables) and values of the distributions of perceived protective factors (dependent variables). After testing the normal distribution of each variable, the researcher decided to use non-parametric statistics to examine the relationships of social workers' demographic, educational and occupational background with the distributions of perceived protective factors.

The researcher used Crotty's five-step methods to analyse the qualitative data that was collected through a semi-structured interview with 30 participants. Consistent with the explanatory sequential design of the mixed methods, the qualitative data followed up key results of the quantitative phase and explored main themes and essential elements related to the eight selected protective factors and significant associations between social workers' background and perceptions of certain protective factors. The validity and reliability of both quantitative and qualitative findings were tested using several techniques and tests. In addition, mixing two different methods testing research findings from two different perspectives was equivalent to using triangulation. The researcher acknowledged major limitations related to social desirability and cultural bias of interpreting the qualitative findings. The strength of using mixed methods and awareness of these limitations made the researcher careful throughout the research processes.

CHAPTER 6: Findings

In this chapter the findings are presented from both the quantitative and qualitative data analyses consistent with the explanatory sequential design of the mixed methods. First provided are the quantitative results of the univariate and bivariate analyses which examined the general tendency of agreement, the distributions and polarizations of each of the twenty protective factors listed in the questionnaire, and the associations between social workers' perceptions and their backgrounds. For further exploration of the quantitative results, social workers' explanations and descriptions of key qualitative results follow.

More specifically, contributing to the main research question of "In what ways are social workers' perceptions of child protective factors associated with their background?" The quantitative results address the following two research sub-questions:

1. What are the most agreed upon and least agreed upon protective factors?

2. What are the associations between the distributions of perceived protective factors and the social workers' demographic, educational and occupational characteristics?

The findings of the qualitative data analysis responding to the third research sub-question:

3. How do social workers describe the most and least agreed protective factors?

To keep the research findings as clear as possible, the researcher intentionally kept her major interpretations separate from both the original quantitative and qualitative findings. Chapter 7 contains these interpretations including the responses to the final fifth research sub-question of "What explanations can be found to indicate why some protective factors are agreed as more frequently than others?" The qualitative findings focussed on social workers' rationale and descriptions of the most and least protective factors. In addition, social workers' cases with lived experiences of protecting children under six years of age are

presented in Chapter 7.

Findings of univariate data analysis

Perceived distribution of protective factors

The questionnaire included a section with twenty protective factor items (Appendix 2). Each item indicated a protective factor that was selected from previous research studies on child maltreatment and child development. Two questions were asked: (1)"Do you agree that the following factors protect children under 6 years of age from child maltreatment?" and (2) "Do you know any other protective factors for children under 6 years of age that were not asked in the questionnaire?" With the first question, twenty protective factors were listed as scaled items and five different ratings were possible for the participant to select in response to the importance of each item. For the second question, two choices of yes and no were given, followed by a request to those who answered yes to provide additional information by naming the other factors they felt were protective.

As previously mentioned, in the five point Likert scale the items were treated as ordinal variables for the current study. The researcher used the median, Inter-Quartile range and frequencies to examine the distribution of each protective factor. In terms of the distribution explored by the frequencies, the researcher examined the frequency of each protective factor with a five-point scale: strongly disagree, disagree, undecided, agree and strongly agree (Appendix 10). To make it more visible and decisive, agreement was calculated on the basis of collapsing the most agreed and agreed frequencies. The total disagreement was composed of the summary of the most disagreed and disagreed frequencies as well. The values of frequencies in this chapter are displayed in three levels: total agreement, not decided and total disagreement. The descriptive analysis, which covered the analysis of median, IQP and frequency, was calculated at each of the five levels as indicated on the Likert scale.

When the researcher checked the central tendency of the distribution on each of twenty protective factors, the median of almost all of the protective factors, excluding two factors, stood at 4 (Mdn=4). This means the participants accepted

18 out of 20 factors as protective factors (See Table 6.1). The median of the two items of "A child who is perceived as adorable" (Mdn=2); and "A child who has competent behaviour" (Mdn=3) fell at 2 and 3 respectively. In order words, the value of 2 for the median in this study showed that most of the respondents did not agree with the item of "A child who is perceived as adorable" as a protective factor for children under 6 years of age. The median value of 3 on the factor of "A child who has competent behaviour" tells us that a majority of the respondents were in the position of "undecided" about that statement as a protective factor. These least agreed factors were the factors that defined children's own characteristics of competence and physical appearance.

In terms of dispersion which was measured by interquartile range (IQR), the perceptions of the respondents were more polarized on the following four factors: (1) "Gender of the child" (IQR=2); (2) "A child who is perceived as adorable" (IQR=2); (3) "A child who has competent behaviour" (IQR=2); (4) "Cultural value of promoting nonphysical forms of punishment" (IQR=2). In order to interpret the value of interquartile range in the context of this study, the interquartile range of zero indicated consistency in perceptions among all respondents who agreed that the given factors were important for the protection of children. Almost a half of the respondents (N= 101, 43.3%) expressed agreement with the factor of "Cultural value of promoting non-physical forms of punishment", but a relatively high number of the respondents (N=50, 21.5%) indicated their disagreement on the same factor. Thus, IQR was two (IQP=2), which indicated that there was inconsistency in the social workers' perception of "Cultural value of promoting non-physical forms of punishment" as a protective factor (See Table 6.1). The result of examining interquartile range of each of twenty protective factors showed that social workers' perceptions were divided noticeably on three child related protective factors and one cultural factor.

There was no polarization on three other factors that had zero value of inter-quartile range. These factors were "Parents or caregivers with adequate knowledge of child development" (Mdn=4, IQR=0); "Parents or caregivers who experienced a secure attachment with their own caregiver" (Mdn=4, IQR=0) and "Connection of parents or caregivers with the community" (Mdn=4, IQR=0). The

majority of social workers who participated in taking the questionnaire, chose the following factors while only a few respondents disagreed. The percentage of participants who agreed and disagreed respectively for each of the following three factors without polarization were: (a) “Parents or caregivers with adequate knowledge of secure attachment with their own caregiver” (81%, 5.3%, N=243); (b) “Parents or caregivers who experienced a secure attachment with their own caregiver” (79.9%, 3.7%, N=239) and (c) “Connection of parents or caregivers with the community” (75.7%, 10.2%, N=243). What this finding indicates is that a majority of the social workers accepted commonly the secure attachments of children with their primary caregivers in the immediate environment as well as connections of primary caregivers with the larger environment-communities as protective factors for children and their families.

It was noticeable however, that there were a number of people who were located between agreement and disagreement. For examples, 13% out of 243 participants were undecided about the factor of “Parents or caregivers with adequate knowledge of secure attachment with their own caregiver”; 16.3% out of 239 participants were undecided about the factor of “Parents or caregivers who experienced a secure attachment with their own caregiver”; and 14% out of 243 were undecided about the factor of “Connection of parents or caregivers with the community.” The position of indecisiveness could have influenced to some degree the zero value of interquartile range or no polarization in the distribution of agreement or disagreement for certain factors.

To determine the most and least agreed upon protective factors, the researcher calculated the total percentage of agreement and disagreement after combining the two categories of agreement and two categories of disagreement (Table 6.1). It is seen that the frequencies of the agreed protective factors range from 30.1% to 94.6%: whereas the frequencies of disagreement range from 2.5% to 55.3% (Table 6.1).

If the factors are grouped by frequencies of agreement from highest to lowest, the following list appears:

- Four protective factors – happy relationship of parents, maternal warmth,

quality of child rearing conditions and cultural value of protecting children, had more than 90% of agreement;

- Two factors – parents and caregivers with adequate knowledge of child development and accessible childcare and kindergarten in the community had a percentage of agreement from 80% to 90%;

- Seven factors – parents or caregivers with adequate developmental expectations of the child, parents or caregivers who experienced a secure attachment with their own caregiver, a supportive significant other in the home, adequate formal support, adequate informal support, living in a non-violent community, and connection of parents or caregivers with the community, had a percentage of agreement from 70% to 80%;

- Two factors – gender and parents or caregivers with structured consistent routine had a percentage of agreement from 60% to 70%;

- Three factors – easy temperament of child, living in a resourceful community and cultural value of promoting nonphysical forms of punishment have a percentage of agreement from 50% to 60;

- One factor – a child who has a competent behaviour had a percentage of agreement of between 40% and 50%, and;

- One factor – a child who is perceived as adorable is more protected, had a percentage of agreement between 30% and 40%.

Table 6.1 Participants' agreement with protective factors by median, IQR and frequency (percentage)

No	Variables	N	Median	IQR	Disagreement*	Undecided	Agreement**
1	Easy temperament of child	245	4	1	58 (23.6%)	49 (20%)	138 (56.4%)
2	Gender	236	4	2	70 (29.7%	16 (6.8%)	150 (63.6%)
3	Child who is perceived as adorable	242	2	2	134 (55.3%)	35 (15%)	73 (30.1%)
4	Child who has competent behaviour	245	3	2	87 (35.5%)	53 (22%)	105 (42.9%)
5	Parents or caregivers with adequate knowledge of child development	243	4	0	13 (5.3)	33 (13.6%)	197 (81.1%)
6	Parents or caregivers with adequate developmental expectations of the child	243	4	1	20 (8.2%)	43 (17.7%)	180 (74.1%)
7	Parents or caregivers who experienced a secure attachment with their own caregiver	239	4	0	9 (3.7%)	39 (16.3%)	191 (79.9%)
8	Maternal warmth	243	4	1	8 (3.3%)	10 (4.1%)	225 (92.6%)
9	Happy relationship of parents	241	4	1	6 (2.5%)	7 (2.9%)	228 (94.6%)
10	Parents or caregivers with structured, consistent routine	239	4	1	36 (15.1%)	58 (24.3%)	145 (60.7%)
11	Quality of child rearing conditions	237	4	1	10 (4.2%)	13 (5.5%)	214 (90.3%)

12	Supportive significant other in the home	237	4	1	33 (13.9%)	37 (15.6%)	167 (70.5%)
13	Adequate formal support e.g. social service and assistance, and social policy	238	4	1	36 (15.1%)	34 (14.3%)	168 (70.6%)
14	Accessible childcare and kindergarten in the community	244	4	1	36 (14.7%)	12 (4.9%)	196 (80.4%)
15	Adequate informal social support, e.g., relatives, friends and neighbours	242	4	1	29 (11.9%)	42 (17.4%)	171 (70.6%)
16	Living in a non-violent community	237	4	1	34 (14.4%)	20 (8.4%)	183 (77.2%)
17	Living in a resourceful community e.g., socioeconomic status of residents is well	241	4	1	55 (22.9%)	43 (17.8%)	143 (59.3%)
18	Connection of parents or caregivers with the community	243	4	0	25 (10.2%)	34 (14%)	184 (75.7%)
19	Cultural value of promoting nonphysical forms of punishment	233	4	2	65 (27.9%)	37 (15.9%)	131 (56.2%)
20	Cultural value of protecting children	240	4	1	8 (3.3%)	15 (6.3%)	217 (90.4%)

Note: *Total frequency and percentage of Strongly Disagree and Disagree; ** Total frequency and percentage of Strongly Agree and Agree.

The factors with the highest percentage of agreement had the lowest percentage of disagreement. For example, the percentage of total agreement for the factor of "Happy relationship of parents" stood at 94.6% (N=241); while the percentage of disagreement was 2.5% (N=241). And only 2.9% out of the 241 respondents were undecided. "Happy relationship of parents" was found the most agreed protective factor among twenty protective factors. By contrast, the factor of "A child who is perceived as adorable is protected more" was found as the least agreed protective factors having 30.1% (N=242) of agreement, 55.3% (N=242) of disagreement and (15%, N=242) of indecisive positions in agreeing with the factor. This finding supported the previous results of the examination of central tendency and interquartile range of the distributions. Social workers had different opinions on agreeing with the factor of "A child who is perceived as adorable is protected more", though there was high percentage of disagreement among social workers. The factors with high percentage of agreement such as "Happy relationship of parents", "Maternal warmth", "Quality of child rearing conditions" and "Cultural value of protecting children" indicated that the quality of interpersonal relations in the family as well as protective roles of the society can be the leading protective factors for the children under six years of age. The details of the other factors with high percentage of agreement are recorded below.

The factors with more than 90% agreement showed a similar pattern of distribution with high percentage of agreement and low percentage of disagreement. For instance, 92.6% of the participants (N=243) agreed with the factor of "Maternal warmth" as protective and only 3.3% of the participants did not accept it as a protective factor while only 4.1% of the participants were in the position of undecided. This indicates that social workers accept commonly the factor of "Maternal warmth" as the protective factor for children under 6 years of age.

For the factor of "Quality of child rearing conditions", the percentage of agreement was 90.3% (N=237) and the percentage of disagreement was 4.2% with only 5.5% of the participants choosing undecided. The factor of "Cultural value of protecting children" also had a 90.4% agreement by the 240 questionnaire participants with 3.3% of disagreements and 6.6% of the

participants not sure whether they could stand for or against that factor. The factors of "Quality of child rearing conditions" and "Cultural value of protecting children" were found the next influential factors for protecting children under 6 years of age from maltreatment.

The factors related to the primary caregivers' knowledge, attitude and child rearing practices carried a relatively high percentage of agreement and lower percentage of disagreement. The percentage of agreement and disagreement for each of the factors was as follows: (a) "Parents and caregivers with adequate knowledge of child development" had an 81.1% agreement and 5.3% disagreement (N=243); (b) "Parents and caregivers with adequate developmental expectations of the child" had a 74.1% agreement and 8.2% disagreement (N=243); and (c) "Parents or caregivers who experienced a secure attachment with their own caregivers" had a 79.9% agreement and 3.6% disagreement (N=239). The high percentages of agreement with adequate knowledge and practice of primary caregivers showed that most social workers perceived that parents and caregivers in the immediate environment of growing children play important roles in protecting children from maltreatment.

A majority of the social workers accepted the factors related to children's family and community environment as protective factors. The factor of "Quality of child rearing conditions" had the highest percentage among the environmental factors as mentioned previously. The factor of "Accessible childcare and kindergarten in the community had the percentage of 80.4% agreement and 14.7% of disagreement; the factor of "A significant other in the home" had 70.5% agreement, and 13.9% disagreement. "Adequate formal support" and "Adequate informal support" were agreed upon as equally important protective factors. The percentage of agreement for the factor of "Adequate formal support" was 70.6% and the percentage of disagreement stood at 15.1% (N=238); while the percentage of agreement for the factor of "Adequate informal support" was 70.6% and the percentage of disagreement was 11.9% (N=242). The factors of "Living in the non-violent community" and "Connection of parents or caregivers with community" received quite high percentage of agreement at 77.2% (N=237) and 75.7% (N=243) respectively. The high agreement with these factors can be

interpreted that the participants expect commonly supportive and protective roles of the children's proximate and distal environments in protecting young aged children from child maltreatment.

The factors related to children's characteristics such as children's appearance, competent behaviour, temperament and gender received the lowest percentages of social workers' agreement in addition to the agreement with one of two cultural factors. For example, the factor of "A child who is perceived as adorable" had the lowest percentage of agreement (30.1%, N=242) and the highest percentage of disagreement (55.5%, N=242). The factor of "A child who has competent behaviour" got a lower percentage of agreement compared to most other agreed protective factors at 42.6% and the percentage of disagreement was 35.5% (N=245). The percentages of agreement for the factors of "Easy temperament of the child" and "Gender of the child" were 56.4% (N=245) and 63.6% (N=236) respectively. The factor of "Cultural value of promoting nonphysical forms of punishment" received one of the lowest agreements rates (56.2%, N=233); while, the factor of "Cultural value of protecting children" got the one of highest percentage of agreement (90.4%, N=240).

It can be seen from these findings, that social workers mostly accepted family and community factors as the protective factors for children under six years of age while factors related to children's characteristics were found to be the least frequently agreed upon protective factors. Specifically, "Happy relationship of parents", "Maternal warmth", "Quality of child rearing conditions", and "Cultural value of protecting children" were found the most agreed protective factors among Mongolian social workers. In contrast, "A child who is perceived as adorable", "A child who has competent behaviour", "A child with an easy temperament", and "Cultural value of promoting nonphysical punishment" were found the least agreed protective factors. This finding informed that social workers tend to link the protectiveness of the young aged children with positive and quality of interactions among parents as well as interactions between children and parents in the immediate environments. In addition, the personal characteristics of the children and value of using physical discipline were not accepted as the protective factors for the children under 6 years of age.

Protective factors additionally named by social workers

The second question was "Do you know any other protective factors that protect children under 6 years of age that were not asked in the questionnaire?" The aim of adding this question was to identify other protective factors that were not included in the questionnaire. In answering this question, 53 (30.8%, N=173) participants answered "Yes", and the remaining 119 (69.2%, N=173) answered "No", which means 173 questionnaire participants did not give an answer to this question. The following factors were named as protective factors for children under six years of age in addition to the factors listed in the questionnaire:

- Good and positive communication (this factor was mentioned the most frequently);
- Family environment and a safe home (this factor was also mentioned frequently);
- Knowledge and training for parents (only a few participants indicated this factor as an additional protective factor);
- Preschool (a few participants named this as a protective factors);
- Respect child's opinion;
- Playing with kids;
- Public and family attitude towards children;
- Safe and adequate food;
- Playground, environment to play;
- Legislation;
- Health related factors such as health care;
- Sending a child without adequate care to the state care centres;
- Presence of sibling in the home;
- Child friendly TV program and books;
- Parents' love;
- Discipline;
- Family support; and
- Helping children to be independent.

Categorised into groups on the basis of the ecological model, these factors would

be grouped in the following ways: (a) microsystem factors that can include good and positive communication, knowledge of parents, safe family environment, respect of children's opinion, playing with children, presence of sibling in the home, parents' love, discipline, family support and helping children to be independent; (b) exosystem factors that include, preschool, public attitude towards children, safe and adequate food supply, playground and environment to play, child friendly TV programs and book; and (c) macrosystem factors that include public attitude towards children [child protection], health care, legislation, and public attitude towards children's discipline. These additional factors named by social workers indicate that social workers seem to view protective factors in a broad context, including family, community, cultural and legislative elements.

The key findings of the univariate analysis inform that the parents and family related factors at the micro level of human ecology were agreed as more frequently than child related factors at the microsystem. The percentages of social workers' agreement with community related factors were relatively high, but they were not higher than parents' and family related factors. The positive interpersonal relationships within the family including happy parental relationship and maternal warmth, quality of child rearing conditions and cultural value of protecting children were accepted as the most agreed protective factors among Mongolian social workers. The central tendency of accepting these factors as protective was quite positive and there was limited or no polarisation in social workers' perceptions about the most agreed factors.

Child related protective factors such as a child who is perceived as an adorable, a child who is confident, a child with an easy temperament, and cultural value of promoting non-physical punishment were found the least agreed protective factors. There was noticeable polarisation in social workers' perceptions when they expressed their disagreements with these factors, because there were a number of social workers who accepted these factors as protective factors. Further exploration of these factors in connection with social workers' background characteristics are presented in the sections of findings of bivariate analysis and qualitative data analysis.

Findings of bivariate analysis

The researcher used Pearson's Chi-Square tests to examine relationships of six independent variables against each of 20 protective factors (Appendix 1). The six independent variables included social worker's demographic, occupational and educational characteristics such as their gender, current position, age, length of work experience, highest education obtained, and profession by educational diploma. When the researcher examined the relationships of these six variables against social worker's agreement with each of 20 protective factors, only the following seven associations were found statistically significant:

1. When a Pearson's Chi-Square test of independence was performed, the relationship between gender and "Adequate formal support" was statistically significant, $X^2(1, N=203) = 6.342$, $p<.05$; Cramer's $V=.177$, $p<.05$. Female respondents were more likely to agree with the "Adequate formal support" as a protective factor than male respondents (Table 6.2).

Table 6.2 Agreement in "Adequate formal support" by gender

		Female	Male
Adequate formal support	No	14.3%	31%
e.g., social service	Yes	85.7%	69%
	N	161	42

Note. $X^2 = 6.342$, df =1, N=203, $p<.05$; Cramer's $V=.177$, $p<.05$

2. The relationship between gender and "Accessible childcare and kindergarten in the community" was statistically significant, $X^2(1, N=231) = 8.053$, $p<.005$ as well. Males were less likely to agree with "Accessible care and kindergarten in the community" than female social workers (Table 6.3).

Table 6.3 Agreement in "Accessible care and kindergarten in the community" by gender

		Female	Male
Accessible care and kindergarten in the community	No	12.3%	29.5%
	Yes	87.7%	70.5%
	N	187	44

Note: $X^2 = 8.053$, df =1, N=231, $p<.005$; Cramer's $V=.187$, $p<.005$

3. The relationship between gender and "Connection of parents with the

community", at cross tabulation one cells (25%) was expected to count less than 5, which did not meet the criteria to apply Pearson's Chi-Square test, in other words it violated the assumption of Pearson's Chi-Square. Normally, when the degree of freedom is 1, a Chi-Square test assumes that each cell has an expected frequency of five or more; The Fisher's Exact test has no such assumption and it can be used regardless of how small the expected frequency is. The researcher looked therefore at the result of the Fisher's Exact test, which indicated that the relationship between gender and "Connection of parents with the community" was statistically significant at level of .05 (N=208, P=.031, p<.05). See Table 6.4.

Table 6.4 Agreement in "Connection of parents or caregivers with the community" by gender

		Female	Male
Connection of parents or caregivers with the Community	No	9.5%	22.5%
	Yes	90 .5%	77.5%
	N	168	40

Note: N=208, P=0.031, p<.05

4. The relationship between current occupation and "Accessible care and kindergarten in the community" was found statistically significant, $X^2(1, N=231) = 4.377$, p<.05. Khoroo social workers were more likely to agree with the "Accessible care and kindergarten in the community" than were khoroo welfare officers (Table 6.5).

Table 6.5 Agreement in "Accessible care and kindergarten in the community" by current occupation.

		Social Worker	Welfare Officer
Accessible care and kindergarten in the community	No	10.5%	20.5%
	Yes	89.5%	79.5%
	N	114	117

Note. X2 = 4.377, df =1, N=231, p<.05;

5. For the relationship between current occupation and "Parents or caregivers who experienced a secure attachment with their own caregiver", the criteria to apply Pearson's Chi Square did not meet the criteria of the cross-tabulation; therefore the Fisher's Exact test was used to examine the associations. The test indicated

that the relationship between current occupation and "Parents or caregivers who experienced a secure attachment with their own caregiver" was significant at the level of .05 (P=.038, N=199). This means khoroo welfare officers were less likely to agree with the factor of "Parents or caregivers who experiences as secure attachment with their own caregiver" than social workers (Table 6.6).

Table 6.6 Agreement in "Parents or caregivers who experienced a secure attachment with their own caregiver" by current occupation

		Social worker	Welfare Officer
Parents or caregivers who experienced a secure attachment with their own caregiver	No	1.1%	7.5%
	Yes	98.9%	92.5%
	N	93	106

Note: N=199, P=.028, p<.05;

6. The initial continuous variable of age was collapsed into four groups for the test of Pearson's Chi-Square. When four different age groups were examined against each of 20 protective factors, there was only the relationship between age and "Living in a resourceful community" that was found to be statistically significant (x2=9.016, df=3, N=194, p<.029; Cravers' V=.219, p<.029). But one cell (12.5%) of cross tabulations was expected to count less than 5, which did not meet the criteria to apply Pearson's Chi Square test, therefore the researcher used an alternative Kruskal-Wallis test.

The Kruscal-Wallis Test indicated a statistically significant difference in the agreement with the "Cultural value of protecting children" across four different age groups (Gp1, n=101: 20-29 years of age, Gp2, n=79: 30-39years of age, Gp3, n=38: 40-49years of age, Gp4, n=18: 50-59 years of age), X^2 = 8.946, df =3, N=236, p=.03. The highest mean rank of 133.92 for the age group between 30-39 years of age, showed that the middle age group had the highest scores in agreement with "Cultural value of protecting child" compared to other three age groups (Table 6.7).

Table 6.7 Agreement in "Cultural value of protecting children" by age groups

	Age group	N	Mean Rank
Cultural value of protecting	20-29	101	107.64

children	30-39	79	133.92**
	40-49	38	118.00
	50-59	18	112.81
	N	236	

Note: X^2= 8.946, df =3, N=236, p<.05

7. In an examination of the length of work experience against agreement with each of protective factors, the Kruskal-Wallis test revealed a statistically significant difference in "A supportive significant other in the home" across five different age groups (Gp1, n=181: 0-5years of age Gp2, n=24, Gp3, n=11: 11-15years of age, Gp4, n=3: 16-20years of age, Gp=5, n=1: 21-25 years of age), X^2 = 10.093, df =4, N=220, p=.022). Further inspection of the mean ranks scores indicated that participants with 0 to 5 years and 16 to 20 years of work experiences in their current occupation had more agreement with "A supportive significant other in the home" as a protective factor than the other three groups. In addition, these two groups recorded a higher median score of agreement (Md=4) than the other three groups (Table 6.8).

Table 6.8 Agreement in "A supportive significant other in the home" by length of work experience (groups)

	Groups	N	Mean Rank	Median (Mdn)
Supportive significant other in the home	0-5	181	115.71**	4
	6-10	24	83.02	3
	11-15	11	86.18	3
	16-20	3	125.50**	4
	21-25	1	49.00	3
	N	220		

Note: X^2 = 10.093, df =4, N=220, p<.05

Although these associations were found statistically significant at the bivariate level of the quantitative analysis, it should be noted that the statistically significant associations "indicate nothing about the nature of relationships" and these results of statistical significance simply tell us "something about the likelihood of results being attributable to sampling errors" which depends on the sample size and research design according to Vaus (2002, pp.174-175).

There was no other statistically significant result found when the researcher tested the relationships between the highest education and agreement with protective factors (separately) at the bivariate level. At the same time, no significant relationship was found between social workers' attendance at school training and agreement with protective factors. As Cohen recommended, non-significant results were not interpreted (Field, 2009, p. 54) .

The key findings of the bivariate analysis indicate that seven statistically significant associations were found at the bivariate level of the quantitative analysis responding to the sub-question of "What are the associations between demographic, educational and occupational characteristics of social workers and their perceptions of protective factors?" In other words, the bivariate analysis identified that the female practitioners were more likely to agree with the protective factors of "Adequate formal support", "Accessible care and kindergarten in the community", and "Connection of parents or caregivers with the community", than male practitioners.

In terms of current occupation by the research participants, social workers are more likely agree with the protective factor of "Parents or caregivers who experienced a secure attachment with their own caregiver", than khoroo welfare officers. In terms of age group, middle age practitioners (in the age group between 30 and 39 years of age) were more likely to agree with "Cultural value of protecting children", than other age groups. And the practitioners who work 0 to 5 years and 16 to 20 years at their current position were more likely to agree with the protective factor of "A supportive significant other in the home".

The findings of the quantitative data analysis included findings of univariate and bivariate analysis. Findings of the univariate analysis revealed that the general tendency of agreement with protective factors was relatively high, although social workers' opinions were divided around accepting a few factors as protective. The quantitative findings indicated the most and least agreed upon among social workers. The most agreed protective factors among social workers were the factors at meso and exosystems, such as parents, family and community related factors and the least agreed factors were the micro factors relating to children's characteristics. Findings of the bivariate analysis indicated several statistically

significant associations between agreement with the protective factors and the demographic and occupational characteristics, such as gender, age, current occupation and length of work experience of social workers.

Findings of qualitative data analysis

Following the results of the quantitative phase of the study, the researcher explored some quantitative results in greater depth. This in-depth exploration started with the social workers' rationale of selecting family protective factors as most frequently agreed factors for children under 6 years of age. Then the researcher introduced the social workers' descriptions of each of the most and least agreed protective factors, their understanding about those selected protective factors and experience of using these factors in their daily practice.

Family related protective factors

The researcher first analysed what made most of the participants agree with family related protective factors by sorting the themes that emerged form the interviews according to frequency.

In the views of the participants, these most frequently mentioned themes relating to agreement with family related protective factors were as follows:

- Family is the closest immediate environment to a child (10);
- Family shapes child development and behaviour (10);
- Children learn from parents (8);
- Warm atmosphere of the family helps a child to grow safely and without fear (8);
- Dysfunctional families with problems of alcohol use of parents or domestic violence or lack of care push children to leave home or experience child abuse or neglect (7);
- Experience of love or parental love guides a child to learn love someone else in the future (7);
- Children are not separable from their family (4);
- A Mongolian proverb teaches us to treat children under 6 years of age like a king or a queen (2);
- Recent policy of the Government aims to support families (1).

First seven themes found to be interconnected with each other. These themes indicated different roles, activities and interpersonal relationships of the family as well as structural elements of the family setting. According to Bronfenbrenner (1979, p.22), the roles, activities and interpersonal relationships in and within the family constitute elements of the micro and meso systems. The latter two themes informed about cultural and political roles and activities that can belong to the larger setting called as exo-system. The descriptions related to structural and functional components of family related factors were described as follows.

The theme of "Family is the closest immediate environment to a child" was expressed in the following phrases; "Family is the primary unit for children, where children interact closely with their parents or caregivers"; "Family is the first place for children to interact with people"; "Family is the most proximate environment to a child", "Family is a place where children brought up" and "family is the number one factor for children everywhere." Although social workers did not name and link their descriptions with the ecological systems, their descriptions of family related protective factors were distinguishable in terms of structural and functional constituents of family related factors. Social workers' terms of primary, most proximate and first place for the child that were used to describe family indicated some structural components of the microsystem of the nested structure of human ecology.

Ten female interview participants highlighted that "Family is the closest immediate environment to a child" indicating family as the protective factor. In terms of their age, four were between 20 between 29, another four were between 30 and 39, and two fell in the group between 40 and 49 years of age. Six were khoroo social workers and 4 were khoroo welfare officers. Interestingly, most of them had social science backgrounds. Three were social workers, and two were sociologists. One philosophy teacher, two teachers and a journalist completed the ten participants.

Under the theme of "Family shapes child development and child behaviour" the 10 participants spoke about the "Strong influence of parents or caregivers on child development", "The parents' role in building children's future", "The connection between child discipline and behaviour", "The family protects the child from

doing wrong", and "The close linkage between child behaviour and family environment". Most of the participants who put the emphasis on family roles in shaping child development and behaviour were female, seven out of 10. The remaining three were male participants. In terms of age, a half (5) were in the age group between 30 and 39, and four were between 40 and 49. Only one male participant in the group was between 20 and 29 years of age. The background of these ten participants included social workers, politicians, teachers, administrators, economists, one manager of eco-tourism and one accountant.

The third and fourth themes were "Children learn from their parents" and "Warm and friendly atmosphere of the home." Regardless of gender difference, seven females and two male participants brought up both themes as the main reason for their agreement with the family as a protective factor. There were the same number of social workers and welfare officers, four social workers and four welfare officers who brought up these themes and there were no major differences in terms of their ages. All the respondents were under 50 years of age; predominantly they fell into age groups between 20 to 29 and 30 to 39. When the participants brought up the theme called "Children learn from their parents" they mostly referred to a Mongolian proverb "Эх нь хээр алаг бол хүү нь шийр алаг" echoing the closest English proverb "The apple does not fall far from the tree." The theme "Warm and friendly atmosphere of home" was expressed by other similar themes such as "Warm family environment", "Warm atmosphere", "Happy family relationship" and "Maternal warmth".

Some participants looked at the issue from other side (negatively) and stated: "Dysfunctional families with problems of alcohol use by parents or domestic violence or lack of care become push factors for the child to leave home or experience child abuse or neglect." The participants who held this perspective were all female aged across all groups from 20 to 59 years. Of these seven participants one was khoroo welfare officer who did not have a social work training certificate while the remaining six were khoroo social workers with social work training. The key messages in their views were that the parents' excessive use of alcohol creates unsafe and abusive home environments for children and a lack of respect for other family members which fuels frequent

quarrels in families which in turn adversely affects children under 6 years of age and their needs are abandoned. The participants said that excessive use of alcohol, abusive behaviour, and lack of care and respect become the main causes of children leaving home or becoming school dropouts.

Another seven participants felt that "Parental love and care is essential for children under 6 years of age". They were mostly (6 participants out of 7) female participants aged between 30 and 39. There was no major difference between the number of social workers (3) and welfare officers (4) who supported this theme. In terms of their educational background, they had different professions including an eco tourist manager, accountant, economist, social worker, teacher and journalist. They also stated that "A child will experience love the first time in her/his home"; "Experience of love will teach children to love someone in the future" and "Parents' loving and caring attitude toward a child create a strong bond between child and parents".

The theme, "Children are not separable from the family" was brought up by four female participants. Three were khoroo social workers aged from 30 to 39. All four participants raised the importance of children being together with their biological parents, having a full family with a mother, father and child as well as their concern at the increasing number of divorces among young couples. The points brought by the social workers inform that social workers are concerned with increasing changes in the family structure that caused by family divorce and family dysfunctions. This concern may indicate that there is an increasing need to have family support programme for young people and couples in solving family issues considering the best interest of the growing children.

These themes indicate essential functional elements of the family, which is a part of the microsystem; however social workers did not explain these patterns as a whole. The family is the most proximate setting of the growing child where the child can experience and observe the essential functional elements of the family including interpersonal relationships, roles and activities of their parents and caregivers. Within this family setting children grow up and develop, interact with primary caregivers and others, and they experience love and care or loss and separation. The functions of family setting in the microsystem are connected with

various patterns of children's experiences in their families. Social workers revealed both positive and negative family experiences of their own childhood experiences when they described about the protectiveness of family environment.

There were several themes, which were brought up just once during the interview to explore the participants' rationale for agreement with family related protective factors. These related to formal and informal actions such as recent government policies to support families, the use of Mongolian proverbs to treat one's own children, effective way of working with families and Mongolian parent's common sense to care for children under 6 years of age. Other comments seemed less relevant such as a safe external environment, a lack of kindergarten and a comfortable home.

Perception of most and least agreed protective factors

According to the results of the descriptive statistics, the most agreed upon protective factors were found to be:

- Happy relationship of parents;
- Maternal warmth;
- Quality of child rearing conditions; and
- Cultural value of protecting children.

In contrast, the least agreed upon protective factors were found to be:

- The child who is perceived as adorable;
- The child who has competent behaviour;
- The gender; and
- Cultural value of non-physical punishment.

When the quality of interpersonal relations and child rearing conditions of the most proximate setting of children were agreed as the most frequent protective factors; children's own biological and personal characteristics found to be least agreed protective factors for young aged children. The noticeable finding among the most and least protective factors was that two cultural factors: cultural value of protecting children and cultural value of non-physical punishment were

understood and agreed differently among social workers. The qualitative data analysis in the next section focuses on the descriptions of these factors that were explained by the interview participants.

Happy relationship of parents

The phenomenon "Happy relationship of parents" was the most frequently agreed protective factor among the questionnaire participants. The same result was found among the interview participants. The interview participants used the following phrases to describe the meaning of "Happy relationship of parents". From the phenomenological view, these phrases were indicators of essential protective elements of the phenomenon of "Happy relationship of parents". (The number in the bracket indicates the number of participants who used the phrase to describe the phenomenon). These protective elements included respect for each other (11), positive and friendly communication (9), warm feeling and warm atmosphere of family (8), calm and peaceful relationships (7), loving and caring relationships (7), happy smile (6), a child is everything in human life (6), no quarrels and no conflict (5), a child makes a relationship happy, basic needs are provided (3), trust and understanding (3), duties and commitment (3), stable and united family (2), no disease and healthy life (1), family routine of having breakfast together (1), and satisfaction of couple with each other (1). Each of these essential constituents of happy relationship of parents is described as below.

Both female and male interview participants frequently used the word of "respect" to describe a happy relationship of parents. Three out of four male interview participants used the word respect in replying to the question "What came up in your mind when you heard or read the phrase, 'Happy relationship of parents'"? A male participant, whose background was social work, aged between 30 and 39 years, replied directly that, "Happiness is to respect each other." There was another similar quote, "If a couple does not respect each other, they would not be happy", which was made by a female participant between 30 and 39 years of age. The association perceived between respect and happiness in the parental relationship, therefore, was viewed as important for a child protective environment.

The term "respect" was expressed in connection with words about communication

including, communicating with respect, communicating respectfully with children and being respectful to each other. The participants frequently used the phrases of "warm feeling", "warm atmosphere", "positive and friendly communication", "peaceful relationship" and "loving and caring relationship" to describe "Happy relationships of parents". These were all elements of communicating with respect. These phrases, however, were not addressed to a particular member of the family or one of the parents. These phrases seemed to be addressed to both of the parents or to all family members. The participants often made connections between respect and a warm atmosphere for family and children. One rationale for connecting children with a warm atmosphere at home was explained as follows,

> *Children under 6 years of age are very dependent on their parents in terms of everything; in particular, children under 6 years of age are very sensitive to relationship and communication of parents. I have noticed that my daughter at 3 years of age becomes uncomfortable when we (I and my husband) have a disagreement or yell each other. Our warm and friendly communication makes our daughter happier.* (Khoroo welfare officer, female)

Some participants perceived that protectiveness was visible when children experienced love and care. This finding tells that social workers see that the family is the place where children can experience love, care and happy relationship. They also see that this experience will help building the capacity of children to love others in their future. This was not only perceived as a protective factor for children but also for the children's own future families.

A number of interview participants mentioned the main causes of unhappy family relationships as alcohol use, particularly alcohol use of the father, and quarrels between parents, which were the key factors to destroy happy relationships of parents and whole families. A number of participants talked about the consequences of the unhappy relationship of parents, including negative effects on children such as children who demonstrated stressed or extrovert behaviour, hyperactivity or low self-esteem, becoming a broker between parents and internalising conflicts between parents. The participants linked the issue of unhappy relationship and alcohol use of parents with the existence of street children or unsupervised children.

The unhappy relationship of parents leads children to be stressed out

> *and anxious about everything. Some kids with alcoholic and abusive parents cannot even stay home and they tend to stay long hours on the street without supervision*. (Khoroo social worker, female)

Whether expressed in terms of happiness or unhappiness, there was a consistent perception among participants that a positive parental relationship was the key factor for a child protective environment.

A few participants raised the issue of commitment and dedication to becoming parents when the researcher asked about their thoughts about happy relationship of parents.

> *Yes, parents' relationship is important for children's upbringing. A happy relationship means, parents do not drink alcohol and it involves a peaceful environment and love at first. I know cases where parents are unemployed, but they are fine on parenting and devoted to their children. If parents are peaceful, calm and do not have quarrels there will be warm atmosphere. A warm atmosphere and smiles indicate a happy relationship. Many parents without education/any degree they still take care of their children very well and work hard for their children and children's education. I think this is commitment of parents*. (Khoroo social worker, male)

This quote shows that parents' devotion and commitment to their children is another protective factor regardless of the parents' educational background and employment status. It also informs that parental positive roles and activities are essential for children's upbringing. The concern related to alcohol use by parents was mentioned repeatedly as the main issue that destroyed happy relationships of parents and a peaceful environment in the family; however, risk factors including the alcohol use of parents were not addressed by the current study.

Two participants raised the issue of stable and united families when the researcher asked about "What came up when you hear/read about happy relationship of parents?" They were both female social workers aged between 40 and 49 years of age.

> *I thought about the stable family. Love and positive communication builds a stable family. A couple's relationship involves children. Children are the future of family relationships.* (Khoroo social worker, female)

> *If parents are happy with each other and with children, the [whole] family will be happy. Happiness includes everything of human life. Family members should be united, and understand each other when they*

make important decisions. (Khoroo welfare officer, female)

This quote shares the view that parents are a unit, working as one, like an old machine, in tune with each other. Another description of the happy relationships of parents was connected to the health status of family members and a healthy routine to keep the family together. An example of a healthy routine to keep the family together was to have breakfast or dinner together. The participant who linked the happy relationship of parents with the status of having no disease used a quote from a famous poem by a Mongolian poet of which the key message was that being healthy is the best example of happiness. The participants mentioned different issues of the family and it's functioning. The finding tells that the happy relationships of parents should be combined with the protective roles and activities of the parents and caregivers in order to ensure the protectiveness of children in the family setting.

Overall the participants' perceptions of the "Happy relationship of parents" were articulated as respectful, loving, peaceful and healthy relationships among couples and supported by smiles (physical appearances) and a poem about happiness. This indicates that social workers perceived that respect, love, commitment, and health and a peaceful and healthy relationship in the family are essential constituents of happy relationship. These essential constituents of the happy relationship of parents include not only the interpersonal relationships in the family, the critical elements of this factor also include the issues of family functioning that caused by various roles and activities of the parents.

Maternal warmth

The phenomenon of "Maternal warmth", the next most frequently agreed upon protective factor, was defined by the phrases such as: genuine and unconditional love (13), warm heart (8), breastfeeding (4), togetherness with a child (3), forgiveness (3), mother herself is a protective factor (2), proverbs about mother's love (2), constant worry about own child (2), not hitting a child (1). The phenomenon of "Maternal warmth" was composed of subjective meanings of maternal genuine love, warmness, dedication and protectiveness. Each of these phrases is described below.

Thirteen participants mentioned the unconditional or genuine love of a mother

when the researcher asked, “What came up in your mind when you read/heard about maternal warmth?” In terms of gender, there were 10 females and three male respondents who belonged to different age groups. A majority of the participants were female and in the age group between 40 and 49 years. Female respondents shared their experiences of raising their own children and some brought up memories of how their mothers loved them unconditionally. The phrase, “unconditional love of a mother was mentioned together with the phrase, “warm heart” in most of the cases. (Their professional backgrounds were politician, accountant, manager, and public administration, economist, accountant and history teacher). Eight out of 13 participants had taken short-term social work courses.) It was noticeable that most of the descriptions of maternal warmth were based on personal experience and the beliefs of the participants. There was one unique description of maternal warmth by a male participant:

> P: *For me maternal warmth means genuine love towards own child. I have heard that there is only true love on the earth that is mother’s love for her own child. Mother’s love must not be false. Mother’s love is true love.*
>
> R: *How did you find out about this true love of mother?*
>
> P: *I have learnt it from my own experience of observing my wife and mother. I have also observed that mothers always worry about their children and think about them.* (Khoroo social worker, male)

This description appears to conform to the broader patriarchal cultural perspective that defines performativity of gender, which is historically and culturally embedded.

Breastfeeding was also considered a sign of the warmth of mothers. Three females and one male participant stated that mothers are connected with their children through breastfeeding. One of the female welfare officers described this phenomenon: “Breastfeeding creates a genuine connection between mother and child”.

Statements of “children should be together with mom” and “mother is a protective factor herself” were made strongly by three female participants. One was even very critical about the practice of sending infants or babies to day care.

> *If a woman sends her small baby to day care, she can lose 50% of her*

> *maternal warmth. Thus a small baby should be together with her mom all the time.* (Khoroo social worker, female).

No one gave, however, a rationale for the importance of being together with children under 6 years of age.

A female participant with three children mentioned a common saying: "A woman without a child is very tough and she has no warmth in her heart." A male welfare officer also shared a similar belief in his description of maternal warmth:

> *I have noticed that the look (gaze) of young ladies becomes gentle and warm when they become pregnant.* (Khoroo welfare officer, male)

Both female and male participants who provided the above-recorded quotes related to the descriptions of maternal warmth were non social workers by background. Their descriptions notably revealed their personal and societal beliefs that give more privilege to women with children than women without children.

When the researcher asked how maternal warmth can be observed, the participants responded that it can be observed by a mother's way of communicating with her own children, ways of taking care of her children, patience, her way of approaching her children, gentle glances, attitudes without worry/worriless attitudes, tone of voice and keeping a child's clothes clean regardless of her socio economic status. One of the participants highlighted that neglectful mothers do not take care of children's clothes and food. She added, "Maltreatment starts from child neglect."

It appears, the observations on the maternal warmth are based on cultural as well as social work values. But, there is a tension between these two perceived values. Some participants observe the maternal warmth through lenses of the societal and cultural expectations. Others saw that the maternal warmth is an essential part of parental care and protection that can be supported and encouraged by social work services.

Quality of child rearing conditions

Social workers defined the phenomenon of "Quality of child rearing conditions" with both objective and subjective meanings including a comfortable home (14),

food (13), a safe environment for children including things like kindergarten, street and playground (11), provision of the basic needs (11), a warm family atmosphere (7), together with parents (6), warm clothes (5), parent's respect for each other (5), more access to kindergarten (5), and provision of school essentials (3), not leaving a child behind a locked door (1) and not having quarrels and no use of alcohol (3). Social workers indicated these as protective elements that contribute to the meaning of "Quality of child rearing conditions". The participants also highlighted different living conditions of ger and apartment areas saying that the living conditions in apartment areas are much more comfortable and convenient than the conditions in the ger areas.

Fourteen participants articulated that a comfortable home indicates the "Quality of child rearing conditions". The researcher found that these participants mentioned the physical home environment, "living in one's own home" and "affordable home" and "living in a warm home". Thirteen out of 14 participants were female respondents aged from 20 to 49 years. There were nine khoroo social workers and five welfare officers among them. These participants mostly put an emphasis on decent, not luxurious, home conditions. One stated clearly that a comfortable home does not necessarily have to be luxurious, but it should be decent and affordable.

> *A comfortable home is not dreaming about something that is not realistic; It is about a down to earth place to live; this means to live a comfortable place in ways of being affordable and decent.* (Khoroo social worker, female)

It was indicative that the "Quality of child rearing conditions" included a provision of children's basic needs in addition to a decent home environment. Eleven out of 30 interview participants confirmed that fulfilling basic needs of children is important for ensuring the quality of child rearing conditions.

> *Quality of child rearing conditions means the family environment for me. When we visit families on our duties, the home with quality of child rearing conditions appears to be warm by temperature, children do not feel cold, also children should have toys to play with, food to eat.* (Khoroo social worker, female)

Within "the provision of basic needs of children", food was brought up more often than other components, including warm clothes and school essentials. All

participants (13 participants) who brought up the food issue were female. They said that children under 6 years of age should have sufficient and adequate food that will support the development of their growing bodies. Participants said that food for children under 6 years of age should be adequate, healthy and safe; but in most cases, the participants reported that the issue of having enough food to feed children becomes a problem for poor families rather than having healthy and safe food. Several social workers shared their own experiences of referring children to the nursing clinic when children were at risk of hunger or at the stage of being malnourished.

"Warm and friendly atmosphere of family" and "togetherness with parents" were other sub-themes to define the "Quality of child rearing conditions". The participants who highlighted friendly and warm interactions between family members were all female workers. Some connected a warm atmosphere of family with warm and kind communication between parents or communication between parents and children, saying that a warm atmosphere is an important factor for the quality of bringing up children.

> *No definite description comes up in my mind. However, the quality of living environment is very important I think. In particular, a warm and kind attitude (communication) and a comfortable home are important. In addition to having warm and kind attitude psychologically, they should have safe food and environment for kids. I think all these factors will contribute the quality of child rearing conditions.* (Khoroo social worker, female)

Six participants connected the issue of children's safety with existence of both parents and grandparents who live together with children. They noted that if children live with both parents, children's safety will be guaranteed. But, some participants did not support this statement:

> *If there is quarrel, or an alcoholic parent in the family, children will be scared and worried or they will be anxious. Eventually it will affect the child's self-esteem or confidence. Due to low self-esteem /self-confidence or feeling unsafe, children may not express freely their opinion or thoughts. It may lead them to become introvert. It happens not only to kids; it can affect the woman whose husband is alcoholic and abusive.* (Khoroo social worker, female)

This statement reveals the general and predictive opinion of the social worker

who expressed her strong perception about the adverse effects of parent's problems on children. Looking at her non-social work (economist) background and her more than ten years of experience in khoroo social work, it can be interpreted that her strong perception of the adverse effects of parents' problem could be drawn from her work experience or informal learning. On the other hand, she could have learned it from her social work in-service training that was designed for practitioners without formal social work education during beginning of social work development in Mongolia.

Eleven participants were concerned about "A safe external environment". According to their descriptions, safe external environments included an accessible kindergarten, a safe playground and safe and clean streets. The most serious concerns for both khoroo social workers and welfare officers were a lack of parental care and limited access to kindergartens, especially in the ger khoroos. They stated that due to limited access to kindergartens and parents' careless and neglectful practices, many children under 6 years of age were being left behind locked doors in the home which resulted in an increase in home based accidents.

> *To be safe means child should not be alone home or unsupervised. Parents should look after their children always. Even some educated couples leave their children behind locked door when they go to work. This means, these couples leave their children in unsafe situations. If there is limited access to public kindergartens, they should send their children to paid/private childcare or kindergarten; or one of them (parents) should look after their children. In principle, a young child should be not left alone home*. (Social worker, female)

A majority of social workers linked the issue of leaving young age child alone at home with the shortage of public kindergartens in the communities. However, in the last statement the social worker highlights: "Even some educated couples leave their children behind locked door when they go to work." This social worker saw the issue as a individual problem rather than as a structural and community problem related to lack of formal and informal supports in communities, acceptance of harmful child-rearing practice and inadequate child protection practice.

Another emerging issue was the concern related to unsupervised use of computer and computer games. Here is an example of social worker's concerns.

> *Child should be protected from computer harm. Nowadays children around 4 or 5 or 6 can easily find games and play games on YouTube. Children can be addicted to computer games because of uncontrolled exposure of computer games and videos. It is very harmful.* (Social worker, female)

This concern was raised in relation to the factor "Quality of child rearing conditions". The social worker acknowledged that she learned it from her own experience of raising her son who is now 5 years of age. Access to computers can be a harmful to children under 6 years of age in some families, if there is unsupervised surfing on online and children and their computer use becomes an inevitable issue.

Social workers' descriptions of the quality of child rearing condition comprise various perceived protective elements of children's proximate and distal environments. These elements include decent comfortable home, provision of basic needs, sufficient and adequate food, warm atmosphere, being together with parents, safety in and out of home. When social workers described these protective elements, they linked these elements with parental roles, activities and interrelations of the family members and communities in general. The key points conveyed by the social workers can be summarised that the quality of child rearing condition is a complex phenomenon that can include physical, psychological and socio-economical conditions and functions of the children's proximate and distal settings as well as interrelations among these settings.

Culture of protecting children

When the researcher asked for participant's thought about the meaning behind "Culture of protecting children", the views were varied. Some participants viewed this factor from the perspective of communication and relationships with children. Four participants said that they would think about respectful ways of communicating with children and four others said that they would identify positive and happy relationships with children as relating to a culture of protecting children. Interestingly, the four participants who thought about "Positive and happy relationship with children" were lawyers. One participant with a politics background stated that children are our future.

A number of participants felt that Mongolian proverbs still work as educational

tools to raise and discipline children. Most of the participants who placed emphasis on Mongolian proverbs mentioned the popular proverb that teaches about the ways to treat children according to their age. The translation of this proverb is: "Treat a child under three years of age like a king, treat a child from four to seven years of age like a queen, treat a child from 7 to 14 like a slave, and treat a child after 14 like a your friend." It appeared that this proverb works as a guide for raising children for some social workers as well as some parents and may become the source of their thoughts and actions. This is reminiscent of Crotty's suggestion to view culture in reverse as a source instead of considering it as the outcome of human thoughts and action.

> We need to reverse this way of viewing culture. Culture is best seen as the source rather than the result of human thought and behaviour. It is a set of control mechanism-plans, recipes, rules, instructions (what computer engineers call "program") for the governing of behaviour. (Crotty, 1998a, p. 152)

A number of social workers who used proverbs to define "A culture of protecting children" indicated that some proverbs become "instructions" to understand people's attitude toward children. At the same time the researcher was aware that culture provides meaning but it is a "circumscribed" meaning; it also sets boundaries, which can limit our thoughts (Crotty, 1998a, p. 153)

Social workers stated that culture is changing. They said that people might think about children's rights behind a "Culture of protecting children" because of increasing awareness of children's rights among children and adults. Several participants also put an emphasis on the importance of listening to children and communicating with them in age appropriate language under the frame of this factor.

Children who are perceived as adorable

More than a half of the interview participants stated that it would display a discriminative attitude if people agreed with the factor of "Children who are perceived as adorable" as protective. Their rationale for not agreeing with this statement was that children should not be treated according to their physical appearance. The background of the participants who supported this statement included a primary schoolteacher, a politician, an accountant, a public

administration manager, an economist, a social worker, a history teacher and a lawyer. Two common characteristics in their background were found to be gender and age. Eleven participants out of 13 were women, and 8 out of 13 were in the age group of 40 to 49. Most of them also viewed the idea that people should not be treated according to their physical appearance as a fundamental principle of social work practice. On the other hand, what social workers said may not be an indication of their perception of protective factors; it could be their perceptions of the self and their pride or the possible effects of social desirability.

A few participants elaborated on this factor by quoting the Mongolian tale about three adorable/beauties on the earth. According to this saying, there are three adorable animals on the earth, a toddler (or small child) who is walking, a puppy that is running and a calf (or baby camel) that is trying to stand. This quote by the participants indicated that Mongolians use short stories and tales to teach love and protection of young children and baby animals. But, using these metaphors in their expressions of protective factors does not necessarily indicate that their perception of protective factors is based on facts; instead it may indicate social workers' false hope that may inhibit their perceptions of protectiveness in children's environment.

A female participant aged between 20 and 29 shared her belief about what she had learned from her herder parents. According to her parents, small children do not easily get contaminated, because they are as pure as spring water. Her parents allowed her small children to play on the grass and get dirty when they visited their grandparents in the countryside. She added to her comments, "I am aware that this practice would not work in the city where we live because of environmental pollution. As you know the pollution of soil and land in the city is extremely high." This indicated that her personal experience and informal learning had an important place in her perception of protective environment although she had formal social work training. Simultaneously she revealed the differences between child rearing practices in overcrowded urban districts and the nomadic countryside and concerns about environmental pollution in the city.

Nine participants with different backgrounds brought up the phrase of "all children are adorable to their parents". The key point of their message was that

parents would not stop loving their children, even when children were not adorable. This is an ideal parental perception about their children and is not always true for some parents who are subject to child protection investigation and service. Another eight participants made a similarly straightforward statement: "A child is a child." Almost all of these stated that children should not be discriminated against because of their physical appearance and that every child has a right be treated equally. From the children's rights perspective it is true that every child should be treated equally, but some participants indicated that it is not always true in reality.

A few participants mentioned that some people do discriminate and do treat disabled or poor children badly based on the children's physical appearance. One participant stated that adults and children's views are different in that some children tend to act discriminatively towards their peers because of physical appearance and disability issues. This finding revealed the existence of a discriminative attitude towards children in the society; however most social workers claimed that children should not be treated differently based on the principle of children's rights.

A child who has competent behaviour

A majority of the participants who referred to the phenomenon of "A child who has competent behaviour" stated that children under six years of age are not able to protect themselves even if they have competent behaviour. The rationale behind this perception was that children under six years are dependent on their guardians, therefore they cannot protect themselves. Here is one example of this understanding:

> *Children are naturally naïve. Some children can be more active and competent; it does not mean that they can protect themselves*. (Social worker, female)

This understanding revealed that some social workers perceived that children are passive recipients of parental or caregiver's care ignoring children's involvement and personal characteristics that affect their interactions with their parents and guardians. The terms that indicated children's interactions with primary caregivers and others, and children's experience of growing up in the family

revealed various patterns of children's experiences in their families.

Social workers' descriptions of competent behaviour of young children did not include any scientific evidence and research that define children's developmental patters and characteristics. Instead, a few social workers appeared to believe in media sources that said that a brave toddler could protect herself and younger sibling from the extreme situation of fire. For example, two participants, (one male and one female), felt that some brave and competent children might protect themselves if they needed to escape from a dangerous place and used as an example a true story that happened several years ago in the remote province of South Gobi, Mongolia. This story was reported in local online news as follows.

> A two-year-old girl named B.Saranchimeg saved her brother of ten months old from fire when parents were away looking after animals, and Saranchimeg stayed home with her younger brother. A fire started in the ger accidently, so she grabbed her brother and escaped from the fire. When her parents came home the "tent" was totally burned but the two children were safe and the younger brother had a 40% burn injury. The *Mirror of the Society* newspaper opened a charity account to raise funds for a new ger for this family. One local business company called Max group and the aimag government presented two sets of tents to the family. While the younger brother and mother of Saranchimeg were hospitalized, Saranchimeg and her father went to the capital city to receive a medal of honour from the President for being recognized as the youngest brave hero. (Mongolnews.mn, 2010)

The participants who shared this story did not comment on the safety issue of these two children, which had been caused by leaving the children without the supervision of caregivers. When the researcher looked at online comments written about the abovementioned story, there was neither concern nor an official report written in the local papers related to this story. Only a few comments in the online news were critical, saying that parents should not leave children under six years of age alone, noting that this was not an issue to celebrate but rather that measures should be taken against such neglectful parents. A majority of the comments admired this girl and congratulated her. This finding adds the fact that a few social workers had a similar perception to the public, believing in the not well-analysed media report.

The next explanation about competent behaviour of young children revealed another misunderstanding by social workers about competent behaviour of the

child. A few social workers linked the competent behaviour of young children with the child's talent. Here is one example:

> Researcher: *What would you think behind meaning of the competent behaviour of young children?*
>
> Respondent: *I would think about the talent of children. Children can learn or obtain talent from their parents. Some children are very capable and do learn easily to dance or make paper crafts for example. Some children do not learn even after several explanations. Therefore, I would link it with child talent. Maybe, there is some influence of genetics.* (Social worker, female)

Aside from these few descriptions, the majority of participants held the position that young children are not capable of protecting themselves and that parents or caregivers should look after them to ensure their safety. Children's age and naïve character appeared to be important reasons for them to hold this position. Although the participants acknowledged children's rights to be protected and cared for by their parents and guardians, their explanations about competent behaviour indicated a misunderstanding about children's developmental characteristics such as children's age and competent behaviour that work as a buffer during stressful situations.

Gender

The researcher did not ask a specific question referring to the phenomenon of "Girls are protected more than boys". However, during the interviews a few participants mentioned that girls were more protected than boys. One of these statements was as follows:

> *I have a daughter, only child in my family. I do think girls should be loved and protected more than boys. Girls should also be educated well to be independent in the future. I used to spend a lot of time in taking care of my daughter's education. Since I started working as a khoroo social worker, the time I spend with her has been reduced dramatically. I have come to feel guilty. I have to spend more time with my daughter.* (Social worker, female,)

This female social worker shared her concern related to the gender of the child and the parent's anxiety about raising a girl based on her personal experience. The great emphasis she places on girl's protection reflects a common societal expectation, that girls should feminine and emotional, and boys should be masculine and strong. She believed that more investment is required in her girl's

education in terms of resources and time in order to build a safe future for her girl. This belief is common among other Mongolian parents.

Cultural value of non-physical forms of punishment

The "Cultural value of non-physical forms of punishment" was understood mostly as punishment without hitting. Seventeen out of 30 interview participants stated that "non-physical forms of punishment" means discipline without hitting. The participants explained this factor with such ideas as: explanation of consequence to children when they make a mistake, limitation of child's favourite activities, and introducing folk stories and proverbs. A female social worker in the age group between 20 and 29 stated, "we have a culture of not hitting children, we have learned many proverbs and stories from our parents and grandparents that have been used as tools to discipline our children." However, the literature review indicated that the practice of hitting children is common and some parents use corporal punishment as tools to discipline their children (Beazley et al., 2006). A male khoroo welfare officer in the age group between 20 and 29 added, "My grandmother used to tell us folk stories which were interesting and educational when we were children." This example showed that not all-traditional practice encourages physical discipline or spanking in child rearing. Instead, the last quote showed that the use of folk stories and proverbs becomes alternative as well as an educational tool to promote non-physical forms of disciplining a child.

During the interview process four participants said, "maybe, the respondents did not understand the meaning of the term, 'non-physical forms of punishment'. They might have understood it as a negative impression". Another reason of the disagreement with this factor could be connected with the newness of this term to local social workers. One said, "Ordinary people would not understand the term, 'non-physical forms of punishment', because this term does not sound like a Mongolian term." This indicates that the term, "non-physical forms of punishment" can be new for some participant social workers or they may not have received formal or informal training in non-physical forms of punishment.

However, eleven out of 30 participants stated explicitly that physical punishment is acceptable for some people to discipline their children. One female participant aged between 30 and 39 years quoted a proverb which apparently promotes the

practice of hitting children: “Hitting a child will reduce a child’s suffering in the future” or “Parents’ spanking will reduce anticipated bad things that may happen to a child.”

A male participant aged between 20 and 29 years said that he believes in the proverb: “Dad’s spanking is helpful to make a child understand or to discipline a child.” He added, “we can hit a child or otherwise the child may become undisciplined”. These statements show that some participants accepted hitting or spanking children to discipline them based on experiences learned from their parents or the older generations. The findings were consistent with the findings of the study of Beazley et al. (2006), which showed that physical punishment is commonly used to discipline children in eight Asian countries including Mongolia.

A number of the participants mentioned, “people’s attitude toward corporal punishment is changing” due to increased awareness-raising activities on children’s rights and changes in legislation that have banned corporal punishment in schools. The following is one of the statements that indicated a change in people’s attitudes toward the cultural value of non-physical punishment of children:

> *Yes, it (cultural value of non-physical punishment) is definitely connected with our tradition. However, people’s attitude toward spanking is changing. It used to be okay to spank children, but nowadays it has become inappropriate. Children have become aware of their rights. Only people, who are less educated, do not care about this change; their children also accept parents’ way to discipline. The issue depends on people’s knowledge and education.* (Social worker, female)

This female social worker acknowledged changes in people’s attitude toward spanking children. As she indicated, this attitude change is connected with increased awareness of children’s rights. Four female participants supported anti-spanking practices that were promoted by children’s rights agencies and individuals. Another participant linked the cause of this change with the initiative of changing legislation. She stated, “Hitting used to be acceptable, but not now. Spanking is now banned officially at schools.” In other words, changes in the macrosystem affect people’s attitude towards corporal punishment.

These polarised perceptions of the "Cultural value of non-physical punishment" endorsed the result of the quantitative analysis which indicated that the perceptions of the respondents were more polarized on this (IQR=2).

Aside from these polarised perceptions a few participants (4) expressed their concerns related to adult communication with children.

> *Once I heard that one woman said to her child: "If you do not obey I would leave you on the street at night not allowing you to come back home". I knew that this woman would not to do this in reality, but she told it to her child. I felt very sorry for the child and talked to this woman suggesting, "Please do not talk to your child in this manner. Children can understand very well if you explain them. They may believe in what you said to her and get scared". Then she said, "Oh really. I am very sorry." I thought that this woman would not say this to her husband, she just said it to her child, because she is child; Sometimes adults communicate with kids in a disrespectful and irresponsible manner.*
> (Social worker, female)

The last quotation provided an example of parental verbal abuse on the one hand, and the need of parental training that enables parents to communicate with their children in a friendly and age appropriate manner on the other hand. It also showed that khoroo social workers are in the position of change agents and educators to parents in promoting non-physical discipline and child friendly communication with children.

Social workers' explanations about some significant associations

The researcher requested the interview participants to provide possible explanations about the statistically significant associations between gender and two protective factors separately: "Adequate formal support" and "Accessible childcare and kindergarten". In addition, their explanations regarding the relationship between length of work experience and the protective factor of "Significant other in the home" was requested from the interview participants. The key findings of social workers' explanations around these three statistically significant associations are presented below.

The preliminary data analysis indicated the gender of the participants had a statistically significant relationship with agreements with "Adequate formal support" and "Accessible childcare and kindergarten in the community", which were reported in the section of the findings of bivariate analysis in this chapter

(Table 6.2 and Table 6.3). The finding of the bivariate analysis showed that female practitioners indicated that they were more likely to agree with the factors of "Adequate formal support" and "Accessible childcare and kindergarten in the community" than male practitioners.

The social workers provided various explanations regarding the statistically significant association of gender with these two protective factors. The themes of the explanations varied as follows: (a) common views about gender roles such as men are expected to be breadwinners and women are expected to be responsible for taking care of children; (b) women think that it is safe to leave their children at kindergarten, because kindergarten is a safe place, plus there is a meal; (c) sending children to kindergarten increases employment opportunities, particularly for women; (d) most social workers are female, and probably responded to this question based on their own experiences; (e) mothers with young children usually approach female social workers to get assistance in sending children to kindergarten, because accessibility to kindergartens is becoming a huge issue; (f) women are more sensitive and close to the issues while men do not take this work seriously; and (g) most of the respondents were female social workers, which is why the weight of female respondents became heavier than the weight of male respondents statistically. The researcher found these descriptions provided a broad view of associations between the gender of social workers and the factors of "Accessible childcare and kindergarten" and "Formal supports" at khoroo level. The social workers linked these statistically associations with their perceptions of gender roles, societal expectations, and family needs as well as the composition of the sample size or questionnaire participants.

When the researcher clarified the types of formal supports that were being provided by social workers, particularly for parents with children under six years of age at khoroo level, the interview participants named different types of formal supports: (1) assisting parents in sending their children to kindergarten by issuing an endorsement letter by the khoroo governor or sending informal requests to kindergarten directors to consider accepting the children; (2) raising issues of building new kindergartens and childcare services and bringing the issue to the attention of the government; (3) assisting parents with a new born baby or a

disabled child to benefit from social welfare fund through welfare allowances; (4) encouraging parents to have vaccinations for small age children in collaboration with social workers and family doctors at community clinics; (5) linking disadvantaged children and families with assistance of international and national non profit organisation and individuals, such as World Vision, the Red Cross etc; (6) arranging to send malnourished infants and toddlers to the state nursing clinic for infants and toddlers; and (7) conducting training for parents. This list of formal support indicated that social workers and welfare officers at khoroo Governor's office mostly play the roles of case manager, broker or liaison, advocate, and trainer when they provide social work services to parents or caregivers with young children. They deal with the most disadvantaged groups including families with many children, disabled children and malnourished infants and toddlers.

In terms of the statistically significant associations between length of work experience and the factor of "A supportive significant other in the home", the participants with work experiences of 0 to 5 years and 16 to 20 years had more agreement with this factor than the other three age groups (Table 6.8). When the researcher requested the interview participants to assist in interpreting this finding, the social workers gave the following reason for this significant association: (1) social workers who have been working at their position for less than 3 years would probably be young people with children under six years of age and they may have experienced having someone's help in the home; (2) it is common that grandparents take care of grandchildren or helping their own children to raise grandchildren so people with more than 15 years of working experience may have their own grandchildren; (3) it is nice to have someone who can help in taking care of children; (4) significant others in the home could be neighbours or social workers, not necessarily someone who is related; (5) most people might only count people with a blood connection as a significant other in the home. The rationale given by the interview participants explained that the statistically significant relationship between length of work experience and this factor could be connected with social workers' age and own experiences.

It was found that social workers' opinions were divided in terms of defining who

would be a significant other in the home. Some thought that a significant other should be a blood relation; others thought that a significant other could be anyone including neighbour, social worker or friend. This can be interpreted that social workers opinions in defining a supportive significant other in the home may have derived from their own personal views rather than professional judgement.

Information sources of child protective factors

When the researcher asked about information sources that introduced child protective factors to the participants, five types of information sources were defined as common: their own practice and life experiences, family interactions, media, training, and textbooks. The finding indicated that participants' knowledge about protective factors was influenced dominantly by their experience, upbringing, culture and proverbs.

Most of the participants replied that they had learned about child protective factors from their life experience, but they did not name specific factors. Their descriptions were very general:

> *Since I did not go to social work school, I cannot say that I learned from school. In fact, I learned it from my life experience. I observed my older siblings and their ways of up bringing their children.* (Welfare officer, female)

Several participants mentioned their family members saying that they learned about children's rights and protection from interactions with their children and parents.

> *The first time my daughter said to me that a child has a right to play, I got a bit surprised. It was the first time I heard about children's rights and protection. It was during the period when I was assigned as a social worker at khoroo, around 10 years ago. Then, a number of trainings on children's rights were conducted involving khoroo social workers*. (Social worker, female)

> *I learned from my mother who has many children.* (Social worker, female)

> *I also learnt it from my personal experience. One of my relative used to abuse his wife. One day, at night my wife got call from her sister that said her husband was beating her. We reported this abuse case to the police. Then the police took measures to protect my sister in law. That time I thought about the safety of their children and sister in law, that's why I encouraged my wife to call the police. After this intervention, he*

stopped beating her wife. (Social worker, male)

The three social workers who related these experiences had non-social backgrounds. A majority of social workers said that they learned about protectiveness of children's environment from their personal experiences and interactions with their family members.

The next common information source was short-term training. International and local non government organizations conducted most of the training in children's rights and protection. Social workers explained that line supervisors are non-social workers who are khoroo governors and officers at the District Governor's offices or welfare offices; thus they often receive administrative guidelines from line managers when they actually need professional supervision. Therefore, supervision did not become a source of information about protective factors.

The media was another common information source. Interestingly, textbooks and books were the least common information sources for finding child protective factors. One of the social worker even asked the question "Can a textbook inform us everything about child protection?" This social worker was a lawyer by background and was new in her current position of khoroo social worker. Few books on child protection and rights that had been published by Save the Children were highlighted as books participants used in their practice.

Consideration of protective factors in daily practice

During the interview the researcher requested social workers and welfare officers to share an experience of a protective factor protecting young children. From the phenomenological perspective, this exploration was seeking to understand protective elements that were used in social work practice. Thus, the researcher asked the interview participants the question, "Could you share your experience of when you considered any of these protective factors to protect children under six years of age from maltreatment, if possible please?" There were many similarities in the factors used in different phases of social work practice. The similarities were particularly noticeable in the ways of doing assessments and referrals, particularly when social workers and welfare officers linked children or their parents to available resources or entitled services. However, there were differences that seemed connected to their duties and responsibilities as outlined

in their job descriptions.

Most of the khoroo social workers reported that they considered the protective factors when they assess the safety of the children and the degree of the protectiveness of the environment. According to certain legislative acts of Mongolia, khoroo social workers are asked to provide a recommendation or reference about the situation of children or victims of domestic violence to judges when divorce and domestic violence cases that involved minors are discussed at court. A few of the social workers shared their experiences of assessing situations about children and families in order to prepare a professional reference that became evidence for the court. The following is one of these examples:

> *Once I worked on one case for three months in addition to my daily duties. This case was related to preparing a recommendation to the court regarding a child who needs to select one of his parents to stay with when parents divorced. I started my assessment from the child, a five year old boy. I observed his interaction with mother and father separately when I visited his home and kindergarten. Also I talked to him individually and found that he got some understanding about divorce. When I asked gently "Do know where will you stay, if your parents live in two different places?" He said "One of my classmates at the kindergarten said she is staying with her mom at her grandma's house, but I am going to stay with my dad." It seemed kindergarten kids receive a lot of information from their classmates. Then I talked to his mother and father individually and looked at strengths and risks. Father was in better position, in terms of having his own accommodation, employment and education. In contrast, mother had no accommodation of her own, no permanent job, and she was showing a strict and aggressive attitude towards to his son during my visit. It was observed boy was closer to his father. Both of them wanted to have their son. I introduced my finding of the assessment to multidisciplinary team members and discussed the case, and then we made a decision that there is a better condition if the child stays with his father. We considered also child's willingness to stay with his father. I attended the court and introduced result of the assessment and concluded that "I hope you will make a right decision, which will ensure child's best interest". I added also "my decision is not only mine; this decision is also the decision of the multidisciplinary team at our khoroo". At end, the court made the decision to leave the boy under father's care.* (Social worker, female)

This case demonstrates the social worker's duty to represent the children or victims of domestic violence at court in order to assist the judges to ensure an outcome that is in the best interest of the children or victims of child abuse or domestic violence. The social worker shared the above case as her example of

what she considered was a protective factor in protecting children's well-being. At first glance the example seemed like a clear example of looking at the potential strengths of caregivers and bringing children's voice into the court. In particular, the social worker placed emphasis on the quality of the child rearing conditions considering father's better position to provide the basic needs of the child. The social worker also expressed concerns about the mother's strict and aggressive attitude toward the child, which revealed to her that the mother was not warm enough to protect her child.

On the other hand, the story brought up some hidden issues related to traditional patriarchal views, inequality related to power and resource distribution, and a mother's aggressive behaviour that may be related to her victimization of abuse or life stress. But, the social worker did not mention any of these issues. Instead, she said that she supported the father of the child without any further questioning. This approach of the social worker may have two reasons. First, she might have a patriarchal view that came from her patriarchal micro and macro environment, which resulted in her evident failure to see or question patriarchal issues. Secondly, she might not have learned about ways to question or challenge issues related to patriarchy, inequality and power distributions from her informal training on social work.

Most of the social workers and welfare officers who participated in the interviews shared experiences that addressed ways to link children at risk of abuse and neglect with available protective services. For instance, six out 30 interview participants said that they had referred and linked abused women with young children to the National Centre Against Violence. Of these six workers, two were khoroo welfare officers. Also seven out 30 interview participants shared examples where they had helped malnourished toddlers by referring them to treatment at the only State Nursing Clinic for Infants and Toddlers. There were another three examples from social workers who referred orphaned children to the state orphanage and the children's welfare home. This indicated that social workers often considered broader protective factors in the exosystem which is beyond the micro and mesosystems to assist disadvantaged children when there were limited resources in the families and communities.

Some examples of interventions that protected young children from maltreatment were promising and inspiring, and some examples shared by social workers and khoroo welfare officers indicated the common challenges and difficulties that are encountered everyday in the social workers' practice as was demonstrated in the following quote.

> *It seems, there is no specific case that refers to child protection. However, I can tell this case can be connected indirectly with protecting children's right. There was a single woman with a small child who had special needs; in fact she is still there in our khoroo. One day she came to our office and said that there is no food for her child telling that "I am not able to work, I have a young sick child". We made arrangements to provide monthly food coupon linking her family with the state food provision project and provided her a tent as well. I thought this support goes to her child. Otherwise I would have asked her to work and earn money for her own living. When her term to have food coupon finished, as a part of requirement of that assistance she was asked to go vocational training under welfare assistance. But, she refused to go there saying that "I do not have money for transport and bus". Then she asked, "I would like to send my child to 24 hours childcare and then I can go to work." As you know this type of kindergarten is very rare in UB, may be one or two. I talked to the head of kindergarten and found that there was no place/vacancy. I kept requesting the head of people's hural at khoroo to talk to the head of kindergarten. If the head of people's hural at khoroo, the authority with more power talks to the head of kindergarten, they may take the child…* (Social worker, female)

This example explored the ways that welfare officers could help a single female headed family with a child who has special needs by using available resources at the community and national levels. Khoroo welfare officers play key roles in provision of welfare services to target groups named in the social welfare act. It shows also how complicated it is to help someone who is uncooperative towards a self-sustaining and independent life when she has a child with special needs. This story also demonstrated how social workers can feel powerless and seek assistance in some circumstances from officials who have more power in order to assist their clients although it was noticeable that this welfare officer tried to utilize all available services and resources that could be offered within her capacity and position.

There was another case, which demonstrated how a social worker used both informal and formal supports to protect children under six years of age in a

difficult situation:

> *We heard informally that a lady in our khoroo got divorced and is involved in drinking alcohol with others and not taking care of her children. When I visited her place together with a block leader I saw that her home became chaotic and windows of the house were broken. The lady was drunk lying on the floor, there were other 4-5 drunk people in her home. A toddler, a baby girl around one and half year was standing next to the bed. I called immediately one her siblings (relatives) and asked her to take care of her daughter temporarily. Then after talking to her relatives and local authorities, I made an arrangement to send her daughter to the State Nursing Clinic, which is safe, and with adequate care for young children. This place takes care of young children and provides nutrition treatment under the order of District Governors. As a social worker, I reported the case to the khoroo governor, and the khoroo governor issued the request letter to the District Governor, then we got the order from the District Governor to send her daughter to the Nursing Clinic. At the same time the relatives of that woman brought her to the hospital and she was diagnosed with heavy toxication of alcohol and required to have a treatment. The woman was treated at the hospital while her daughter was staying in the State Nursing Clinic. That time one of the relatives/siblings told us, "we will take of our sister's daughter, we would not allow her daughter to be adopted, even if her mom is not able take care of her own daughter."*. (Social worker, female)

This example showed that social workers use both formal and informal support systems in order to protect children at high risks or danger of child maltreatment. Since there are very limited places to bring removed children who are at high risk of abuse and neglect in the communities and nationwide, social workers mostly use informal support systems, including grandparents, siblings, relatives and welfare shelters, which are mostly run by non-profit agencies or religious groups. Most social workers related that social workers often approach the state welfare or nursing agencies when they face difficulties in removing the children at high risk of abuse and neglect. The state has few institutions in which to place abused and neglected children temporarily to protect and provide treatment and rehabilitation services. The State Nursing Clinic for Infants and Toddlers is one and receives children by the order of the District Governors. In fact, it was found to be the only the state clinic that provides protective and nursing services for toddlers and infants. The researcher found this previous example helpful in terms of describing the details of government procedure in referring abused and neglected children to the state protection and treatment services. At the same time

the example was also informative in demonstrating formal supports that protect children at high risk or danger of abuse and neglect at the state and city levels.

The following is another example that showed how a social worker, community worker, and family clinic doctor worked together as multidisciplinary team members to protect a toddler who was in the condition of malnutrition and chronic neglect:

> *One day, a block leader found out that two-year-old child was home alone behind locked door and she informed us about this child. We requested family clinic doctor to assess health status of this child because she was very tiny and small compared to other same age children. Family doctor assessed her health status and measured child's weight and told us that the child is underweight, in the condition of hunger. We raised issue of children's rights and state involvement saying that parents do not take care of children properly and questioning parents' right to be parents. Also the child was sent temporarily to the State Nursing Clinic, which treats children under three years old, and twin children who need special care. The child gained weight after three months treatment at the clinic and then she was brought back to the parents. But, during the period child was staying in the clinic, we worked with parents. The fact was that mother of the child was working in construction from morning to the evening. Dad was supposed to look after the child, but he did not. He locked his small child at home and went to drink alcohol. That's why the child was alone home for long hours. Then, we assisted mother to find a job at a café close to home where she can work for short periods of time, the police worked closely with the dad. After three months treatment, the child went back home safely*. (Social worker, female)

This case demonstrated how social workers work closely with block leaders, and other officials at khoroo governor's office such as welfare officers, police, and family clinic doctors and how they use available resources that can assist families with children. From the last two examples it was found that block leaders are important people for khoroo social workers in terms of identifying issues and risks related to child protection. According to their job description, block leaders are part time workers working under the supervision of khoroo social workers in most of the khoroo governor's offices. It can also be seen that social workers' roles include managing cases, coordinating multidisciplinary team members, advocating on behalf of children and brokering to link the clients with available resources in the communities, at city and national level.

Although, the researcher did not ask any questions about the working conditions

of social workers, almost all of them expressed concerns about this during the interviews. When the government introduced the "One Stop Shop" program in 2009-2010 (M. Turner, 2012), all officials at the khoroo governor's office were told to sit together in one room in order to provide all government services at one place and reduce bureaucracy. This meant that four or five officials in the khoroo governor's offices including a khoroo social worker, a welfare officer, a registration officer and a khoroo coordinator/organizer shared one office. Khoroo governors usually had their own separate offices. On the one hand, colocation was found easier for communication and multidisciplinary practice. On the other hand, social workers raised the following concerns related to inappropriate working condition for direct practice of social work.

Most khoroo governors' offices were in old, one storeyed houses with only a few rooms or they were in rented first floor apartments in residential areas. Only a few khoroo governors' offices were in bigger buildings with several rooms that had been built during last ten years. As the social workers reported they often had to leave the office and talk with a client in the corridor or in a public meeting room in order to discuss personal concerns or issues raised by clients: "It is impossible to provide proper social work services, and it even creates an inaccessible environment for our clients who want to consult private and confidential matters with us". Another social worker highlighted, "No one wants to consult about their private issues in front of many people or in public". This informs that the working conditions of the frontline social workers affect their own individual and multidisciplinary practice of working with families of young aged children.

Summary of the chapter

Consistent with the explanatory sequential design of the mixed methods, the results of the quantitative data analysis were extended by the qualitative findings. The quantitative analysis identified that "The happy parental relationship" and "Maternal warmth", "Quality of child rearing conditions" and "Cultural value of protecting children" were the most agreed protective factors among khoroo social workers. Parents and family related factors at micro and exosystems were found to be the most acceptable protective factors for young children. In addition, social workers commonly agreed with "Adequate knowledge and experiences of

parents" and "Connections of parents with the communities" as protective factors for children. The distributions of two cultural factors were contradictory. While social workers accepted "Cultural value of protecting children" as the most agreed protective factor, "Cultural value of non-corporal punishment" was the least agreed protective factor for children under six years of age.

In contrast, child related protective factors such as "A child who is perceived as an adorable", "A child who is confident", "A child with an easy temperament" and "Cultural value of promoting non-physical punishment" were found to be the least agreed protective factors. These factors defined children's own characteristics and belong to microsystem of human ecology. There was noticeable polarisation in social workers' perception in accepting child related factors as protective factors.

The bivariate analysis found seven statistically significant associations between social workers' demographic and occupational characteristics and their perceived agreement with several protective factors. In other words, the current study found that social workers' age, gender and length of work experiences were more likely to influence social workers' perceptions of certain protective factors. There was no significant association found between social workers' educational background and their perception of any protective factor.

The qualitative findings extended the results of the quantitative analysis. Social workers highlighted the importance of family related factors in protecting children under six years of age. The essential protective constituents of the descriptions of most agreed protective factors were respectful and caring interpersonal communications and relationships between parents, parents and children, provision of basic needs of children, and ensuring safety of children in and out of home. Social workers believed that it is discriminatory to protect and care for children on the basis of children's physical appearance. They also stated young children cannot protect themselves because of their age and competence. But, social workers' descriptions of protective factors appeared to be based on their informal, unformulated knowledge and practice experience.

When social workers talked about significant associations between social workers

background and their perceptions, their explanations covered various themes related to gender roles, maternal employment opportunities, different gender attitude towards work, and increasing demand for local social services and personal and professional experiences. Some risk factors and hidden issues were brought up by social workers when they discussed the most and least agreed protective factors. The information sources about child protection factors for social workers were, in rank order, their own practice, life experiences, family interaction, media, training, with textbook and professional supervision ranked lowest. Social workers' descriptions and examples of using protective factors demonstrated current frontline child protection practices provided by social workers and welfare officers.

The key practices of khoroo social workers and welfare officers included preparation of recommendations or references about the situation of children or victims of domestic violence, referrals of malnourished and neglected young children to the state nursing clinic for temporary care for three months, provision of welfare assistance, and using informal supports in cases when children need to be removed from high risk places. Social workers' concerns related to their physical working conditions were brought up as well. Overall, both the quantitative and qualitative findings revealed khoroo social workers' current practice in assisting parents with young children at the community levels. The findings revealed contextual meanings and descriptions of the protective factors. These findings will be discussed in line with previous studies on child protective factors, local and international knowledge and practice of social work in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 7: Discussion

In this chapter, the researcher discusses the quantitative and qualitative findings of the current study in light of existing studies on protective factors of children against child maltreatment, social work education and practice, and the social and historical contexts of Mongolia. The discussion of the research findings is divided into four sections: the first section covers the general trend of the participant social workers' perceptions of the protective factors; the second section discusses the most versus least agreed protective factors; the associations between social workers' perceptions and their background are discussed in the third section; the participant social workers' use of protective factors in the practice is discussed in the fourth section, together with the explanation of why some factors are perceived more often than others.

General trend of social workers' perceived protective factors

Quantitatively, the overall findings demonstrated that the general tendency in the distribution of perceived protective factors was in the direction of social workers' agreement with the protective factors rather than disagreement with them. The social workers accepted 18 out of 20 factors of the micro, meso, exo and macrosystems of human ecology as factors that protect children under six years of age from child maltreatment. They did not largely accept two factors that define children's characteristics, such as children's appearance and age as protective factors for children under six years of age. The social workers' perceptions were divided about accepting these two factors as well as another child related factor and a cultural factor, all indicating the interquartile range of two (IQR=2).

Of the rest of the agreed protective factors, three factors received the consensus of agreement with the value of zero at interquartile range (IQR=0). These three factors were the factors of "Parents' adequate knowledge of child development", "Parents' experience of having secure attachment" and "Parents' connection with the community". In particularly, the social workers' common agreement with the factor of "Parents' adequate knowledge of child development" was consistent with findings of other researchers. For example, Werner's longitudinal study was conducted among Hawaiian children following children from 1 or 2 years until 32

years of age. According to Werner' study, parents education was the critical factor in providing emotional support for children's upbringing during early and middle childhood, even if the family lived in poverty (Werner, 1993, p. 509). Wekerly and Wolf (1998, p. 341) also highlighted parents' adequate knowledge and expectation of child development as a key factor that contributed to healthy parent and child relationship. The researchers also noted the importance of parents' connection with the community for protecting from child maltreatment.

The qualitative data supported the quantitative findings of collective agreement with the protective factors in the proximate system. Social workers' descriptions about the protectiveness of family indicated essential structural and functional protective elements of the microsystem. Social workers used the terms of primary, most proximate and first place of socialisation of children indicating family as the closest setting to the child. The most proximate and primary settings of children's environment are located in the centre of the nested structure of ecological systems, called the microsystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Social workers' descriptions also covered different roles and functions of families, which indicated various patterns of children's experiences within the family setting. Bronfenbrenner highlighted that "experienced" is a critical action for the growing person based on his consideration of both of behaviourist and phenomenological concepts (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 22). Bronfenbrenner's emphasis on experience-based action suggests social workers to consider both structural and functional elements of protective factors in family settings when they seek and build protective elements in children's environment.

The distributions of the protective factors also showed that a majority of the social workers thought that a safe, and child friendly environment, particularly, "Accessible childcare and adequate formal supports in the community" were commonly agreed protective factors for young children and their parents. For example, 194 or 80.4% out of 244 research participants believed that this factor is a protective factor. This high acceptance appeared to be consistent with findings of the previous studies. Benzies and Mychasiuk's review (2009, p. 109) reported that having access to high quality care affects families and especially low-income families, in several ways, including increasing the possibility of parental

employment. But most of the previous studies emphasised the high quality of childcare. These studies found that the communities with adequate formal support, in particular the high quality of childcare centres or preschools become protective factors for children under six years of age (Garbarino & Kostelny, 1992; Harden, Monahan, & Yoches, 2012; National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000). The difference is that social workers in ger districts highlighted the accessibility rather than the quality of childcare and kindergarten in the communities. Most of the previous studies focussed on the high quality of the childcare because low quality care was found a risk factor for the development of children. Therefore, further studies may need to look at social workers' perceptions of the quality of childcare in connection with the understanding of child protection and development.

In the quantitative and qualitative phases of this research, social workers agreed that both formal and informal supports as equally important for protecting young children from maltreatment. For example, the percentage of agreement is 70.6% (N=238) for "Adequate formal support", and the percentage of agreement stands at 70.6% (N=242) for "Adequate informal support". This can be interpreted in two ways: when the informal supports are not adequate, people may seek extending their informal supports giving the emphasis on both informal and formal supports. On the other hand, when urbanization takes place, especially in the cities of Mongolia, young people may suffer weakening their ties with informal supports and the families due to migration to the city as UNDP report (2000) stated. In this case they may need to approach to the formal supports that are available in the places where they live.

Social workers and welfare officers who are a part of the formal support system appeared to value informal supports based on their own cultural values and experiences of daily practice. They considered informal supports as helpful as formal supports. From the perspective of an effective child protection system, social workers are key players of the formal support system, which should be offering a range of protective and preventative services in the communities in order to ensure safety of children and families. But, the findings of the current study show that social workers' different perceptions can be related to underdeveloped local protective and preventative services or lack of

understanding of the roles of formal supports in building effective child protection mechanisms.

Social workers and welfare officers accepted relatively well the two factors of "Living a non-violent community" and the "Connection of parents or caregivers with the community". The percentage of agreement for these two factors stood at 77.2% (N=237) and 75.7% (N=243) respectively. The connection between these two factors can be interpreted from a human ecological perspective. According to Osafsky (1999, p. 42), parents are not likely to allow their children to explore the neighbourhood independently if the community where they live has chronic violence. Although no scientific evidence was found relating to the existence of chronic violence in the neighbourhoods [exosystem] of Ulaanbaatar, a few studies indicated a high prevalence of interpersonal violence and domestic violence and involvement of social workers in assisting victims of domestic violence in Mongolia (Kohrt et al., 2004; Lkhagvasuren & Davaa, 2010; National Traumatology and Orthopaedic Teaching Hospital, 2006; West, 2006).

Several interview participants expressed their concerns about unsafe and dangerous roads and streets, playgrounds in residential areas, and claimed that the situation was worse in the ger areas of Ulaanbaatar. This finding was consistent with the study of the National Traumatology and Orthopaedic Teaching Hospital in Mongolia (2006, p. 11), which reported that road traffic injuries, suicide, interpersonal violence, falls, burns and poisoning have become the main contributing factors to deaths caused by injuries in Mongolia. These facts demonstrate that risk factors of child maltreatment inevitably exist in all levels, in particular the exosystem and macrosystems of human ecology in the context of Mongolia. This explains why social workers might perceive and give the same emphasis to factors relating to parents' connection with the community and a non-violent community.

The current analysis did not examine linkages between ecological factors and children's status of being protected or not protected or of being at risk of abuse as have other studies based on the ecology theory of human development. Instead, the study focused on social workers' perceptions of the factors that can protect young children from maltreatment. The factors, however, which were selected for

the current study, were derived from previous studies done within the framework of a human ecological perspective. Some findings of the current study were consistent with the findings of previous studies, but there were some differences in terms of methodological and conceptual issues among the studies. For example, the study done by Kohrt and his colleagues (2004) among 99 Mongolian caregivers and boys aged between 3 to 10 years old identified ten risk factors (primary caregivers' education, primary caregivers' moods and feelings, frequency of contact with mothers, frequency of contact with fathers, quality of marriage/presence of spousal abuse, contact with extended family, cultural acceptance of violence as discipline, severity of physical punishment and the frequency of physical punishment factors) that more likely contribute to the children's outcome of mental illness. This was the only study found that is very close to the context and theoretical framework of the current study.

When the same factors indicate different effects of risks or protectiveness, awareness or recognition is required of the patterns of protectiveness or risks of these factors. Recognising a pattern of a protective or risk factor enables social workers to address tactfully child protection and prevention issues in a timely manner. As mentioned in the literature review, "a protective factor works like a risk factor but in different directions - potentially it inhibits rather than accentuates a deficiency state" (Rutter 1979, p. 108). This says social workers may need to look at all possible effects and their directions when they assess different environmental factors of children's situations.

Generally, social workers stressed the factors in the closest environment to the child as the most agreed protective factors. In contrast, the factors that related to children's personal characteristics were considered as the least agreed factors in terms of protecting children under six years of age. The protective factors in extended families and communities were expected to be relatively vital while social workers were concerned about shortage of accessibility to kindergartens and lack of available social services and resources in the communities. The same factors showed different effects depending on the context and measurement. Further explanations about the factors at the two polarizing ends are presented in the next section.

Most versus least agreed protective factors

From the ecological perspective, the social workers frequently accepted the factors related to children's immediate environment and primary caregivers as protective factors for young children, whereas they did not often accept children's own characteristics as protective. Social workers' opinions were divided about accepting two cultural factors as a protective. While the "Cultural value of protecting children" was accepted as the most agreed, the "Cultural value of promoting non-physical forms of punishment" was counted as the least agreed protective factor. The descriptions about these most and least agreed protective factors were explored in greater detail at the qualitative phase. These descriptions were rich and included various themes as follows.

Most agreed protective factors

The social workers' descriptions of the phenomenon of "Happy relationship of parents" indicated positive interactions of the primary caregivers with each other and their children as well as safe and friendly environments from the perspective of human ecology. These protective characteristics of the relationship were consistent with the findings of the previous literature (Belsky & Vondra, 1989; Scannapieco & Connell-Carrick, 2005; Vanderbilt-Adriance & Shaw, 2008).

The social workers' descriptions of "Maternal warmth" covered demonstrated various ways of protecting children through love, care, close connection and commitment. When the researcher asked about ways to observe maternal warmth, the participants said that they were going to observe a mother's way of communicating with her children, her way of looking or glancing at her child, her tone of voice, her worrying attitude and her keeping children's clothes clean and neat. These actions of listening to a mother's tone of voice and observing her attitudes toward children were found to be similar to the method of measuring maternal warmth in several studies (Bowes et al., 2010; Kim-Cohen et al., 2004) where the maternal warmth was assessed by the mother's tone of voice, spontaneity, sympathy, and empathy toward children.

Social workers' contradictory views were found regarding maternal employment. One middle-aged female social worker was concerned about a mother's employment during the early age of children which, she stated firmly, would

reduce maternal warmth and be very harmful for children, and suggested mothers to stay home until their child turns 5 years of age. She advocated for changes in the existing laws. This social worker's views were different from the stories of young social workers who enjoyed coming back to work after giving birth and who encouraged women with young child to have part-time employment.

According to the current Mongolian legislation, mothers are entitled to stay with their children for two years after the birth. During these two years, mothers are entitled to have a one-year allowance for children's milk, which is equivalent to 40,000 tg per month, about AUD25. Within two years after a birth, women can go back to work because, according to the Labour Law of Mongolia, employers are obliged to allow them to work at their previous position. Brooks-Gunn et al. (2002) raised concerns similar to the responses to the social workers' contradictory views about maternal employment during first years of child's life. They found that if a mother worked more than 30 hours per week in the first three years of a child's life it had a significant negative effect on the child's cognitive outcome in the first years of life. .

The next phenomenon relating to the "Quality of child rearing conditions" was defined by the broad aspects of psychological, biological and physical conditions and functions of children and their families. Their descriptions included the elements belonging to all of micro, meso and exosystems of human ecology. For example, they were concerned about the safety of the family environment and about the family atmosphere from the mental and environmental health sides. They included concerns related to parents' alcohol use and quarrels, which often occurred in an environment with close proximity to the children.

Some elements of social workers' descriptions appeared to be similar to the results of the study of Egeland and his colleagues. According to Egeland et al. (1990), children who functioned well emotionally and cognitively in school had an organized and predictable home environment. Their mothers also demonstrated accepting, respectful attitudes and positive feelings towards their children (Egeland et al., 1990). The Mongolian social workers highlighted safety issues in and out of the home and decent affordable, warm, safe homes with adequate food. The social workers also reported that issues related to the provision of basic needs

of children were common problems encountered in the daily practice of social workers. This finding was consistent with findings from previous studies done among Mongolian social workers (E. Sukhbaatar et al., 2008; Tserendorj & Terbish, 2007).

The fourth most agreed upon protective factor was the factor of "Cultural value of protecting children". Social workers' views about this factor were varied. Some of them viewed this factor in the frame of interpersonal communications such as communicating with children in respectful ways while others linked this factor with the traditional views of caring and protecting children, which are reflected in Mongolian proverbs. The social workers used many proverbs, a few folk stories and a poem when they described different protective factors, not only the factor of the cultural value of protecting children.

It was obvious that the proverbs had a deep connection to culture of the Mongolian social workers, as expressed by Grotty (1998, p. 152): "culture is best seen as the source rather than the result of human thoughts and behaviours". Social workers stated that they use proverbs as educational tools in bringing up their own children. This finding indicated that proverbs and other folk literature still play important roles among Mongols in bringing up children, as the previous studies indicated (Bawden, 1960; Kler, 1945; Nikolaeva, 2009; Wang et al., 2014; Whymant, 1926). In addition, social workers' frequent use of proverbs was similar to some findings of Janice Raymond. Raymond (2012) wrote about Mongolian proverbs that can be used as a tool to introduce new concepts to Mongolians on one hand or to understand Mongolian culture on other hand.

Raymond's finding provides one of the answers for the question of why Mongolian social workers often used proverbs to describe different factors that protect children under six years of age. It was people's informed consensus on the meanings of proverbs that have been used and passed on among Mongolians from one generation to next generation. Moreover, the researcher thinks it may be helpful to borrow Raymond's idea (2012, p. 4) of "an informed understanding of Mongolian proverbs" for introducing and developing new approaches and phenomena in areas of social science inquiry.

Social work is a value-based and normative discipline (Reamer, 2013; Siporin, 1975). Protecting children is a part of social work's fundamental values of human rights (IFSW, 2012b, 2014). Khoroo social workers tend to link protection of children with rights of children. It observed that they linked cultural value of protecting children with children's rights as well. Overall, it was noticeable that khoroo social workers and welfare officers do not distinguish children' rights from societal and professional obligations of protecting children.

Siporin (1975) defined separately rights and obligations when he distinguished categories of values. In the classification of Siporin's categories (1975, p. 352), a right is a "recognized, legitimated claim from social responses and resources, which people are obliged to meet"; in contrast, an obligation is derived from "a wider societal demand and inner commitment for valued performance…" (Siporin, 1975). Therefore, as a professional person who is committed to defend children's rights and protect children from different types of maltreatment, social workers may need to be aware about the justification of using the human rights principle in the practice of protecting children.

As previously mentioned, two cultural factors of protecting children were perceived differently by social workers. Social workers perceived the factor of the "Cultural value of protecting children" with a high level of agreement, while they perceived the factor of the "Culture of promoting non-physical punishment" with a low level of agreement. It might be the newness of the promotion of non-physical punishment in the society led to the division of social workers' perceptions into two groups, those who agree and those who do not. Statistical evidence confirmed the polarization in the perceptions of this factor.

Social workers who accepted the factor of the "Culture of promoting non-physical punishment" as protective were aware that people's attitudes are changing, and legislation against spanking is becoming effective in schools. In contrast however, some social workers reported stories with justifications for hitting and spanking, but they reported these practices in the name of other people. A few social workers admitted that they agreed with gentle spanking and said that it was needed to discipline children. These findings were somewhat consistent with the findings of previous studies that indicated the prevalence of corporal punishment

is relatively high in Mongolia and the region of South East Asia (Beazley et al., 2006).

Least agreed protective factors

At the qualitative phase, three child-related factors were not well supported by social workers. In particular, "A child who is perceived as adorable" had the lowest agreement in terms of accepting this factor as protective. Although the researcher chose the words of "adorable" instead of "affectionate" for this factor in order to make it more understandable in the local context, it was evident that most of social workers did not accept it as a protective factor.

A key rationale for the lowest agreement was that social workers found that the statement promoted discrimination against children based on their appearance. Social workers said that children should not be treated differently based on their physical appearance when they gave their rationale for their disagreement. From the children's rights perspective, it is understandable that every child should enjoy their right to be protected and not be discriminated against regardless of her/his race, age, gender and ability. But, from the perspective of child development, it may raise a question whether social workers aware about patterns of protectiveness, which can reduce risks of maltreatment or stimulate child well-being or development. Some social workers used the simple statement, "A child is a child", exhibiting avoidance of explaining the reasons. Although the research participants did not mention their professional commitment to fight against discrimination, the researcher heard the following words repeatedly when they answered this particular question: "It is not professional to agree with this factor". In fact, social workers' justification was drawn on societal obligation or "wider societal demand and inner commitment" (Siporin, 1975, p. 352) of being not discriminatory against a human being.

The factor of "A child who has competent behaviour" was also not accepted by a majority of the social workers. Their rationale was connected with children's ages. They said that children under six years old are too young to protect themselves and they should be under the care of parents and other primary caregivers. This explanation supported the previous studies that pointed out the increased ability to cope with stress when a child gets older (Garbarino et al.,

1992).

Regarding the other two child related factors, “Easy temperament” and “Gender”, the previous literature presented findings about the positive effects of a child with an easy temperament on the child and parental relationship which could stimulate loving affection between child and parents (Chess & Thomas, 1977, p. 4). Garmezy also called a positive temperament a risk reducer like other risk reducers including gender and a warm relationship between child and parents. The current study did not seek social workers’ detailed descriptions of an easy temperament and the gender of the child. One female social worker shared her concerns related to having a girl based on her personal experiences. Her concerns reflected the common societal value of protecting girls more than boys, which was consistent with previous literature that found that being a girl is a protective factor. (Benzies & Mychasiuk, 2009; Criss et al., 2002; Rutter, 1979, 1987).

Some quantitative findings of the current study, particularly findings related to child related factors seemed to be hard to explain for the social workers who participated in the interviews. These difficulties could be explained by the following reasons: (1) social workers and welfare officers do not often work closely with children at their workplace; instead they often have contact with parents or the primary caregiver of the children; (2) a majority of social workers do not have social work or social science background; and or (3) some of them may have never identified these factors as protective factors although they consider and come across the protective elements in their daily work. Social workers were cautious when they explained specific terms of protective factors.

The explanations of social workers focussed on different protective elements that contributed to the descriptions of the most agreed protective factors. Positive and respectful communication of parents, safe and friendly interactions with children, love and care and decent, available and adequate accommodation and food in children’s proximate environment were leading protective elements for children under six years of age. In contrast, children’s own characteristics such age, gender and competence were perceived as the least agreed protective factors.

Connections between social workers' perceptions and their background

At the quantitative phase, seven associations were found statistically significant between social workers' perceptions of protective factors and their background in terms of demographic and occupational characteristics. These associations included the social worker's gender, age and occupation against six perceived protective factors: "Adequate formal support", "Accessible childcare and kindergarten in the community", "Connection of parents or caregivers with the community", "Parents who have experienced a secure attachment with their own caregivers", "A supportive significant other in the home" and "Cultural value of protecting children". The qualitative results and findings from the literature review provided some explanations to these statistically significant associations between social workers' perceptions and their backgrounds.

Social workers' gender and their perceptions

First, the quantitative results indicated that statistically female social workers were more likely than male social workers to agree with three factors as protective: "Accessible childcare and kindergarten in the community", "Adequate formal support" and "Parents' connection with the community". In the qualitative phase, the association between social workers' gender and their agreement with "Accessible childcare and kindergarten in the community" was explained differently.

Social workers linked these associations with gender roles, feeling safe and cared for if the mother leaves the child in the kindergarten, increased employment opportunities for women, the big demand to increase accessibility of kindergartens in the communities and the different attitudes of female and male practitioners to their work. Some of the explanations were consistent with previous studies; some seemed to be reflections of the changes that occurred in their local contexts. For example, the explanations connected with gender roles were similar to the concepts of gender performativity that were mentioned in the literature review.

Consistent with Butler's (1990) concept of gender performativity, female and male social workers commonly highlighted the traditional roles: "men are

expected to be the breadwinner, while women are expected to be responsible for taking care of the children". Both male and female workers conveyed the same message and connected it with the traditional roles of females and males. This indicates a common acceptance of traditional gender roles that support patriarchal practice in the society. This finding is consistent with the findings of Fakunmoju and his associates (2013) of the gender difference in the perceptions of child abuse in the context of three countries (Fakunmoju et al., 2013).

The big demand to increase accessibility of kindergartens in the communities was another frequently highlighted explanation by social workers. In particular, social workers who are employed in ger khoroo often talked about shortage and lack of access to kindergartens there. As the qualitative results showed, khoroo social workers played key roles in liaising families with kindergartens. Even when there was no vacancy in the kindergartens, they tried to help families by using their networks and local authority. But, social workers' stories revealed that they were often helpless and powerless when the existing infrastructure of kindergartens did not match the growing demand. The finding related to the lack of accessibility of kindergartens is found consistent with the government report that discussed the shortage of kindergartens and its negative effects on the quality of education and safety of children under six years of age.

The qualitative results extended the findings on the association between the gender of the social worker and the acceptance of the factor "Adequate formal support" by providing information about available formal supports at the khoroo level. The most commonly offered formal support was a social worker's referral. Khoroo social workers said that they prepared letters of endorsement requesting to send a child to a nursing home, kindergarten, or for welfare service upon the requests of parents or family members. This role was mentioned in almost all cases and experiences in the qualitative data. The social workers' concentration on referral services was also supported by studies that indicated the lack of human and financial resources and unfavourable decentralization policies of the government via the "One Stop Shop" policy (Tserendorj & Terbish, 2007; M. Turner, 2012).

A part of "Formal support" was identified as the social workers' roles of

brokering and liaising between children or families in need and charity agencies and individual donors. The study confirmed the khoroo social workers' legal duty to provide assessment reports to the court on behalf of children and victims of domestic violence. Social worker's training for parents was indicated as another type of formal support. But, a majority of social workers stated that they preferred to invite or collaborate with the professional trainers or qualified non-profit agencies who have expertise on specific issues or who have funding to conduct training. This explanation supports previous studies that highlighted the financial and technical assistance of international and national non-government agencies in the development of new practice models such as the multidisciplinary team approach (Lkhagvasuren & Davaa, 2010; Olonbayar, 2011).

The quantitative results also indicated that female social workers were more likely to agree with the factor of "Parents' connection with the community". Due to time constraints, the researcher did not ask specific questions about this connection at the qualitative phase. But, other studies provided explanations about parent's perceptions regarding their connections with the community network. For example Coohey's study (1996) found that parent's construction of social isolation was connected with their perception of supports from formal and informal networks. For example, neglectful parents had fewer contacts and resources in the community than other groups while non-maltreating parents had more contacts and resources in the community than maltreating parents (Coohey, 1996).

In addition, the researcher of the current study suggests three more reasons for the association between the gender of social workers and their perception of "Parent's connection with the community". Firstly, during the process of distributing assistance to the residents, khoroo social workers might have noticed that people who have regular connections with the community were more knowledgeable about the available resources than people who had no connection with the community. Secondly, the concept of participation was widely introduced among social workers and welfare officers when social development principles were introduced to social workers. Therefore social workers are expected to encourage parents and community members to be involved in various activities. Lastly,

female social workers had generally been a part of Mongolian culture with collectivist values, although, modern and busy urban life is gradually affecting people's life style and their values. For all these reasons female social workers were able to agree with "Parent's connection with the community".

The quantitative and qualitative results confirm that the gender of social workers influence significantly their perception of protectiveness of young children. Some of the explanations of social workers that this association is related to personal, professional, institutional, and cultural issues supported existing findings of the literature. To reduce gender influence in the perceptions of social workers in child protection practice a holistic approach at all levels may be necessary.

Social workers' age and perception

The quantitative analysis indicated a significant association between the age of the social workers and their perception about the "Cultural value of protecting children". Middle-aged practitioners (in the age group between 30 and 39 years) were more likely to agree with this factor as protective than other age groups. The qualitative result explained that the personal and professional lives of the middle-aged practitioners were more stable than those of young practitioners who had just jumped into a new career or had only recently established their own personal life. The work and life experience of the middle-aged practitioners were noted as important elements that contributed to their perception about the "Cultural value of protecting children". Additionally, older social workers seemed to be influenced more by their culture and family values of upbringing children than younger social workers.

Social worker's work experience and perception

In terms of occupational characteristics, two associations were found statistically significant. The first association indicated that the practitioners who had worked for 0 to 5 years and 16 to 20 years at their current position were more likely to agree with the protective factor of "A supportive significant other in the home". The second association showed that khoroo social workers are more likely than khoroo welfare officers to agree with the two protective factors of "Parents or caregivers who experienced a secure attachment with their own caregiver", and "Accessible childcare and kindergarten in the community".

The interview participants provided the explanation, based on their practical observations or personal experiences, about the association between length of work experience and agreement with the factor of "Supportive significant other in the home". For instance, social workers with less than 5 years experience were expected to be young people with children under six years of age, therefore, the association was linked to the social workers' experience of seeking a babysitter or someone's help in the home. Social workers who had been working at their current position over 15 years were assumed to have the experience of having their own grandchildren. This explanation did not include the work experience of khoroo social workers; instead, it was based on personal experience or social workers' observation of other colleagues. Understanding of the "significant other" in the home was different among social workers as well. Some referred to relatives or people with blood ties; others referred to neighbours and close friends. This showed that social workers did not consider "A supportive significant other in the home" as a protective factor when they talked about various options of informal supports.

Based on the background data, the researcher adds another explanation. Social workers who had been working at their current position for 16 to 20 years would have started working since the position of khoroo social worker was created in 2001 (E. Sukhbaatar et al., 2008; Tserendorj & Terbish, 2007). If they were working on this position over 15 years they must have had a lot of opportunities to participate in the short term in-service training for social workers, as far as the researcher knows and according to the results of other local studies. The only question is whether these training programs specifically covered child protection issues or the protectiveness of children's environment.

If social workers attended training on child protection, their work experience and social work training could have influenced their decisions to select certain factors as protective factors. In order to reduce the influence of work experience in case management decisions, Sullivan and her associates recommended in-service training with agreed assessment protocols for child protection officers (Sullivan et al., 2008). A similar recommendation can be made in the case of Mongolia to reduce the influence of demographic and occupational factors in the case

management decisions of social workers.

Statistically, khoroo social workers were more likely than khoroo welfare officers to agree with the two protective factors of "Accessible childcare and kindergarten in the community", and "Parents or caregivers who experienced a secure attachment with their own caregiver". The qualitative results supported this quantitative result. The interview participants highlighted the different roles of these two positions. According to the job descriptions, khoroo social workers play key roles in liaising families and children with kindergartens and other protective and welfare services, while welfare officers provide welfare services to other age groups. Therefore, khoroo social workers were more likely to agree with accessible childcare in the community. The qualitative results were consistent with the previous studies and reports that described roles of khoroo social workers and welfare officers (Lkhagvasuren & Davaa, 2010; Sandagsuren, 2014).

Both quantitative and qualitative results indicated that social workers' gender, age and work experience influenced their perceptions. This indicates social workers' personal characteristics and experiences might affect their decision-making and assessment. These findings led to the question: "How do social workers use protective factors in their practice of protecting children from maltreatment?" The next section discusses this question.

Use of protective factors in practice

Social work scholars highlight the importance of creatively blending values, knowledge and skills in social work practice; these key elements of social work are often linked with constructs of feeling, knowing and doing (Barlett, 1970; Johnson & Yanca, 2010). The findings of the current study revealed some associations between social workers' perceptions and perceived use of protective factors in their practice.

Qualitative findings supported the findings of the quantitative analysis in several ways. Both khoroo social workers and welfare officers indicated that they used often protective factors in the direct practice of working with individuals and families rather than working at program development, advocacy and policy formulation. Social workers' experiences were directly connected with the nature

of their work. As frontline practitioners, both khoroo social workers and welfare officers said that they acted like arms of the state agencies or administrators supporting the khoroo governor's office in the implementation of relevant legislative acts.

Moreover, the qualitative results illustrated social workers' roles of investigators and brokers. The stories demonstrated that social workers mostly addressed children and families at high risk of maltreatment and temporarily removed malnourished toddlers from home to the state-nursing clinic using the power of the government, assistance of relatives and multidisciplinary team members in their khoroos. However, there was some evidence of social workers acting as helpers by linking families with available resources. Most social workers said that they provided assistance to children, parents and vulnerable groups in the khoroo by linking them with available resources in and outside communities and advocating on their behalf to get entitled assistance. But their work appeared to be mostly fragmented and not aimed to support family as whole.

As social workers reported, every day they work with families who are experiencing poverty, becoming dysfunctional for health and other reasons or becoming addicted to alcohol. They address the basic needs of parents and children by linking them with available resources or providing materialistic assistance and providing emotional support. In the broader community context, khoroo social workers and welfare officers indicated that limited services are available in the communities; most of the services provided by qualified and professional staff are located in the centre of city. For example, several social workers mentioned how they sent malnourished or neglected young children to the state nursing centre with the approval from the khoroo and district governors.

As frontline government practitioners, social workers and welfare officers saw their role as the important government agent who can link the families and children with available services. At the same time they acknowledged the difficulties of providing some direct services by themselves due to their lack of qualifications and the poor working conditions. IFSW (2012a) highlighted the importance of formal learning for building social work knowledge and reflection of practice skills, and the findings in this study also indicate the great need for

formal and informal education for khoroo social workers and the recruitment of qualified social workers who can apply social work knowledge with practice skills in the practice.

Quantitatively, out of all the 254 questionnaire participants, only 50 (19.7%) identified themselves as social workers with a social work degree qualification. The rest reported that they had different professional backgrounds including social science teachers, lawyers, public administrators, teachers, accountants, and engineers. In terms of social work training and qualifications, most of the respondents (85.9%) had certificates of social work training lasting from one week to three months, which were not comparable with the diploma of social work or the bachelor and master's degrees. This finding about the qualification and training of social workers and welfare officers was consistent with the previous studies done among Mongolian social workers (E. Sukhbaatar, 2006; Tserendorj & Terbish, 2007).

A similar pattern of educational background was found among the participants who were interviewed. Around 20% of the 30 participants did not want to answer the question about their professional education. This might be due to the fear of losing their jobs under the pressure from employers/organisations and social work associations who advocate recruitment of qualified social workers to the position. Even officials of the state agencies in charge of social work service say that only qualified social workers will be recruited for social work positions in the future (Sandagsuren, 2014).

In addition, the researcher noticed that the participants with social science backgrounds or longer experience in their positions more frequently agreed to participate in the semi-structured interviews than social workers with non social science qualifications. Among them, there were social workers, teachers, journalist, sociologist, a psychologist, a philosopher, a public administrator and a politician. The mean length of work experience for the questionnaire participants was 3.63 years, whereas the mean of length of work experience was 5.6 years for the 30 interview participants a difference of two years. The practitioners with relevant backgrounds or who had been working at the current position for more than five years appeared to be confident and more willing to participate in the

interviews than the practitioners with non-social work degrees and a shorter period of work experience.

The picture of the educational background and degrees of the research participants indicated that a majority of social workers and welfare officers do not have social work degree qualifications. This finding echoes Bartlett's (1970) advice to develop social work into a profession rather than an occupation. Her concern was expressed as follows:

> The major distinction between profession and an occupation is usually regarded as being the substantial body of knowledge on which a profession rest. One type of occupation, sometimes described as a "semi-profession," makes use of technical skills and establishes as its knowledge base a body of experience derived from occupational practice… Some social workers think that social work should remain an occupation. This opinion is in opposition to the one, which considers that social work should be in the direction of developing as a profession (Barlett, 1970, p. 19).

Bartlett (1970, p. 19) added that profession's knowledge, skills and values are transmissible through education and a profession is responsible for standards of practice and the competence of its members. Occupations, on the other hand, are defined as having technical skills and practice-based knowledge (Bartlett, 1970). Although, the focus of the current study was not to distinguish the social work profession from any occupation, the findings indicate that the Mongolian agencies, particularly the government recruitment system and processes treat the social work profession as an occupation or semi-occupation without the involvement of social work school and professional agencies.

Both quantitative and qualitative findings indicated that there is no major difference found in the agreement of social workers in terms of their educational background in social work. This finding did not support the first assumption that qualified social workers would more frequently agree with protective factors than the practitioners without a social work degree. The finding showed that their qualifications did not influence the social workers' perceptions.

These finding were consistent with the findings of two other studies. Shor and Haj-Yahia (1996, p. 433) found a similar pattern of perceptions among Israeli students regardless of their educational disciplines, which was inconsistent with

the authors' expectations of finding different perspectives among students from different disciplines. As previously reported, Sullivan and her colleagues also found that the perceptions of social workers with different levels of experience were not different in terms of determining protectiveness and managing risks in the community (Sullivan et al., 2008, p. 699).

There are at least two reasons for the consistency of the findings of the current study with the above two studies. The study of Shor and Haj-Yahia involved students with different backgrounds in terms of their areas of study but their perceptions and understanding about child protection and child maltreatment were still not well developed compared to professional practitioners who had specific training and practice experience of working in the field. In the second study of Sullivan and her colleagues, the participants were all qualified social workers with similar educational backgrounds, but the authors linked the results of their study with in-service training and the use of risk assessment tools in their practice.

At the qualitative phase, five types of information sources were defined as common sources when the researcher asked about the first information sources that introduced child protective factors to the participants. The sources included their practical experience, personal experience, media, in-service training and textbooks. The professional textbook or book was the least common resource for updating knowledge about child protection.

To the knowledge of the researcher, several textbook and manuals on child protection and multidisciplinary team services were published in Mongolian language under the financial and technical assistance of international and local NGOs over last ten years and most of them were distributed to the khoroo social workers and multidisciplinary members for their reference of work. As Trevithick (2012, p. 92) noted "all knowledge we acquire becomes a form of personal knowledge" regardless of whether it is based on personal experiences or interactions with others or whether it is based on teaching and learning opportunities. In addition, khoroo social workers' current knowledge about protective factors could be based on factual knowledge that includes knowledge of key legislations and law, knowledge of social policy and knowledge of agency

policy, practice and processes and knowledge of particular problems or particular groups (Trevithick, 2012). But, some practical knowledge of social workers about protective factors was tacit knowledge that was unformulated and different from formulated knowledge of facts, procedures and values (Payne, 2014, p.10).

Practice knowledge including knowledge use or utilization and knowledge creation and skills development (Trevithick, 2012) helps the practitioners to carry out their practices tactfully and effectively. But, knowing ways of doing in their own practice is insufficient. Therefore, social work scholars highlight the importance of both "knowing how to do something" and "knowing about … some aspects of the world" (Payne, 2014) which values both theoretical or academic and practical knowledge. If social workers learned about protective factors for the first time from practical and personal experiences rather than from training or textbooks, their knowledge about protective factors is more likely to be unformulated practical knowledge. In this case, their understanding and perception of protective factors might lack academic knowledge that would enable them to understand the different aspects of child protection and development and apply this formal knowledge in their practice, guided by the ethics and standards of the profession.

In order to ensure effective professional services, social workers need assistance from the organization that is often gained through professional supervisors. Most social workers who participated in the interviews said that their supervisors were non social workers, mostly managers and senior public administration officers who worked at khoroo and district governor's offices. Therefore, the supervisors mostly required administrative tasks to be completed, and the situation became complicated and sometimes difficult when they evaluate the work of social workers.

However, specialists at the state and city offices are often qualified social workers who arrange different types of training and seminars for khoroo social workers and welfare officers. In relation to the supervision and management issues, the process and criteria of social worker recruitment for khoroo social workers and welfare officers were found be challenging for the development of the growing profession of social work in Mongolia, although the senior officials at the state

social welfare and service agencies announced that from now on no more non social workers will be recruited for the position of social worker and welfare officer at the khoroo level.

The researcher found social workers at the khoroo level put effort into the provision of protective services for families and children, in their own ways trying to meet the growing demand for social services in fast growing and challenging contexts. But, the challenges related to lack of qualifications, professional supervision and working environment became major obstacles to providing professional services. Most importantly, these obstacles raised another fundamental issue of the social work profession, social work values.

Personal values versus professional values

As Reamer (2012, p. 29) noted, social workers are required to distinguish their own personal values from the values of the practice in order to avoid the risk of misunderstanding issues. In the context of the current study, several stories revealed that social workers considered personal values in their practice of protecting children under six years of age. These stories were consistent with the social workers' rationale of selecting some factors to be more agreed than others.

The acceptance of social worker's reference at court as evidence is a significant recognition of the profession of social work in Mongolia. On the other hand, social workers' involvement in the decision-making process at a court puts them in the position of acting professionally. It also requires social workers to make decisions carefully considering all relevant values such as societal, professional, organizational, and human service practice values ethically rather than focusing only on their own personal values.

In addition, a number of social workers provided different rationales that influenced them to protect children from maltreatment. These rationales included children's rights, anti-discrimination, importance of children's health and safety, importance of having adequate parental care, and parents' self sustaining capabilities. As previously shown, the terms of child protection and children's rights are often used interchangeably among the public and professionals in Mongolia.

Chronologically, the concept of children's rights was first introduced to Mongolian practitioners right after the government ratified the Conventions of the Rights of the Child in 1991. Compared to children's rights, the term, "child protection" is relatively new to practitioners. To the extent of the researcher's knowledge, the implementation in Mongolia of the first pilot projects on child protection started in 2000-2001. These projects were specifically designed to develop child protection services for children who were at high risk of abuse, neglect and domestic violence. However, there is no specific law on child protection. Child protection measures are taken as implementation of the Law on the Rights of Children. These circumstances may lead people to use the terms "child protection" and "children's rights" interchangeably.

Given this context, social workers' frequent use of children's rights in the descriptions of protective factors can be interpreted in the following ways. Social workers might simply perceive children's rights as similar to child protection, like two sides of one coin; or they might perceive that children's rights are a part of human rights, which is one of social work's fundamental principles. In both cases, social workers should consciously know how to apply the principles of human rights or children's rights in the practice of protecting children or building protective environments for children.

The principle of anti-discrimination is similar as it is another societal value and fundamental principle of children's rights. In particular, the principle of anti-discrimination was the key reason for social workers to disagree that "A child who is perceived as adorable" is a protective factor. It was evident that most social workers perceived that discrimination by physical appearance of children is not acceptable. The social workers' justification was combined with the cultural value of protecting children, which was illustrated by several Mongolian proverbs. This echoes Dolgoff and his colleagues' argument, "social work practitioners take their professional values from societal values, that is, from the values held by the larger society in which they practice" (Dolgoff et al., 2012, p. 24).

The justifications of the importance of children's health and safety, the provision of adequate parental care, and parents' self sustaining life issues tended to be

linked with Articles of the Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC) and government policies. The Convention includes the Articles that highlighted children's health, safety, and provision of adequate care as support by the state for parents in caring for their children. The government's ratification of the CRC is the foundation for the state's commitment to implement the convention by applying its articles into policies and programs at all levels of the government structure. The civil and legal rights of all people, and access to and opportunity for healthy and safe living conditions are also included in societal values (Reamer, 2013). As frontline government workers, social workers can use these values as justification for protecting children under six years of age from maltreatment.

Both quantitative and qualitative findings showed that khoroo social workers often carried out risk assessments and referral services in compliance with relevant legislation. Due to the nature of social problems they encountered and lack of qualified services providers in the communities their major roles were found to be investigators and coordinators. In terms of social work knowledge and qualifications, the majority of social workers attended short term in-service training rather than obtaining formal social work degrees.. In addition, practical knowledge appeared to be dominantly used rather than formal and academic knowledge.

Why some factors were more frequently agreed than others

Looking again at the ecological systems to which the four most agreed protective factors belong, we can easily say that these four factors represent the four systems of the ecology in human development. "Maternal warmth" and "Happy relationship of parents" are factors of the microsystem; "Quality of child rearing conditions" can belong to both meso and exosystems and "Cultural value of protecting children" belongs to the macrosystem.

Based on background information about the Mongolian context and the findings of the current study, the researcher reflects that the present demographic, social and economical challenges have influenced social workers to rely on family factors. Changes in the macrosystem affect the lower systems and make the protectiveness in the microsystem, particularly family factors prevalent to rely on.

As evident in the demographic background, the urban population in Mongolia is growing due to massive internal migration. The urban infrastructure and public service facilities cannot cope with this rapid growth. Specifically, the largest population group aged 20 to 24 years of age contributes to the increase in number of households with children from 0 to 4 years of age. This demographic change has created a number of challenges including the shortage of kindergartens and the lack of social services in the communities, which, together with the almost complete absence of affordable childcare services in the communities, make the family based support systems and protectiveness in families essential for children under six years of age.

Simultaneously, the young people who migrated from remote areas to urban areas are facing challenges to compete for limited job opportunities and affordable accommodation in the city. When they leave the family and social support networks of their hometowns, their informal supports weaken. Young couples have to find affordable living places, but these are mostly located where the infrastructure of water supply and sanitation is primitive. These places are also often underdeveloped, with overcrowded social service facilities and unsafe recreational facilities such as playgrounds and public spaces. These conditions may explain why social workers highlight the "Quality of child rearing conditions" as a protective factor for children under six year of age and their families.

When the living environment including the neighbourhood and communities are perceived unsafe and lacking in childcare and kindergartens, the family becomes the only setting where children can be safe and adequately cared for. Therefore, the family as an ideal place with a lot of respect, care and empathy for children might be considered a main protective factor. Further, it is a given that the family is the closest setting to the children where children experience their environment and interact with primary caregivers and others. These phenomena could push social workers to agree more frequently with family related factors, particularly factors that define parents' relationship, knowledge, experience and connections with the communities.

The findings of the current study showed that social workers were concerned

about children in dysfunctional families and the effects of family conflicts, divorce and substance abuse of parents on children. In such cases, “Maternal warmth” becomes the critical protective factor for young children and social workers might choose this factor as most important for children under six years of age. The previous studies confirmed that maternal warmth is a critical protector that promotes resilience in young children who are exposed to socio-economic deprivation and affects positively children’s emotional development and resilience (Bowes et al., 2010; Kim-Cohen et al., 2004).

The “Cultural value of protecting children” was found a commonly agreed protective factor among social workers. The profession of social work is relatively new in Mongolia. Based on background reviews about the development of social work in Mongolia and findings of the current study, the researcher sees four possible sources from which Mongolian social workers can take their professional values. The first is the international code of ethical principles of the International Federation of Social Workers. The second source is the national code of ethics of Mongolian social workers, which has not yet been agreed and approved nationwide. The third source is societal values and the fourth source is organizational values. If the practitioners do not have social work background and have not attended formal and informal training in social work, they are not likely to consider the professional values of social work from the first two value sources even if they are working as social workers.

As previously noted, any practitioners with a relevant background, who have passed the civil service exams, and have met the organizational recruitment criteria of social workers are being recruited as khoroo social workers or welfare officers at the khoroo governor’s level. The policy and procedure of recruiting social workers are controlled and implemented by the Council of Civil Service and organisations that employ social workers. Without the involvement of professional social work organisations and individuals, government agencies and officials can easily recruit practitioners as social workers based on their requirements. These mistaken recruitment processes indicate that social work is often seen as occupation or semi-occupation rather than a profession and undermine the status of social work as a profession in the public services.

The development of social work associations is still immature, and associations are not taking up the responsibility of licensing social work services or ensuring the quality of social work services. Licensing social work services and social workers is considered a long way from becoming a reality in Mongolia. Accreditation is required only of the programs of schools of social work and is done by a group of experts assigned by the Ministry of Education and Science. Due to the immature development of professional associations and the absence of an agreed national code of ethics, Mongolian social workers started accepting informally "some societal values as core or fundamental values of the profession" (Dolgoff et al., 2012), rather than the drafted national code of ethics which has not as yet been agreed by nationwide social work associations and schools. Given the immaturity of social work associations, the organisations that employ social workers play key roles in managing and providing guidance to social workers and social workers have to follow the regulations of the organisations and consider the organisational values in their practice. But, the values of the government organisations or political administrative bodies may not always be applicable in social work practice. That is probably why social workers rely on cultural or societal and personal values rather than professional values.

Another reason for the frequent agreement with the factor "Cultural value of protecting children" can be the cultural influence on social workers, which is an influence of the macrosystem. The background section in this thesis on the cultural value of protecting children pointed out that the dominant cultural child rearing and protecting practices still exist today. Messages of cultural values and morals have been passed from one generation to another via unwritten and written stories, folktales and proverbs reflecting the unique Mongolian nomadic life style and parenting roles. The common use of proverbs is evidence of the influence of culture on individuals. Scholars from different countries analysed Mongolian proverbs and studied the different roles of proverbs as tools for communication, moral reasoning, descriptions of gender divisions and conveying messages related to child rearing practice and parenting styles (Kler, 1945; Nikolaeva, 2009; Raymond, 2012; Wang et al., 2014; Whymant, 1926).

The societal and political changes that have occurred over the last hundred years

in Mongolia have considerably affected the lives of families and children. The qualitative findings of the current study indicated that traditional child rearing and protecting practices are still preserved in the mentality of modern Mongolians. Confirming the continuation of traditional and cultural influence, the qualitative phase of the current study found that social workers often used proverbs and stories to justify and explain their actions. Social workers said that they learned proverbs from their parents and grandparents or school textbooks. This confirmed that frontline social workers use commonly accepted societal values instead of professional values to justify or explain their actions or decision-making. From the perspective of culturally competent social work, it may be acceptable to consider cultural values in social work practice. But, from the perspective of the development of the profession, this practice raises the question of whether social work is developing in the direction of occupation or profession.

Summary of the chapter

In this chapter, the researcher discussed the quantitative and qualitative findings in line with the studies on protective factors of children against child maltreatment, on social work education and practice, and on the social and political contexts of Mongolia. Discussions of the research findings were divided into six parts: research design, the overall distribution of perceived protective factors, the most and least prevalent protective factors, the connections between protective factors and social workers' demographic and occupational characteristics, the use of protective factors in the practice; and explanations of why some factors were perceived more frequently than others.

The choice of mixed methods with an explanatory sequential design allowed the researcher to collect numeric data via the questionnaire and explain results of the quantitative data analysis by qualitative data, which were collected by interview sequentially. The two distinct phases of the study were guided separately by two different theories, the ecology of human development and phenomenology. Quantitatively, the most agreed protective factors were found to be the factors related to parents and children's immediate environment. In contrast the factors that defined children's characteristics were found to be least agreed factors.

Between these distinctive groups, there were other commonly agreed factors related to parents and community characteristics including accessible care, adequate formal and informal supports and parents' connection with the communities. Qualitatively, social workers indicated various protective elements by describing the most agreed protective factors and protectiveness of children's environment. In particular, both quantitative and qualitative findings highlighted the importance of having accessible care and kindergartens in the communities due to emerging problems related to shortage of kindergartens and childcare in urban areas. In addition, the community characteristics were defined as commonly agreed protective factors. Child related protective factors were perceived as least frequently agreed.

The results of the quantitative phase indicated that gender, age and work experience of social workers were more likely to influence social workers perceptions of six protective factors. These factors included adequate formal support, accessible childcare and kindergartens in the community, connection of parents with the community, parents' experience of secure attachment, a supportive significant other in the home and cultural value of protecting children. The connections between social workers' gender and their perception of accessible childcare, adequate formal support and parents connection with the community were explained by gender roles, feeling safe or safety of home environment, mother's employment, the big demand to increase accessibility, and the different attitudes of female and male attitudes.

Social workers were using their personal and professional experiences to explain the associations between social workers' age and perception of cultural values of protecting children. In particular, the explanations about the associations between social work experience and perceptions of the factors on "The significant other in the home", "Parents' experience of secure attachment" and "Accessible care in the communities" were connected with their practice and personal experiences. Some of the findings on the connections of demographic and occupational characteristics and perceptions of protective factors were consistent with previous studies.

In terms of knowledge and qualifications a majority of social workers had

certificates of social work training, which were not comparable with a diploma, bachelor and master's degrees in social work. Only 20% of social workers had qualifications with a social work educational diploma, which was consistent with previous local studies. In both research phases the researcher did not see any difference among social workers in terms of their perceptions and use of protective factors. This finding did not support the research hypothesis that qualified social workers are more likely to agree with protective factors.

The current study revealed that the main sources of information that introduced child protective factors to the participants were personal and practice experiences. This study also confirmed previous findings related to inadequate working conditions, lack of resources to update professional knowledge, and lack of supervision of frontline social workers. Universal human rights principles and societal values were key justifications in selecting certain factors as protective factors.

The current study revealed that parent and family related factors became the most commonly agreed protective factors for children under six years of age due to the current demographic, economical and social challenges in Mongolia. These challenges influenced various elements and systems of human ecology that should be considered in all aspects of social work practice and education.

CHAPTER 8: Conclusions and Recommendations

This chapter presents the conclusions of the current study and recommendations for further improvement of social work and child protection in Mongolia. The chapter ends with suggestions for further research.

Conclusions

The researcher used mixed methods with the explanatory sequential design to respond to the main research question of "In what ways are social workers' perceptions of child protective factors associated with their background?" The sequential quantitative and the qualitative phases of the study were informed by the two distinct theories on the ecology of human behaviour and phenomenology. The explanatory sequential design of mixed methods allowed the researcher to examine the distributions of perceived protective factors, commonly employed social work skills and associations between social workers' perceptions and their background in the first phase and to explain the results of the quantitative phase by using findings of the qualitative phase in the second phase.

Both quantitative and qualitative findings found that frontline social workers' qualifications did not influence their perceptions of protective factors of children under six years of age. Instead, social workers' perceptions accepting family, community and cultural factors were dependent on their gender, age and occupational positions. The study also found that khoroo social workers often used societal and personal values in their daily practice that was supported by unformulated practical knowledge and experience rather than formal academic knowledge and professional skills. The frontline social workers perceived family and community factors as protective more often than the factors of other ecological systems. These findings were connected to the following reasons:

Changes in the larger system affect the lower systems of human ecology and have immediate impact on children's lives. The population of modern Mongolia is changing in terms of locality and structure. The intensive internal migration from remote areas to urban areas has made the capital city of Ulaanbaatar the densest

area of Mongolia. The largest age group in Ulaanbaatar is of 20 and 24 year olds, which has led to an increase in the number of children aged 0 to 4 years. These changes contribute to an increasing demand for social services. Moreover, the existing infrastructure and capacity of social services at the community level, such as kindergartens, school and local clinics facilities in the capital cannot meet the increasing needs of families with young children.

These social, demographic and economical changes in the macro and exosystems influence children's immediate environment by the negative effects of lack of access to kindergartens, lack of affordable housing and the pressures to maintain daily lives in scarce and disadvantaged conditions. These societal changes at exo and macrosystems such as the increasing demand for social services, lack of local facilities and services, and increasingly unsafe neighbourhoods lead to look at broader aspects of the human ecology to child protection issues holistically.

Newly introduced khoroo social workers are facing the growing demand for social services and need to act professionally. Social work is a relatively new profession in Mongolia. The positions of khoroo social workers were created fifteen years ago and positions of welfare officers were created within the last ten years using the same title of social workers at the khoroo level. The initiatives of local and international agencies with aims to develop social work services at the community level matched well with the Government interests to develop its own structures which can implement its political and social agenda at the khoroo level. Over the decade, khoroo social workers and welfare officers have gained acceptance and have been legally recognized as important players in addressing various social issues such as domestic violence, child abuse and poverty.

The current study found that the direction of the social work profession in Mongolia is uncertain, particularly the social work positions at the government levels. This indicates that the profession of social work is becoming an administrative occupation. It was found that khoroo social workers and welfare officers often played the roles of administrator, ad hoc broker, investigator, case manager and coordinator of a multidisciplinary team. However, the increasing demand for social services needs social workers to act more professionally using a body of social work knowledge and skills guided by professional values and

ethics.

The majority of frontline social workers and welfare officers were found to be non social work practitioners and the government recruitment process is not favorable to recruiting qualified social workers. This implies that the profession of social work appears to be treated as a semi-occupation or occupation in the government agencies rather than a profession. Thus, social workers without any or with only meager social work qualifications are being employed in the positions of social workers and welfare officers with legal responsibilities and in roles to respond to child abuse and domestic violence issues. Social workers' considerations of using protective factors was found to be ad hoc and only applicable in the limited services of assessment and referral to other agencies inside and outside the communities.

However, it should be noted that the social workers' efforts in protecting children in environments of such intensity and stress, their strengths in using the children's rights approach and their collaboration with multidisciplinary teams in the community are invaluable assets. Sheafor and Horejsi (2008, p. 45) noted "social workers must use both heart and head when interacting with clients and providing services." At the same time, it is essential for social workers to provide services in ethical and effective ways. The finding suggests that there should be a shift of frontline workers' practice-based knowledge and skills towards a body of substantial knowledge and skills guided by the ethics and principles of the social work profession.

The child protection system is still underdeveloped. The statutory child protection system is a new phenomenon and underdeveloped in Mongolia as in other developing countries. The Mongolian structure and function of the child protection system is not consistent with countries where there is a national child protection system with the components of law, coordinating mechanism, services, workforce, resources and a supportive public. Findings of the literature review and the current study showed that frontline social workers – a part of the workforce of the child protection system operate in a complex legislative and political environment. Although Mongolia has no independent law on child protection, a couple of hundred Mongolian laws regulate the violation of

children's rights. This legal environment, which is closely connected with the implementation of compliance with the Convention of the Rights of the Child, leads social workers to deal with broad issues rather than focus on specific issues such as child protection. Being responsible for broad social and administrative issues in such complicated situations with an underdeveloped child protection system compels social workers to neglect studying and applying new policies, publications and specific protective elements of formal supports in their practice.

As arms of the Government agencies and a part of multidisciplinary teams, khoroo social workers and welfare officers play important roles in the implementation of legislation and the provision of welfare assistance and social services. Frontline social workers and welfare officers use limited available formal and informal supports in their capacities as authorities and from their experiences. The findings suggest an emphasis must be placed on the qualification and training of frontline practitioners to prepare them as trained professionals who can contribute in building a protective and preventative child protection system. A skilled and committed workforce would be expected to be the main driver of other child protection components including legislation, coordinating mechanisms, adequate resource allocations and a supportive public to build a safe environment for children and families.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the current study, the researcher makes the following recommendations for further child protection research, social work education and practice in Mongolia.

For further child protection research, the first project that needs to be undertaken across the whole country is a comprehensive baseline study of the prevalence of child abuse followed by a systematic recording and follow-up system on the incidence of child abuse. Such a study will enable the examination of associations between the prevalence of child abuse and neglect cases and protectiveness and risks of child maltreatment at different systems of the human ecology. In addition, the structural and functional elements of protective factors can be examined in

greater detail looking at different protective environments of children who are being protected and are at risk of maltreatment. This study also can be extended to incorporate various protective elements of children's environment in formal and informal training programs to prepare a trained child protection workforce in Mongolia.

In terms of social work education, formal and informal social work education plays a critical role in transferring knowledge about protectiveness and risks of child maltreatment into social work practice. In particular, to reduce the differences in social workers' perceptions of protectiveness of children's environment, it is essential to place emphasis on social work education and its linkage with social work practice. Therefore, in order to reduce the differences in frontline social workers perceptions, the researcher suggests developing both formal and in-service training manuals and educational tools and introducing them in academic and in-service training for social work students as well as and social work practitioners. Specifically, the roles of social work educators are important in developing an inventory and handbook on assessment and intervention in the use of different types of protective factors in collaboration with frontline social workers and their partners in multidisciplinary teams.

At the same time social work educators can play leading roles in writing local publications on child protection and prevention aspects. In particular, these publications should include both academic and practical knowledge and experience of developing effective child protection mechanisms and prevention at all levels. To build evidence based local knowledge of protectiveness of children's environments, the collaboration between social work educators and frontline social workers is essential. The frontline workers can document and analyse existing practical knowledge and experience of protecting children and their families in collaboration with social work scholars, educators and qualified social work supervisors. For example various proverbs and folk literature that are concerned about child protection and promote positive discipline methods of bringing up children could be a part of these publications and practice manuals.

For the further development of social work practice, the practice-based occupational approach must be moved to an approach respecting social work as a

profession. Social work schools and organisations should be working together with the government bodies and individuals who are in charge of recruiting qualified social work practitioners and supervisors to make the government requirement system more favourable for recruiting qualified social workers to the social work positions at all levels of public service. At the same time, it is essential to encourage frontline practitioners with non social work backgrounds to seek qualifications in social work if they are committed and willing to stay in social work positions in the future. Their practice-based knowledge and skills must be enhanced by formal learning and scientific evidence that will enable them to understand children's complex settings, seek more protective elements within the ecological systems and apply them tactfully and professionally in their practice.

One of the potentials of incorporating protective elements in social work practice is developing and implementing a comprehensive family support program in the communities in line with the existing government strategic child protection policies. This proposed program could address strengthening protectiveness of children's proximate and distant environments and promoting various protective factors at all levels from individual to the state. To implement this program social workers' partnership with different organisations and individuals including the multidisciplinary team members and parents with children is essential. This comprehensive program would allow social workers to extend child protective and preventative services in more holistic ways, looking at both responsive and preventative aspects of child maltreatment.

All these initiatives will be possible with trained professionals in the designated positions of the child protection workforce including khoroo social workers and welfare officers. In particular, to improve the roles and contributions of social workers in the field of child protection and prevention, it is necessary to recruit qualified social workers at all levels of the government structure. Strengthening current social work positions and finding more positions in different government and non-government settings are critical for the development and enhancement of the reputation of the newly introduced profession of social work. The researcher believes the findings and proposed recommendations of the current study are

important for the further development of child protection and social work education and practice in Mongolia.

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Appendix 1: Variables

1. Demographic, occupational and educational characteristics of research participants: Subtotal- 7 variables

1. Gender
2. Age
3. Occupation
4. Work experience
5. Education
6. Profession
7. Training attended

2. Perceived agreement with the following factors that protect against child maltreatment: Subtotal -20 variables

Factors at micro level: Child related factors

1. Easy temperament
2. Gender
3. Perceived as affectionate
4. Competent behaviour

Factors at micro level: Parents and family related factors

5. Parent's or caregiver's adequate knowledge of child development
6. Parent's or caregiver's adequate developmental expectation of the child
7. Parent's or caregivers' experience of secure attachment
8. Maternal warmth
9. Happy relationship of parents
10. Parents' or caregiver's structured and consistent daily routine
11. Quality of child rearing conditions
12. Supportive significant other in the home

Factors at exo-system: Community factors

13. Adequate formal support, e.g., social service, assistance, and policy
14. Accessible childcare or kinder garden in the community
15. Adequate informal social support, e.g., relatives, friends, neighbours
16. Living in a non-violent community
17. Living in a resourceful community, e.g., socio-economic status of residents is well
18. Connection of parents or caregivers with the community

Factors at macro level: Cultural factors

19. Cultural value of promoting nonphysical forms of punishment
20. Cultural value of protecting children

Appendix 2: Questionnaire Form

QUESTIONNAIRE ON PROTECTIVE FACTORS

Consent will be gained by completion of this questionnaire.

Please answer the following questions. Please cross all the appropriate boxes, e.g., ☒

I. Demographic and educational data

1. Gender Female ☐ Male ☐

2. Age ……

3. Occupation (e.g., khoroo social worker or khoroo welfare officer) ……

4. How long have you worked at this position? ……year …….month

5. Education
   - Diploma ☐
   - Bachelor ☐
   - Master ☐
   - Doctoral ☐
   - Other ☐ Please indicate ……

6. Profession
   - Social worker ☐
   - Public administrator ☐
   - Teacher ☐
   - Psychologist ☐
   - Sociologist ☐
   - Lawyer ☐
   - Accountant ☐
   - Engineer ☐
   - Other ☐ Please indicate ……

7. Have you attended any social work short-term training or seminar or workshop?
   - Yes ☐ If yes, please cross all the appropriate boxes
   - No ☐ If no, please move to question 8

Social work qualification training with 3 phases ☐
Social work certificate training with length from 45 days to 3 months ☐
Voucher training on social work ☐
Workshop or seminars on social work ☐

II. Protective factors against child maltreatment

Do you agree that the following are factors, which protect children under 6 years old from child maltreatment?

If you are strongly disagree please cross at column no 1, if you are disagree, please cross at 2, if you are uncertain cross at 3; if you are agree please cross at 4, if you are strongly agree please cross at column 5. Please cross all the appropriate boxes, e.g., ☒

Scale Items	1	2	3	4	5
Child related factors					
Child with easy temperament, e.g. child with easy temperament engages easily with others					
Gender, e.g., girl is more protected					
Child who is perceived as adorable e.g., child who is perceived as adorable is protected more					
Child who has competent behaviour, e.g., competent child does not act aggressively					
Parents and family related factors					
Parents or care givers with adequate knowledge of child development					
Parents or caregivers with adequate developmental expectation of the child					
Parents or care givers who experienced a secure attachment with own caregiver					
Maternal warmth					
Happy relationship of parents					
Parents or care givers with structured, consistent daily routine					
Quality of child rearing condition					
Supportive significant other in the home					
Community factors					
Adequate formal support e.g., social service and assistance, and social policy					
Accessible child care and kinder garden in the community					
Adequate informal social support e.g., relatives, friends, neighbors					
Living in a non-violent community					
Living in a resourceful community e.g., socio economic status of residents is well					
Connection of parents or care givers with the community					
Cultural factors					
Cultural value of promoting nonphysical forms of punishment					
Cultural value of protecting children					

9. Do you know any other protective factors that protect children under 6 years old?

Yes ☐ If Yes, please indicate

No ☐ If No, please move to question 10

(a)_____ (b)_____ (c) _____ (d)_____

Are you willing to be approached for further individual interview that will discuss about preliminary results of the current questionnaire? If yes, please provide your contact address, which you consider the best way reach you, on the invitation form provided.

Please put the filled invitation in a separate small envelope and drop it in the box. The interview will last approximately one hour. Please see details about the interview from the information sheet.

Thank you so much for your time and completing the questionnaire.

Appendix 3: Invitation Form

Invitation

Are you willing to be approached for further interview that will discuss about preliminary findings of this questionnaire? You will be contacted at a later date.

If you are willing to be approached please provide your contact details, which you consider the best way to reach you. For instance, you can provide your name with your telephone number, email address or mail address.

……

Thank you so much.

Appendix 4: Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Question 1: What made most of the participants to agree with family related factors such as happy relationship with parents, quality of child rearing conditions, maternal warmth?

Question 2: What did come up in your mind, when you read/ heard about the phrase of "happy relationship of parents?"

Question 3: What did you come up when you read/heard to the phrase of "maternal warmth"?

Question 4: How would you describe maternal warmth?

Question 5: What did you come up when read/heard the phrase "quality of child rearing conditions?"

Question 6: Please share your experience of considering one of these factors as protective factor when you had to protect children under six years of age?

Question 7: What did come up in your mind when you hear/read the phrase "a child who is perceived as adorable is protected more?"

Question 8: What did you come up in your mind when you read "Cultural value of non-physical forms of punishment?"

Question 9: In your opinion, what would be reason of selecting the following two factors ("a child who is perceived as adorable is protected more" and cultural value of non-physical forms of punishment" as least agreed protected factors"?

Question 10: Some participants added the following factors as positive communication, safe home, influence of tradition, parents' knowledge, training session for them (parents), preschool. What do you think about these factors?

Question 11: What value or belief made them to nominate them as protective factor

Question 12: What was your first information source that introduced about child protective factors to you?

Appendix 5: Number of Questionnaire Participants

N	District Name	Title of Research Participants	Number of Participants as expected	Number of Participants approached
1	Bayangol	Social worker (SW)	23	18
		Welfare officer (WO)	23	22
2	Bayanzurkh	Social worker (SW)	28	15
		Welfare officer (WO)	28	26
3	Songino-khairkhan	Social worker (SW)	32	26
		Welfare officer (WO)	32	28
4	Khan-Uul	Welfare officer (WO)	14	14
		Social worker (SW)	16	15
5	Chingeltei	Welfare officer (WO)	19	16
		Social worker (SW)	19	19
6	Sunkhbaatar	Welfare officer (WO)	20	18
		Social worker (SW)	20	15
7	Baganuur	Welfare officer (WO)	4	4
9	Nalaikh	Welfare officer (WO)	7	6
8	Bagakhangai	Welfare officer (WO)	2	2
8	Baganuur	Social worker (SW)	5	5
7	Nalaikh	Social worker (SW)	7	7
9	Bagakhangai	Social worker (SW)	2	*
	TOTAL		301	256

* No joint meeting or training was conducted that involved two social workers from Bagakhangai during the period of data collection.

Appendix 6: The Ethical Approval of the Research

Flinders University and Southern Adelaide Local Health Network

SOCIAL AND BEHAVIOURAL RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Research Services Office, Union Building, Flinders University
GPO Box 2100, ADELAIDE SA 5001
Phone: (08) 8201 3116
Email: human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au

FINAL APPROVAL NOTICE

Principal Researcher:	Ms Bathishig Adilbish
Email:	adil0005@flinders.edu.au
Address:	T031, Deidre Jordan Village
Project Title:	Mongolian social workers' perceptions of factors that protect against child maltreatment

Project No.:	Final Approval Date:	Approval Expiry Date:
5452	1 December 2011	**15 December 2014**

The above proposed project has been **approved** on the basis of the information contained in the application, its attachments and the information subsequently provided.

If you have any outstanding permission letters (item D8), that may have been previously requested, please ensure that they are forwarded to the Committee as soon as possible. Additionally, for projects where approval has also been sought from another Human Research Ethics Committee (item G1), please be reminded that a copy of the ethics approval notice will need to be sent to the Committee on receipt.

In accordance with the undertaking you provided in your application for ethics approval for the project, please inform the Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee, giving reasons, if the research project is discontinued before the expected date of completion.

You are also required to report anything which might warrant review of ethical approval of the protocol. Such matters include:

- serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants;
- proposed changes in the protocol (modifications);
- any changes to the research team; and
- unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project.

To modify/amend a previously approved project please either mail or email a completed copy of the Modification Request Form to the Executive Officer, which is available for download from http://www.flinders.edu.au/research/info-for-researchers/ethics/committees/social-and-behavioural-research-ethics-committee/notification-of-committee-decision.cfm. Please ensure that any new or amended participant documents are attached to the modification request.

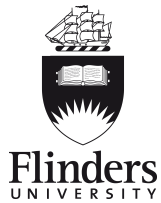
In order to comply with monitoring requirements of the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (March 2007)* an annual progress and/or final report must be submitted. A copy of the pro forma is available from http://www.flinders.edu.au/research/info-for-researchers/ethics/committees/social-behavioural.cfm.

Your first report is due on **1 December 2012** or on completion of the project, whichever is the earliest. *Please retain this notice for reference when completing annual progress or final reports.* If an extension of time is required, please email a request for an extension of time, to a date you specify, to human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au before the expiry date.

Andrea Mather
Executive Officer
Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee
2 December 2011

c.c Dr Carol Irizarry, carol.irizarry@flinders.edu.au
Dr Helen McLaren, helen.mclaren@flinders.edu.au

Appendix 7: Information Sheet



Information Sheet

Thank you for taking time to read this information.

My name is Batkhishig Adilbish. I am studying in social work research program at the Flinders University of South Australia, School of Social and Policy Studies. I am conducting research about social workers' perceptions of factors that protect children from maltreatment.

The purpose of my research is to study social workers' opinions on factors that protect children under 6 years of age against child maltreatment in connection with perceived social work skills and some demographics and educational characteristics of social workers. The participants of my research will be khoroo social workers and welfare officers in all khoroo of Ulaanbaatar capital city, Mongolia.

Research data will be collected by two stages including questionnaire and interview. The questionnaire form is enclosed with this information sheet. Interview questions will be driven from preliminary data analysis of the questionnaire. All the questions in both questionnaire and interview are aiming to understand common protective factors perceived by social workers. I believe all information you would provide in the questionnaire or interview will be valuable for my research and further improvement of our practice and policy for child well-being and development of social work profession.

Your participation in my research is totally voluntary. If you choose to take part

in my research, I will not be asking for names, localities or any information that may identify you in the questionnaire form.

If you are willing to participate in my research you will be requested first to fill *the questionnaire* with three sets of questions about your few demographic and educational data, your opinions about protective factors and social work practice skills. There is no right and wrong answer. Probably it will take 15-25 minutes to fill the questionnaire. After completion of the questionnaire you will be asked put back the filled questionnaire in the envelope with A4 size and drop it in a box prepared by the researcher. Once you have dropped the questionnaire into the box, it is not possible to withdraw your data; in other words, you will not able to get your questionnaire from the box since all questionnaires are not identifiable. If you feel you do not want to fill the questionnaire, it is totally acceptable. You just need to put unfilled questionnaire back into the envelope with size A4 and invitation form into the smaller envelope and drop the envelopes in the box prepared by the researcher.

If you are willing to be approached for *further interview*, you will be requested to provide your most preferred address on the invitation form prepared by the researcher. I will contact you by the address on the invitation to discuss with you about your availability and mutual agreed place and time to conduct the interview. The interview will be conducted in a private office at ether of the Mongolian State University of Education or Save the Children. During the interview you may freely decline to provide any particular information at any point. You may discontinue or withdraw your participation at any time of the interview, without prejudice. You may use a pseudonym if you wish.

I will also be asking your permission to audiotape our interview. The audiotaped record of our interview will be stored in a locked cabinet. As soon as practicable, I will transcribe and summarize the interview without including any identifying details. Then, the audiotape will be erased. The summarised transcripts will be stored securely for the duration of my study. No information that could identify you will be included in the research report or any other publications that may result from this study. Upon completion of the research study, the transcripts will be kept in a locked storeroom at the Flinders University of South Australia for

five years, in line with ethical requirements.

Many social workers find the talking about protective factors of children and social work practice skills helpful and educational as it can help clarify their understanding and improve their practice. As a qualified social worker and researcher I will encourage you to focus on your strengths, situations and factors that protect children against child maltreatment.

Hope you will consider participating in my research and helping me to complete this research project. If you would like to ask me some questions before you decide whether to participate, or have decided to be approached, please reach me through 9987-8556 or my email at adil0005@flinders.edu.au.

Thank you so much.

Sincerely,

Batkhishig Adilbish

Important Notes:

The researcher will not be asking you to name or location of your office; however, the researcher is a mandated reporter and will report any disclosures of suspected domestic violence and child abuse.

The researcher will take every care to remove responses from any identifying material as early as possible. Likewise individuals' responses will be kept confidential by the researcher and not be identified in the reporting of the research. However the researcher cannot guarantee the confidentiality or anonymity of material transferred by email or the internet.

This research forms part of a postgraduate PhD degree. The researcher's supervisor is Associate Professor Carol Irizarry, Social Work and Social Planning at School of Social and Policy Studies, Flinders University of South Australia, who may be contacted on 61(0)8 8201 2452 if you have any questions or concerns about this study. The Flinders University Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee has reviewed this study. For more information regarding ethical approval of the project the Executive Officer of the Committee can be contacted by telephone on 61(0)8 8201 3116, by fax on 61(0)8 8201 2035 or by email human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au.

Appendix 8: Letter of Introduction

Social Work and Social Planning

Social Sciences South (344)

GPO Box 2100
Adelaide SA 5001
Tel: +61 (0)8 8201 2452
carol.irizarry@flinders.edu.au

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

Dear Sir/Madam

This letter is to introduce Ms. Batkhishig Adilbish who is a doctoral student in the Discipline of Social Work at Flinders University. The student will introduce her student card, which carries a photograph, as proof of identity.

The student is undertaking research leading to the production of a PhD thesis in Social Science on the subject of Social Work and Child Protection.

The student would be most grateful if you would volunteer to assist in this project, by granting a written questionnaire and interview, which covers certain aspects of this topic. No more than 25 minutes on one occasion would be required for a questionnaire and no more than one hour would be required for an individual interview.

Be assured that any information provided will be treated in the strictest confidence and none of the participants will be individually identifiable in the resulting assignment, report or other publications. You are, of course, entirely free to discontinue your participation before your submission of the questionnaire and completion of the interview or to decline to answer particular questions.

The student intends to document the questionnaire and interview, and will seek your consent, on the attached form, and use the recording or a transcription in preparing the thesis, report or other publications, on condition that your name or identity is not revealed.

Any enquiries you may have concerning this project should be directed to me at the address given above or by telephone on +61 (0) 8 8201 2452, or by email (carol.irizarry@flinders.edu.au)

Thank you for your attention and assistance.

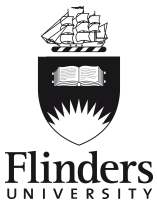
Yours sincerely

Dr. Carol Irizarry

Associate Professor
Head - Social Work and Social Planning
School of Social and Policy Studies
Flinders University

This research project has been approved by the Flinders University Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee (Project Number 5452). For more information regarding ethical approval of the project the Executive Officer of the Committee can be contacted by telephone on 8201 3116, by fax on 8201 2035 or by email human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au

Appendix 9: Consent Form for Participation in Research



CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH

(by Audiotaped Interview)

I ….....

being over the age of 18 years hereby consent to participate as requested in the interview for the research project on Mongolian social workers' perceptions of factors that protect preschool age children against child maltreatment.

I have read the information provided.

Details of procedures and any risks have been explained to my satisfaction.

I agree to audio recording of my information and participation.

I am aware that I should retain a copy of the Information Sheet and Consent Form for future reference

I understand that:

I may not directly benefit from taking part in this research.

I am free to withdraw from the project at any time of the interview and am free to decline to answer particular questions.

While the information gained in this study will be published as explained, I will not be identified, and individual information will remain confidential.

Whether I participate or not, or withdraw after participating, will have no effect on my employment results gained.

I will be audio recorded during the interview

I may ask that the recording be stopped at any time, and that I may withdraw at any time from the session without disadvantage.

I understand that the interviewer is bound by mandatory reporting laws regarding domestic violence and child abuse and understand what her obligations are.

I understand that the audiotape will be stored in a locked cabinet and that only the researcher will have access to the audio recording.

Participant's signature……Date……...

I certify that I have explained the study to the volunteer and consider that she/he understands what is involved and freely consents to participation.

Researcher's name…….…….....

Researcher's signature……..Date…….

Appendix 10: Agreement with Protective Factors by Frequency of Perceived Attitude of the Research Participants

No	Variables	N	Median	IQR	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	Easy temperament of child	245	4	1	18 (7.3%)	40 (16.3%)	49 (20%)	129 (52.7%)	9 (3.7%)
2	Gender	236	4	2	13 (5.5%	57 (24.2%)	16 (6.8%)	122 (51.7%)	28 (11.9%)
3	Child who is perceived as affectionate	242	2	2	49 (20.2%)	85(35.1%)	35 (15%)	62 (25.6%)	11 (4.5%)
4	Child who has competent behaviour	245	3	2	15 (6.1%)	72(29.4%)	53 (22%)	98 (40%)	7 (2.9%)
5	Parents or caregivers with adequate knowledge of child development	243	4	0	0	13 (5.3%)	33 (13.6%)	155 (63.8%)	42 (17.3%)
6	Parents or caregivers with adequate developmental expectations of the child	243	4	1	3 (1.2%)	17 (7%)	43 (17.7%)	148 (60.9%)	32 (13.2%)
7	Parents or caregivers who experienced a secure attachment with their own caregiver	239	4	0	1 (0.4%)	8 (3.3%)	39 (16.3%)	142 (59.4%)	49 (20.5%)
8	Maternal warmth	243	4	1	1 (0.4%)	7 (2.9%)	10 (4.1%)	141 (58%)	84 (34.6%)
9	Happy relationship of parents	241	4	1	1 (0.4%)	5 (2.1%)	7 (2.9%)	122 (50.6%)	106 (44%)
10	Parents or caregivers with structured, consistent routine	239	4	1	4 (1.7%)	32 (13.4%)	58 (24.3%)	114 (47.7%)	31 (13%)

11	Quality of child rearing conditions	237	4	1	2 (0.8%)	8 (3.4%)	13 (5.5%)	118 (49.8%)	96 (40.5%)
12	Supportive significant other in the home	237	4	1	2 (0.8%)	31 (13.1%)	37 (15.6%)	128 (54%)	39 (16.5%)
13	Adequate formal support e.g. social service and assistance, and social policy	238	4	1	4 (1.7%)	32 (13.4%)	34 (14.3%)	137 (57.6%)	31 (13%)
14	Accessible childcare and kinder garden in the community	244	4	1	11 (4.5%)	25 (10.2%)	12 (4.9%)	109 (44.7%)	87 (35.7%)
15	Adequate informal social support., e.g., relatives, friends and neighbours	242	4	1	3 (1.2%)	26 (10.7%)	42 (17.4%)	132 (54.5%)	39 (16.1%)
16	Living in a non-violent community	237	4	1	3 (1.3%)	31 (13.1%)	20 (8.4%)	117 (49.4%)	66 (27.8%)
17	Living in a resourceful community e.g., socioeconomic status of residents is well	241	4	1	4 (1.7%)	51 (21.2%)	43 (17.8%)	97 (40.2%)	46 (19.1%)
18	Connection of parents or caregivers with the community	243	4	0	4 (1.6%)	21 (8.6%)	34 (14%)	142 (58.4%)	42 (17.3%)
19	Cultural value of promoting nonphysical forms of punishment	233	4	2	15 (6.4%)	50 (21.5%)	37 (15.9%)	101 (43.3%)	30 (12.9%)
20	Cultural value of protecting children	240	4	1	1 (0.4%)	7 (2.9%)	15 (6.3%)	146 (60.8%)	71 (29.6%)

Appendix 11: Results of the Normal Distribution Test on PF Items

No	Protective factor scale items	Mean	Median	Skewness	Kurtosis	Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test of Normality		
						Statistics	df	Sig
1	Easy temperament of child, child related factor	3.29	4.00	-.813	-.315	.319	245	.000
2	Gender, child related factor	3.40	4	-0.577	.827	.336	236	.000
3	Child who is perceived as affectionate	2.59	2.00	.279	-1.103	.243	242	.000
4	Child who has competent behaviour	3.04	3.00	-.265	-1.037	.253	245	.000
5	Parents or caregivers with adequate knowledge of child development	3.93	2.00	.279	-1.103	.349	243	.000
6	Parents or caregivers with adequate developmental expectations of the child	3.78	4.00	-.948	1.177	.349	243	.000
7	Parents or caregivers who experienced a secure attachment with their own caregiver	3.96	4.00	-.708	1.177	.320	239	.000

8	Maternal warmth	4.23	4.00	-1.167	2.995	.294	243	.000
9	Happy relationship of parents	4.36	4.00	-1.305	3.419	.267	241	.000
10	Parents or caregivers with structured, consistent routine	3.57	4.00	-.527	-.188	.267	241	.000
11	Quality of child rearing conditions	4.26	4.00	-1.352	2.798	.274	237	.000
12	Supportive significant other in the home	3.72	4.00	-.704	-.019	.324	237	.000
13	Adequate formal support e.g., social service and assistance, and social policy	3.67	4.00	-.841	.251	.346	238	.000
14	Accessible childcare and kinder garden in the community	3.97	4.00	-1.201	.718	.315	244	.000
15	Adequate informal social support e.g., relatives, friends and neighbours	3.74	4.00	-.763	.316	.322	242	.000
16	Living in a non-violent community	3.89	4.00	-.901	.141	.314	237	.000
17	Living in a resourceful community e.g., socioeconomic status of residents is well	3.54	4.00	-.356	-.902	.259	241	.000
18	Connection of parents or caregivers with the community	3.81	4.00	-.979	1.024	.259	241	.000
19	Cultural value of promoting nonphysical forms of punishment	3.35	4.00	-.451	-.799	.278	233	.000
20	Cultural value of protecting children	4.16	4.00	-1.050	2.644	.312	240	.000