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PARENTS' PERSONALITY AND PARENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIP AS A PREDICTOR OF SOCIAL COMPETENCE IN YOUNG CHILDREN

By

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Research Report

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Supervisor: Dr. E. C. Price

2013

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this research report is a result of my original and unaided work, and that to the best of my knowledge have recognised all sources that were used in the course of this research. This thesis has been submitted in partial fulfilment of the degree, Master of Arts (Clinical Psychology), at the University of the Witwatersrand, and has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination at this or any other university.

Signed: _____

Levandri Pillay

Date: 13 November 2013

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ABSTRACT

Early childhood represents a critical period for the development of social skills and abilities that enhance social competence. One of the main aspects that contribute to this development is the parent-child relationship. The purpose of this study is to explore this area of the parent-child relationship by focusing on parenting personality and parents' perceptions. The aim of this study was to investigate whether parents' personality could influence the parent-child relationship and consequently predict social competence in young children. Parents' personality related to the five personality dimensions as delineated by the Five Factor Model. Parents' perceptions focused on Attachment, Discipline Practices, Involvement, Parenting Confidence, and Relational Frustration. The study consisted of 62 parents of children between the ages of three and six years old. Participants were asked to fill out three questionnaires, the Parenting Relationship Questionnaire for Pre-schoolers (PRQ-P), the Neuroticism Extraversion Openness-Five Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI), and the Social Competence Scale (SCS). The five personality dimensions were found to be significantly correlated with parenting perceptions of the parent-child relationship and the preschool child's social competence. For example Neuroticism, Extraversion, Agreeableness and Conscientiousness were significantly related to Parenting Confidence, however only Neuroticism and Agreeableness correlated significantly with social competence in children. More specifically, Neuroticism was negatively related to Emotional Regulation and Agreeableness was positively related to Prosocial Behaviour. In addition to this regression analyses showed that the parent-child relationship, personality, and social competence were strongly mediated especially with regards to Neuroticism, Parenting Confidence as well as Relational Frustration and Emotional Regulation. Implications of the findings and recommendations for future research were discussed.

Key Words: Social competence, parents' personality, parent-child relationship, young children.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction

The social and emotional development of a young child at a preschool-age influences many attributes of his or her life, and parenting plays a role in how each child acquires developmentally appropriate social and emotional skills (Berg, 2011; Mulder, 2008). Parents are the first individuals with whom children create a meaningful relationship. It is this connection that has intrigued researchers into exploring the influence it has on various aspects of a child's developmental functioning.

This study aimed to explore the parents' perceptions of the parent-child relationship as a factor that may be related to the child's social competence in the pre-school years. The term 'parents' perceptions' in this study, referred to self-reported parenting confidence, attachment, parental involvement, discipline practices and relational frustration. All these aspects were measured quantitatively using the objective Parenting Relationship Questionnaire (PRQ) (Kamphaus & Reynolds, 2006). In addition to this, parents' personality types were considered in order to establish a more concrete understanding of how various parental characteristics may influence the parents' account of the parent-child relationship, and perhaps to also shed some light into how personality characteristics impact on the parent-child relationship. Parents' personality was measured using the Neuroticism Extraversion Openness - Five Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI) (McCrae & Costa, 2004), which measures five specific personality traits: Neuroticism, Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, and Openness to Experience (McCrae & Allik, 2002).

Before introducing this study further, it is first necessary to define what is meant by the terms 'social competence', 'social skills', and 'parent-child relationship'. Social competence may be described as "*the ability to integrate thinking, feeling and behaving to achieve interpersonal goals and social outcomes*" (MacKay & Keyes, 2002 cited in Kostelnik et al., 2006, p.2). This specific aspect of the child's character will be measured using the Social Competence Scale (SCS) (CPPRG, 1995), and focuses on two main characteristics of social competence namely

Prosocial Behaviour and Emotional Regulation. Social skills can be seen as the ability to communicate and interact with others in society without undue conflict or disharmony (Shaffer, 2005). There are five main clusters of social skills behaviour: cooperation; assertion; responsibility; empathy; and self-control, all of which help maintain social competence (Denham, 2006). It is necessary to mention here that for the purposes of this study *social skills* and *social competence* will be used interchangeably. The parent-child relationship is a unique one and it differs for every parent and child pair. This complex relationship is dependent on a variety of aspects, including behaviours, feelings, expectations, child's characteristics, and parent's characteristics, to name a few (Maccoby & Martin, 1983).

1.2. Rationale

Human beings are essentially social beings and are dependent upon various social networks throughout a lifetime. Socially competent children possess the ability to develop various meaningful relationships which can greatly benefit other areas of development such as emotional and cognitive development (Shaffer & Kipp, 2007) and overall wellbeing (Barblett & Maloney, 2010). Thus, social competence is thought to be an important protective factor for young children, buffering them from stressors and helping to prevent serious emotional and behaviour problems later in life (Anthony et al., 2005). Despite the large amounts of research and theories that have been used to conceptualise and understand the importance of social competence in young children, there are certain aspects of the parent-child relationship that still require further examination.

Parenting plays a very important role in the early social development of young children (Berg, 2011; Darling, 1999; Swick & Hassel, 1990). It does, therefore, follow that how parents view their children and how they are able to conceptualise their relationship, may have a bearing on how they respond to and parent their child (Urman, 2012). Parents' personality is also an important characteristic to consider when exploring parents' conceptualisations of the relationship they have with their children. This is because personality traits influence the choice of parental behaviours (Karreman, van Tuijl, van Aken & Dekovic, 2007) and may therefore

moderate the relationship between parents' perceptions of the parent-child relationship and child social competence.

This study will focus on preschool children between the ages of three and six years old as these are critical ages for the development of positive styles of peer social relations (Doherty, 1997). Also, according to Erikson's theory of psychosocial development, it is at this age that young children begin to explore and play with others (Shaffer & Kipp, 2007). This is the beginnings of future social development.

By exploring the complex relationship between parents' personalities, how parents experience the parent-child relationship and the child's social competence, this study aims to elucidate some factors in the parent-child relationship that may be associated with poorer social outcomes in children, with the ultimate aim to providing some reflections for further research and practice. Such findings could potentially inform preventative interventions for children deemed at risk of future social, emotional and behavioural difficulties as these are often seen as a function of poor social competence during early childhood (Berg, 2011). It is important to mention that this study used a self-report, standardized and quantitative measure to elucidate the parents' perceptions of the parent-child relationship. The limitation, therefore, is that it is the parents' perceptions that are used and not teacher reports or objectively observed interactions that allow for inferences to be made about the nature of that dyadic relationship. This will be discussed in more detail later.

1.3. Aims

This study aims to explore various aspects of parenting and the parent-child relationship as they may influence a pre-school aged child's level of social competence and ultimately development. The parenting aspects that will be looked at vary from parent confidence; discipline practices; and how parents describe their relationship with their children. Other factors such as the parents' attachment (affective, cognitive and behavioural relationship), involvement (parents knowing about their children's daily activities) with their children and parents' personality will also be explored. The stress the parent experiences relating to the behaviour and affect of the child (relational frustration) may also bring to light aspects that may have an effect on the parent-child

relationship. These are hypothesized to potentially affect how a child integrates socially at pre-school, with ultimate effects on social competence. Moreover an exploration of how parent-child relationship aspects mediate the relationship between parents' personality types and social competence in the child may reveal valuable information in understanding the conceptions and effects of the parent-child relationship.

1.4. Research Questions

Given the explorative nature of this area of study, the proposed research will be guided by the following research questions.

- How is parental personality related to perceptions of the parent-child relationship? Specifically, which domains of parenting personality are related to which aspects of the parent-child relationship and what is the nature of those relations?
- How are parental reports of the parent-child relationship, specifically focusing on attachment (affective, cognitive and behavioural relationship), involvement (parents knowing about their children's daily activities), parenting confidence, discipline practices and relational frustrations, related to the child's social competence?

In addition to the above research questions, a mediation analysis will be tested to explore whether the relation between parents' personality and children's social competence could be mediated by the nature of the parent-child relationship.

CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Social Competence

Social competence is an elusive concept that does not have a singular definition. However, it is agreed that social competence consists of numerous facets which include social cognition, social assertion, frequency of interaction, positive self-concept, social effectiveness and popularity with peers (Dodge, 1985). There are nonetheless two definitions that stand out, these define social competence as the "*attainment of relevant social goals in specified social contexts, using appropriate means resulting in positive developmental outcomes*" (Ford, 1982, p.324), or as "*the ability to achieve personal goals in social interactions while simultaneously maintaining positive relationships with others over time and across situations*" (Rubin & Rose-Krasnor, 1992, p.285).

Defining social competence has been a challenge for literature for many years, and although there are numerous characteristics that demonstrate social competence which are not age, situation, nor skill specific (Lee, 2006), it is useful and more practical to define it by focusing on a specific age group. This is due to the fact that there are hallmarks of social competence that are portrayed at different stages of development (Waters & Sroufe, 1983). This study focuses on young children between the ages of three and six years old, thus for the purposes of this study the following descriptions of social competence are most appropriate as they encompass aspects that are essential in preschool-aged children. Demonstrating social competence requires that a child has dexterity in achieving successful outcomes from interacting with others (Spence & Donovan, 1998). Bierman and Welsh (2000) alternatively describe social competence as an executive construct that reflects the child's competency in combining behavioural, cognitive and affective skills in order to easily adapt to diverse social contexts and demands. A socially competent preschool child should be able to demonstrate empathy and positive affect (Sroufe, 1983), while also exhibiting the ability to initiate interactions with peers, respond contingently to the social gestures of others, and abstain from overtly expressing negative behaviours (Lieberman, 1977).

Two fundamental facets of social competence that will be considered in this study are those of prosocial behaviour and emotional regulation. Prosocial behaviours are a category of voluntary

actions directed to other people's benefit (Stefan & Miclea, 2010), which includes having empathic concern for others' wellbeing, and is deemed by society as constructive and beneficial (Eisenberg & Mussen, 1989). At a young age, prosocial behaviours include sharing of toys, asking for and providing help, and being able to wait for your turn during play interactions. Emotional regulation on the other hand refers to one's ability to manage negative emotions and personal feelings in order to avoid hurting the feelings of others. This is achieved by coping with unpleasant emotional arousals while being proficient at distinguishing between those emotions that are appropriate for expression and those which should be suppressed (Eisenberg & Mussen, 1989). Studies suggest that children who are less prone to venting negative emotions, in the form of crying or aggressively lashing out, were perceived by maternal figures and teachers as more socially competent (Denham et al., 2003).

Large bodies of research have suggested that social and emotional competence in young children are important factors for predicting school readiness, future academic performance, higher self-esteem, and success in interactions with peers and adults (Barblett & Maloney, 2010; Berg, 2011; Denham, 2006; Halberstadt, Denham & Dunsmore, 2001; Mulder, 2008; Patrick, Yoon & Murphy, 1995). In addition to this, the development of social competence in young children has been suggestively associated with many positive outcomes in adulthood, such as higher academic success, and a more positive outlook on life (Mulder, 2008). Studies have also implied that children who lack in social competence are at a greater risk for behavioural problems as evidenced in learning difficulties, academic underachievement, adjustment problems, conduct problems, and delinquent behaviour (Fantuzzo & McWayne, 2002; Hartup & Moore, 1990). There are many factors that contribute to the overall development of social competence and, over time, result in children possibly growing into socially competent individuals.

Generally children with low levels of social competence prefer to interact mostly with adults, this may be caused by the fact that when there are interactions between an adult and a child, the adult tends to initiate and maintain the social interaction (Lee, 2006). However, it is only with peer interactions that children are able to experiment with and practice social strategies that they have learnt from their home environment. Although positive social interactions with teachers are necessary and an important aspect of social competence, other social connections such as peer

relationships are equally important, as peer acceptance is an integral part of further developing social skills in preschool (Denham et al., 2003). There have been strong associations depicted between children's peer status and social competence, in particular, Warden and MacKinnon (2003) implied that obedience of social rules, friendliness and prosocial behaviours made children more socially competent and attractive to peers.

Positive peer relationships in pre-school are likely to encourage positive relationships throughout a young child's schooling career. Negative relationships, on the other hand, could create a foundation for later academic difficulties, emotional distress and rejection or neglect by later school peers (Patrick, Yoon & Murphy, 1995). Also, longitudinal research provides evidence that links children with a lack of social skills, in early childhood, to behavioural and academic problems later in life (Lee, 2006). Play activities with peers during early childhood possibly create primary contexts for establishing and maintaining positive interactions with others as well as enhance the acquisition of social competencies (Lee, 2006). For this reason, it is not uncommon to find that many preschools and crèches tend to incorporate curricula that emphasise cognitive language, social-emotional, and academic skills which require children to work together to complete tasks.

Patrick, Yoon and Murphy (1995) conducted a 4-year longitudinal study to determine how social competence influences adjustment to school, focusing on the transition from preschool to grade-school. They suggested that social competence at school makes an important contribution to children's school adjustment, independent of academic competence and IQ. At the outset Patrick, Yoon and Murphy predicted that "*social competence will be an important independent contributor to children's school adjustment*" (1995, p.5). The results implied that for pre-schoolers in particular, social competence was just as important for successful school adjustment as their academic competence. The importance of social competence subsided as children adapted to grade-school, and as they progressed through grade-school academic competence became more prominent for success (Patrick, Yoon & Murphy, 1995). Thus it is important to examine predictors of social competence in the preschool years as research seems to suggest that it may be an important predictor of better outcomes in the later school years.

In a similar area of interest Welsh, Parke, Widaman and O'Neil (2001) pioneered a longitudinal study to determine if there is a link between a child's social and academic competencies. This study spanned a three-year period whereby 163 children were followed from the end of preschool to third grade. Findings throughout the three years consistently indicated that there was a reciprocal relationship between social and academic competence (Welsh et al., 2001). In other words social competence greatly influenced academic competence and the same held true for the reverse relationship, as children who were academically competent also demonstrated more socially competent behaviour.

Wight and Chapparo (2008) conducted a pilot study to explore the relations between social competence and learning difficulties in young boys, based on teachers' perceptions. Although the main focus of this study was to explore the importance of social competence in the classroom, they also looked at other aspects in a child's life where social competence is important. These included peer status, aggression, and ability to deal with emotions (Wight & Chapparo, 2008). The results suggested that the young boys who had learning difficulties showed poorer levels of social competence when compared to young boys who had no difficulties with learning. These young boys also demonstrated significant difficulty with making and maintaining friendships, as well as a marked increase in levels of aggression, while also exhibiting problems in dealing with stressful feelings (Wight & Chapparo, 2008).

Overall these studies have emphasised the importance of social competence in young children. However it must not be ignored that social competence most likely begins with early interactions with caregivers, as these are the first relationships that children are exposed to. According to Bowlby's Attachment Theory, children begin to develop a cognitive model of relationships with others based on interactions with early caregivers (Bowlby, 1969). Positive interactions with caregivers provide the infant with the foundation for forming other positive and supportive relationships in later life (Shaffer & Kipp, 2007). In other words, children use early experiences with their parents and other family to form working models of what social relationships should look like.

2.2. Theoretical Underpinnings of Social Competence

Many developmental theorists, such as Freud, Erikson, Bandura, and Bronfenbrenner (cited in Shaffer & Kipp, 2007) have emphasised the importance of developing positive representations of self, emotional knowledge, and regulatory abilities, all of which can be cultivated in children through the experiences of healthy and positive early relationships. Freud's psychosexual stage of three to six years old is referred to as the *phallic stage* of development, whereby children begin to internalise the characteristics and moral standards of their same-sex parent (Freud, 1933). This suggests that children begin to accept the behaviours of their same sex parent and consequently adopt these attributes. During the same age group, Erikson's psychosocial stage is known as the *initiative versus guilt stage* where children attempt to act grown up and will try to accept responsibility, while learning to retain a sense of initiative and yet learn not to impinge on the rights, privileges, or goals of others, relying on the family unit to attain these social skills (Erikson, 1963). At this stage children begin to act independently but at the same time are aware of guilty feelings when they violate the rights of others. This guilt, along with family assistance, guides the young child towards empathy and more acceptable social behaviour.

Albert Bandura's social learning theory states that learning from others is one of the main characteristics of developing social skills (Bandura, 1977). More specifically, Bandura's social learning theory has implied that children's learning is most influenced through imitation, reinforcement, and modelling (Bandura, 1977). Children learn thorough observation, by attending to, encoding and retaining the behaviours displayed by their social models, but at the same time becoming aware that their actions have an influence on their environment and interactions with others (Bandura, 1977). Furthermore if a child's behaviour is reinforced through acceptance from parents, teachers and peers, then it is more likely that the child will repeat that behaviour (Bandura, 1977). Considering that social competence represents itself as a behaviour, it is likely that it will be learned and maintained through observing models that display socially acceptable conduct. This provides the child with an example of social skills that could be used in various contexts.

Bronfenbrenner (1977) suggests that children face a set of stage-relevant tasks that are influenced through their interactions with networks of family, peers, and community systems

(Lee, 2006). This ecological theory emphasises the fact that children develop and learn from a variety of contexts ranging from family, friends and peers, to neighbours and the greater community. Thus it is also necessary to consider the influence that a community may play in a child's development of social competence as it is evident that the numerous interactions between the child and each of their ecological systems plays an important role in their overall social development.

2.3. Social Competence and Culture

South Africa is a country rich in diverse cultures and values and as a result there are various social norms and acceptable behaviours that could render a child socially competent or not, but before embarking on a discussion of culture and society it is first necessary to define socialisation as it is a core concept in understanding social competence with regards to the greater community. Socialisation is the process whereby a child learns the language, habits, values, manners and social norms of a community or group in order to become a member of that social group (White, 1977). Parents are possibly the most important agents of socialisation, but peers, teachers, extended families and neighbours also play an integral role in helping a young child conform to the accepted standards and norms of the community (Eisenberg & Fabes, 1998).

It cannot be ignored that certain aspects of social competence are greatly influenced by the culture in which a child is raised, making cultural knowledge an essential factor when exploring social competence (Rogoff, 2003; Rose-Krasnor, 1997; Rubin, Bukowski & Parker, 1998). Culture can be defined as "*the set of attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviours shared by a group of people, communicated from one generation to the next*" (Matsumoto, 1997, p.5). Due to the differences in various cultures, behaviours that may be appropriate in one culture may be unacceptable in another (Whiting & Child, 1953).

Vygostky's sociocultural theory informs the idea that a young child's development is socially mediated and encouraged through interactions with competent others (Vygotsky, 1987). This theory centres on the notion that "*every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level*" (Vygotsky, 1978, p.57), which

alludes to the fact that a child can only learn so much on their own, at some point it is necessary to acquire external information from competent others which can be internalised and understood on an intrapsychic level (Bruner, 1987). Therefore it is apparent that the community and culture can have an impact on the overall development of the child, which includes the development of culturally specific social behaviours.

An important notion in the cultural ethos of South African society is that of *Ubuntu*. This one word embodies a rich collectivist culture that may contribute to the social competence abilities in children as they develop. *Ubuntu* is an underlying social philosophical concept in African culture (Nussbaum, 2003) and it can be defined as "*the capacity in African culture to express compassion, reciprocity, dignity, harmony, and humanity*" (Nussbaum, 2003, p. 2). This definition suggests that South Africa can be viewed as a collectivist society which focuses on the needs of others before considering the needs of the individual.

In collectivist cultures, such as Japan, China, and India, social identity, group interest, and passive behaviours are usually more valued and accepted by peers, whereas individual identity, personal interest, and expansive behaviours are more valued in individualistic cultures, such as the United States, Canada, Australia, and Italy (Kaiser & Rasminsky, 2003; Klein & Chen, 2001; Rogoff, 2003). This not only elucidates the culturally sensitive nature of social competence but also the necessity of taking into account cultural influences when attempting to understand social competence.

2.4. Parenting and Parents' Perceptions

Parenting can be a difficult aspect to examine as there are multiple facets to it, and parental behaviours are likely to be greatly influenced by parental traits, child characteristics, and the broader social context (Paunonen, 2003). As a result parents' personality and parents' perceptions have sparked interest in the study of the parenting role. Mowder (2005) established the Parent Development Theory (PDT) which is a relatively new theory that emphasises the fact that parents have perceptions of the role they play in parenting and these perceptions

subsequently influences the way in which they parent their children. Additionally, these perceptions of parenting are coloured by the parents' personalities (Urman, 2012).

According to the PDT, parenting is influenced by parents' own historical experiences, their own personal growth and development as well as their experiences of parenting their own children (Mowder, 1993). Furthermore, Mowder (2005) suggests that by understanding and clearly delineating parenting behaviours, it is possible to isolate and measure perceptions of said behaviours. Parenting behaviours such as bonding, discipline, warmth, responsiveness, and overall consideration for a child's wellbeing are all possibly persuaded by numerous factors which include, but are not limited to, parents' personalities, the child's temperament, socioeconomic status of parents, culture, parents' social networks, and marital relations (Belsky & Barends, 2002; Mowder, 2005).

Although the discussion has focused on parents' perceptions of their parenting role, it is assumed that these perceptions permeate through to how parents perceive their relationships with their children. This assumption follows from the notion that parenting as a behaviour is likely to be persuaded by the type of relationship a parent has with their child (Belsky & Barends, 2002) and in perceiving the role they play, a parent perhaps inadvertently perceives some aspect of their parent-child interactions. Parent perceptions of their children are very important as they play an integral role in how parents interact and relate to their children (Aring & Renk, 2010). For example, parents who expect negative behaviour from their children tend to react negatively towards their children, even in the absence of negativity (Bugental & Shennum, 1984).

Schema theory may be useful in understanding parents' perceptions of the parent-child relationship and the consequent interactions between parent and child. Schema theory is rooted in the organisation of thought patterns which are structured on preconceived ideas thereby influencing the absorption and processing of new information (Anderson, 1977). When considering parenting behaviours and perceptions, parents may possibly use relational schemas based on their relationship patterns with their children to infer their children's behaviour (Baldwin, 1992). In other words, if parents perceive positive relationships with their children, it is likely that they will react more positively to them and their children will perhaps in turn

portray more positive behaviours. Overall studies have suggested that negative parent perceptions of their children have been linked with negative parenting behaviours and retaliatory behaviours from children (Aring & Renk, 2010).

In an older study, Swick and Hassel (1990) relied on reported parent and teacher perceptions to explore the relationship between parental efficacy (specifically focussing on locus of control and interpersonal support) and social competence in young children. They examined 62 preschool children between the ages of 2 and 5 years old. There were numerous research questions explored, but for the purpose of this study only three will be considered. These are: is there a relationship between parental locus of control and the parents' assessment of the child's level of social competence; is there a relationship between parental interpersonal support and the parents' assessment of the child's level of social competence; and is there a relationship between the parents' assessment of the child's level of social competence and the teacher's assessment of the child's level of development and level of social competence (Swick & Hassel, 1990). They suggested that both parental locus of control and interpersonal support are very influential in the child's development of social competence and were significant at the .05 p-level. The same level of significance was true for a correlation between parents' and teachers' ratings of the children suggesting that parental reports of social competence were strongly, and positively, correlated with teacher reports of social competence (Swick & Hassel, 1990). The results obtained from this study implied that parents with an external locus of control tended to view their children in a more hostile and negative manner, with this externality manifesting itself in the child's social behaviour. Also, parents with a lack in social and interpersonal support could possibly have a negative impact on the views they have of their children, as this could possibly permeate into the well-being of the family as a whole (Swick & Hassel, 1990). This study also reported that a child's development of social competence is inextricably linked with various aspects of the parent-child relationship and possibly rooted in other systemic considerations.

Before conducting a research exploration of parental reports of children's social behaviour by focusing on peer play, language competence and problem behaviour, Mendez and Fogle (2002) sought to investigate whether parents' reports coincided with teachers' reports of children's social competence. They asked parents and teachers to complete a rating instrument that assessed

children's ability to demonstrate positive behaviours in peer relationships. Results from Mendez and Fogle's (2002) study corresponded with the results achieved in an earlier study by Fantuzzo, Mendez and Tighe (1998) which suggested that parents' reports were congruent with teachers' reports of children's social conduct. This study, along with others, supports the validity and importance of making use of parental assessments when considering children's social behaviours (Diamond & Squires, 1993).

2.5. Parenting and the Parent-Child Relationship

Parent-child relationships have gained a lot of attention in previous literature as it is the first real relationship a child experiences. Hartup (1985) explained that parent-child relationships serve at least three important functions. They represent a basic framework from which various competencies can develop; they provide emotional and cognitive resources that encourage the child to explore their social world; and it is the relationship upon which all other relationships are based. The Parenting-Relationship Questionnaire developed by Kamphaus and Reynolds (2006) to capture a parents' perspective of the parent-young-child relationship focuses on five main parenting behaviours, namely Attachment, Discipline Practices, Involvement, Parenting Confidence, and Relational Frustration.

According to John Bowlby's (1969) theory of attachment, an infant's bond to its mother has great implications for its development of social, psychological, emotional and cognitive wellbeing. Of utmost importance in this relationship are the caregiver's reactions and responses to the young child as well as the caregiver's ability to provide the child with a comforting and secure environment from which to learn from. A young child will feel safe to explore and interact with others if they can be certain that there is a safe place to return to if they are distressed (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters & Wall, 1978). Longitudinal studies demonstrate that establishing secure primary attachments possibly result in more favourable developmental outcomes, such as displaying positive emotions and being more attractive to toddlers as playmates. Conversely, children with primary attachments that are disorganised or disoriented are at risk of becoming hostile and aggressive pre-schoolers and more likely to be rejected by peers, further emphasising that early attachments have an influence on a child's social abilities

later in life (Booth, Rose-Krasnor & Rubin, 1991). These findings are also reported in a study conducted by Rose-Krasnor, Rubin, Booth and Coplin (1996) where it was suggested that securely attached four year old children were found to be more socially engaged than insecurely attached children, while Booth, Rose-Krasnor, and Rubin (1991) implied that insecurely attached four year olds were more aggressive and tended to demonstrate higher levels of negative affect in social interactions compared to securely attached children. Furthermore Elicker, Englund and Sroufe (1992) suggested that preschool children who were securely attached displayed higher levels of social competence, self-esteem and empathy. A follow-up study of the same pre-schoolers reported that these securely attached children had better friend relationships, closer and more trusting relationships with adults, and healthier social skills as adolescents (Shulman, Elicker & Sroufe, 1994).

Discipline practices are not always considered to be a negative parenting characteristic. The PRQ describes Discipline as parents' inclinations towards enforcing rule abiding demeanours in their children by reacting consistently and appropriately to their child's misbehaviours, this is indicative of parents who are not overly permissive or uninvolved in their children's daily activities (Kamphaus & Reynolds, 2006). Discipline is a parenting behaviour that could possibly be regarded as harsh and negative or perhaps constructive and positive. If discipline is used in an appropriate manner and as a teaching tool, then it can probably provide the child with a firm and consistent appreciation for rules, both at home and in society.

Parenting is a challenging task and even individuals who have adequate parenting skills could struggle and lack confidence in their abilities to be a good parent if they perceive their relationship with their child to be strained (Belsky & Barends, 2002). This lack in confidence can possibly be further exacerbated by a child that requires extra attention due to limitations in physical, emotional or cognitive abilities, thus adding to a parent's feeling of inadequacy (Belsky & Barends, 2002). Parenting Confidence in the PRQ assesses parents' feelings of comfort, control, and confidence when actively involved with their children (Kamphaus & Reynolds, 2006).

Studies suggest that parents who are neglectful and uninvolved in their children's lives tend to have children who lack social responsibility and social assertiveness (Chen, Liu & Li, 2000). Furthermore it was ascertained that childhood depression was strongly related to parental rejection (McLeod, Wood & Weisz, 2007). Parental involvement describes parents who are healthily engaged in their children's lives and interact with them on a daily basis by participating in mutual activities. They are also possibly more accessible to their children by being available and easily approachable, while at the same time assuming responsibility for the welfare of their child (Lamb, Pleck, Charnov & Levine, 1987). Relational Frustration could possibly be related to stress and distress in the parent-child interaction dynamics (Kamphaus & Reynolds, 2006) which could likely add to negative parent-child relationships.

2.6. Parental Factors and Preschoolers' Social Competence

Everyday interactions with their parents are fundamental in developing children's social skills (Cohn, Patterson & Christopoulous, 1991; Parke & Ladd, 1992) this is further confirmed by the discussion of the developmental theories above. There are many aspects of the parent-child relationship with regards to social competence in children that have been explored, these vary in the range of parental stressors (Anthony et al., 2005); parental responsiveness and nurturance (Davidov & Grusec, 2006; Maccoby & Martin, 1983); parental affect and control (McDowell & Parke, 2005); parenting styles (Berg, 2011; Darling, 1999); and parents' social skills (Okumura & Usui, 2010).

Anthony (2005) and colleagues conducted a study to examine whether parenting stress in the home context was related to the children's behaviour while in preschool. The study explained that parents who view their children as moody, demanding, and who characterize their interactions with their children as 'difficult' and 'lacking in pleasure and positive reinforcement' report elevated levels of stress (Anthony et al., 2005). In the study, Anthony (2005) and colleagues focused on children, their parents as well as their teachers, from two types of preschool programmes. They assessed 78 children from private day care centres and 229 children from Head Start, which is a site that is designed to primarily serve families living in poverty and consists almost entirely of low income, African-American families (Anthony et al., 2005).

Parenting behaviour was surveyed by using the Parenting Behaviour Checklist (PBC), which was developed to assess parenting behaviours and expectations, rather than their attitudes or beliefs (Anthony et al., 2005). They made use of the Parenting Stress Index-Short Form (PSI-SF) to gauge parents' levels of stress. The children's teachers were required to fill out the Social Competence and Behaviour Evaluation form in order to examine social competence and behavioural/emotional adjustment of the preschool children by tapping overall emotional expression, social interactions with peers, and interactions with teachers (Anthony et al., 2005). There were three main hypotheses that were tested in this study, (1) parenting stress is related to parenting behaviour; (2) parenting behaviour is related to social competence and behaviour problems in children; and (3) Parenting behaviour will mediate the relationship between parenting stress and child behaviour (Anthony et al., 2005). Results suggested that parenting stress was a significant correlate of parenting practices, however there was variation in the relationship between parenting stress and parenting practices depending on the particular aspect of stress and behaviour considered. This may be due to the fact that that a parent's feeling of strain is perhaps directly related to interaction with their child or their child's difficult behaviour, rather than their own dissatisfactions with life. The results did not demonstrate a strong a link between parenting behaviour and child maladjustment, but parenting discipline style did imply a significant relationship to social competence in the classroom (as rated by teachers). The relationship between child behaviour and parenting stress was not mediated by parenting behaviour; this was contrary to the third hypothesis of the study. Regression analyses revealed that parenting stress accounted for a significant amount of the variance in social competence, internalizing and externalizing behaviours, beyond that attributed to parenting behaviours (Anthony et al., 2005). Finally there were limitations to the study in that the temperaments of the children could have had an impact on the parents' level of stress and in turn influenced parental behaviours. In other words, difficult children with social problems could have influenced their parents' behaviours and levels of stress. Also there could be other variables that could possibly increase stress for the parents and children alike, such as a difficult home socioeconomic environment.

A study conducted by McDowell and Parke (2005) suggested that parental control and affect was related to children's social competence with peers. Specifically, mothers who were more positive

in the interactions with their children were rated by peers as less negative and by teachers as more positive. Maternal controlling behaviour was related to children being rated as less positive by teachers. Fathers who were more positive in the interaction had children who were rated by teachers as more positive and less negative (McDowell & Parke, 2005). However this study focused on children in the fourth-grade, thus is not related to the current study as the variables that were assessed could significantly vary for younger children in preschool.

In reviewing the literature on parenting style, it is interesting to note the consistency with which authoritative upbringing is associated with higher levels of social competence and lower levels of problem behaviour in both boys and girls at all developmental stages (Darling, 1999). Berg (2011) conducted a study that assessed 14 parents of preschool aged children who attended programs through the Family Resource Centre in order to determine the influences that parenting style has on these children's emotional and social competence. The styles of parenting that were assessed were authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive parenting. Authoritative parents tend to express clear guidelines and expectations for their children by providing them with consistent rules to follow that are also flexible, while providing lots of nurturing, love and care. Authoritarian parents lack in nurturance and care and tend to set high standards and guidelines for their children, also obedience is paramount and love is equated to success. Permissive parents avoid disciplining their children and have little or no expectations of them. They often view their children as friends and can be overindulgent (Berg, 2011). Berg (2011) discussed the fact that children's emotional competence is related to their social competence and consequently intended the study to examine social and emotional competence in unison. The parents were required to complete two surveys, one to determine their parenting style and the other was an evaluation tool to assess their children's social and emotional development. Results revealed that of the 14 participants there were two children who were identified as having a significant delay in social emotional development, and both children's parents used an authoritarian parenting style. Furthermore it indicated that those parents using authoritative parenting practices had children who scored highest on social and emotional development scales (Berg, 2011). The limitations of this study were that the sample size was very small and was dependent on parents being honest and unbiased when answering the questionnaires. Darling (1999) confirmed the results found by Berg (2011) by reviewing literature that focused on the effects that parenting styles have on

various developmental outcomes of their children. Darling (1999) suggested that children from authoritarian families tended to perform moderately well in school and displayed modest amounts of problem behaviour, but they were also found to have poorer social skills, lower self-esteem, and higher levels of depression.

Okumura and Usui (2010) were interested in the relation between parent social competence and its relation to their children's social competencies. The study they conducted made use of information the U.S. National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979 (NLSY79), and to counter the lack of detailed information on the parents, they constructed a measure of parents' sociability skills based on their occupational characteristics from the Dictionary of Occupational Titles (DOT) (Okumura & Usui, 2010). The study chose to utilize the questionnaires in the 1985 wave of the NLSY79, which asked respondents between the ages of 20 and 28 directly about their degree of sociability. The present study focused on children between the ages of three and six years old, thus the focus will be on that aspect of the Okumura and Usui (2010) study that assessed recollections of sociability levels of the participants at the age of 6 years old. Okumura and Usui (2010) first ensured that the DOT could be used to correlate participants' people skills with their parents' people skills. They then enhanced the correlation by looking at the social skills of participants in the NLSY79 who were parents and their children's social abilities. They reported that parents' social skills had a positive effect on their children's sociability, but only for those of the same gender. In other words, mothers' social abilities were positively related to their daughters' level of sociability and fathers' social levels were positively related to their sons' social competencies (Okumura & Usui, 2010). The fathers' DOT people-skill variables demonstrated positive and significant effects on children's sociability at age 6 and in early adult-hood. In contrast, for father-daughter pairs, many effects were suggested to be positive and significant for the daughters' sociability at age 6, but such effects were fewer for the daughters' sociability in early adulthood. Mothers' sociability (at age 6 and in early adulthood) was positively related to children's sociability between 2 and 6 years old. Specifically, the estimated coefficients for the effect of the mothers' sociability at age 6 on their children's sociability between 2 and 6 years old were .049 for daughters and .027 for sons, whereas the corresponding effects of mothers' sociability in early adulthood were .035 for daughters and .028 for sons. The

effect of the mothers' sociability on their daughters' sociability is larger and more significant than on that of their sons (Okumura & Usui, 2010).

2.7. Personality

Another important aspect to consider in the parent-child social competence relationship is the parents' personality traits. Research has uncovered that parents' personality is a significant principal of parenting behaviour (Kochanska, Aksan, Penney & Boldt, 2007; Karreman, Tuijl, Aken & Dekovic, 2007). Many theorists such as Freud, Erikson, Cattell, and Eysenk have attempted to define personality in different ways (Rykman, 2004), but it is unmistakable that personality is a complex human aspect that is not easily put into a succinct definition. Nevertheless, Larsen and Buss (2010) attempted to pull together a definition that captures the vital elements of personality. They define personality as "*the set of psychological traits and mechanisms within the individual that are organised and relatively enduring and that influence his or her interactions with, and adaptations to, the intrapsychic, physical, and social environments*" (Larsen & Buss, 2010, p. 4).

This study will centre its attention on the "*psychological traits*" (Larsen & Buss, 2010, p. 4) of personality as they are the foundation for the Five Factor Model (Costa & McCrae, 1995) which has informed research into personality factors. Specific features of a person's character distinguishes one individual from another, these features can be described by the use of adjectives, such as lazy, optimistic, aggressive, thoughtful or easy-going. These types of adjectives, which are used to describe people's characteristics and are usually stable and enduring, are known as "*trait-descriptive adjectives*" (Larsen & Buss, 2010, p. 4). Cattell (1965) explicated personality as a series of trait dimensions which can be described using various trait-descriptive adjectives. While Allport (1937) explained that traits are consistent patterns of thoughts, feelings and behaviours that amalgamate to form an individual's personality.

The Five Factor Model is a well-known taxonomy of personality traits, and has evolved from various taxonomies to establish a more concise clustering of traits making it easier to assess and categorise personality. There are five broad categories of traits that make up the Five Factor Model, these include: Neuroticism (N), Extraversion (E), Agreeableness (A), Conscientiousness

(C), and Openness to Experience (O) (Costa & McCrae, 1995; Goldberg, 1981; McCrae & John, 1992).

Extraversion relates to individuals who tend to have a more outgoing nature, they enjoy parties and revel in the company of others. Social attention is a fundamental aspect of Extraversion, with these personality types preferring to assume leadership roles and thus having a great influence on their social environments (Ashton, Lee & Paunonen, 2002). Extraverts are viewed as warm, gregarious, garrulous, optimistic, and have and overall tendency of exuding happiness especially when surrounded by others (Bornstein et al., 2007).

Agreeableness refers to people who have a preference for harmonious interactions and attempts to pacify situations in order to prevent conflict as they believe that solutions can be achieved without quarrel (Graziano & Tobin, 2002). Agreeable individuals tend to possess an empathic nature that leads to more forgiveness of others' transgressions making them more likeable to others (Strelan, 2007). People with an agreeable character get along well with others, are trustworthy, empathetic, gentle, loving and caring (McCrae & John, 1992).

Conscientious individuals have greater job satisfaction and security while also being able to maintain more positive and committed social relationships (Langford, 2003). This might be due to their propensity towards a passionate and persevering nature that never gives up and is constantly striving towards success. These individuals are hard-working, reliable, well-disciplined and responsible, making them successful in all areas of life from careers to family and friends (Bornstein et al., 2007).

Openness to experience describes people who are more open-minded, these individuals are curious but insightful, and they seek adventure as well as thrilling experiences. People who score high on the openness scale tend to have broad interests and as a result have a wealth of knowledge about a variety of topics (Costa & McCrae, 1992). They also place a lot of emphasis on emotions and consequently respond empathically to family members and friends (O'Brien & DeLongis, 1996).

Neuroticism or emotional instability refers to individuals who are more anxious, hostile and depressed. They possess poor coping skills, and generally lack the ability to cope with stressful situations (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Neurotic characters are more likely to feel overwhelmed by minor frustrations and lack confidence in their abilities to overcome difficulties which could exacerbate their feelings of uneasiness and psychological distress (Belsky & Barrends, 2002).

2.8. Personality and Parenting

Belsky (1984) established that personality of the parent is possibly one of the most important factors in the parent-child relationship as it affects not only parenting but also other social contextual factors that influence parenting and the parent-child relationship. Freud (1970) claimed that parents' personalities were important aspects to consider when examining the parent-child relationship as it can partially determine the parent-child relationship and consequently have an impact on the child's development. This suggests that the relation between personality and child development is mediated by the parent-child relationship.

Furthermore, personality is influential on every aspect of our lives thus it is not uncommon to find that there is a marked interest in parents' personalities as it can influence the type of parent an individual is. Mowder (2005) brought to light the fact that parents' personalities is a vital factor that has an impact on parents' perceptions, these perceptions in turn have an effect on parenting behaviour. Children's needs change as they develop and their relationship with their parents take on different requirements, thus it is important for parents to be aware of their child's developmental changes and needs and as a result the parent-child relationship is constantly evolving (Mowder, 2005). Freud (1970) postulated that negative parenting behaviours were related to parents' personalities, more specifically, neurotic parents were more inclined to reject or not respond to their children's needs.

In an attempt to investigate how parents' perceptions of parenting are related to parents' personalities, Urman (2012) recruited 168 participants who responded to website advertisements. These participants, who were 87 parents and 81 non-parents, were requested to fill out two questionnaires, the Parent Behaviour Importance Questionnaire (PBIQ-R) and the Big Five

Inventory (BFI). The results of the study implied that Openness to Experience, Agreeableness and Conscientiousness were predictors of positive parenting perceptions. Extraversion and Neuroticism however were not significant predictors of parents' perceptions. Despite these predictors, the personality characteristics of Openness to Experience, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness and Extraversion, all correlated with parenting perceptions as measured by the PBIQ-R (Urman, 2012). Moreover, Turiano (2001) reported that parenting perceptions have an influence on parenting behaviour and thus has an impact on children's developmental outcomes.

Another study which attempted to assess parenting characteristics and how they relate to personality also suggest that Neuroticism was generally related to negative parenting behaviours such as being harsh and power assertive in regular interactions with the child, while Openness to Experience, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness were positively related to positive parenting habits such as "instructional and guiding behaviour" (Karreman et al., 2007, p. 725). These results were confirmed by implying that higher levels of Neuroticism in parents are related to lower levels of involvement, responsiveness and sensitivity, as well as higher levels of irritability, negative discipline and hostility toward children (Belsky & Barends, 2002; Bornstein, Hahn & Haynes, 2011; Metsapelto & Pulkkinen, 2003; Spinath & O'Connor, 2003; Urman, 2012).

Furthermore, Belsky and Barends (2002) proposed that Extraversion personality characteristics in parents could be related to more positive parenting behaviours such as being responsive, sensitive and emotionally engaged with their children. Bornstein and colleagues also suggested that Agreeableness in parents might be related to being affectionate and warm when interacting with one's children, which could likely influence positive parenting (Bornstein et al., 2007).

2.9. Summary

As can be seen by the various studies that have been conducted, there are many aspects of the parent-child relationship that can be explored when attempting to understand young children's developmental outcomes, and in particular social competence. The parent-child relationship has been shown to be influenced by parents' perceptions (Turiano, 2001) and parents' perceptions, in

turn, have been linked to parents' personality types (Urman, 2012). The present study represents one of the first that has attempted to create a cohesive picture of the various aspects of the parent-child relationship, such as parenting confidence, attachment, parenting stress or relational frustration, involvement and discipline. Secondly this study endeavoured to amalgamate parents' personality types and parents' conceptualisation of the parent-child relationship, and explore how social competence in young children is affected by this relationship. Despite the fact that parents' personality traits greatly influence parenting behaviours (Huver, Otten, Vries & Engels, 2010), there has been limited research into how parents' personality traits may affect the impact they have on their child's level of social competence. Research does however show that extraversion, agreeableness, and less emotionally stability was related to authoritative parenting; conscientiousness was related to higher levels of supportive parenting; agreeableness was found to be positively associated with encouraging support and inversely with negative, controlling parenting, and neuroticism was found to be related to less parental warmth (Huver, Otten, Vries & Engels, 2010). Taking into consideration that the current study is dependent on parents' perceptions, it is necessary to consider parents' personality as an aspect of influence. Lastly, it should be noted that most of the reviewed studies were conducted abroad, leaving a gap in South African literature about the topic. Therefore this study aims to fill in that gap by exploring a South African population.

2.10. Hypotheses

Given the vast body of information uncovered in the literature, the following hypotheses will guide the current study

1. Hypothesis 1 – Parents' personality has an effect on the parent-child relationship.
2. Hypothesis 2 – Parents' personality has an effect on the child's level of social competence.
3. Hypothesis 3 – Parents' reports of the parent-child relationship is related to parents' perceptions of social competence levels in their children.
4. Hypothesis 4 – The parent-child relationship serves as a mediator for the relationship between parents' personality types and the child's level of social competence.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This study aimed to explore parents' perceptions of various aspects of the parent-child relationship as they related to a pre-school child's social competence. The child's social competence was measured using the Social Competence Scale (SCS) (CPPRG, 1995). The term 'parents' perceptions' in this study, was used to refer to self-reported Parenting Confidence, Parental Stress, Attachment, Parental Involvement, Discipline Practices, and Relational Frustration. All these aspects were measured quantitatively using the objective Parenting Relationship Questionnaire (PRQ) (Kamphaus & Reynolds, 2006). Parents' personality type was also measured in order to allow for analyses to shed some light into how personality characteristics impacted on the parent-child relationship. Parents' personality was measured using the Neuroticism Extraversion Openness-Five Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI) (McCrae & Costa, 2004), which measures five specific personality traits namely, Neuroticism, Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, and Openness to Experience. This chapter will describe in detail the methods used to conduct the current investigation by discussing the design, participants, measures, procedures employed, and method of data analysis.

3.1. Research design

Quantitative research examines variables that typically differ in size, magnitude, duration, or amount. These variables can be measured for individual participants in order to obtain scores that can be submitted to statistical analyses to obtain valuable interpretations (Gravetter & Forzano, 2009). Quantitative research establishes statistically significant conclusions about a population by studying a representative sample of the population (Creswell, 2003), however, it is impractical to test the whole population and therefore a sample that is representative of the populace was used in this study.

This research project used a correlational study, which is a quantitative research strategy, to compare three groups of variables, namely parents' personality types, parents' perceptions of the

parent-child relationship, and child social competence. This is a statistical method of study that is used to show consistent patterns of relationships between variables (Gravetter & Forzano, 2009). A correlational study serves only to describe or predict behaviour, not to explain it, thus it cannot explain causation. Although this is not seen as a statistically robust or difficult exercise, a good description of the three variables examined, in this study, facilitated the researcher's evaluation of the statistical output in the context of parenting and children's social competence (Creswell, 2003).

The relationships found in correlational studies show attributes of strength, and direction which could be: positive or direct association, which means that as one variable increases or decreases so does the other; negative or inverse association, meaning that as one variable increases the other decreases and vice versa; or unrelated which shows a random relationship that has no direction (Caldwell, 2007).

The quantitative method was chosen to conduct this research because it allows for comparisons, and to establish whether relations exist between the above variables as asked by the study's research questions. Furthermore it served to provide evidence for future studies by demonstrating the magnitude of effect of the relations between the variables under study.

3.2. Participants

Participants were chosen using a convenience sampling method (discussed below). The target sample for this research were the parents of pre-school children in Johannesburg. The final sample consisted of 62 parents of children between the ages of three and six years old. The parents who participated in this research were conveniently accessed from four different private pre-schools and crèches located in middle to upper middle class areas of Johannesburg. The pre-schools and crèches that were included in the study employed a formal structure that separated the children into different classes according to their age. Each school also incorporated various interactive activities into their daily schedules that provided the children with an environment that encouraged learning of numerous skills through interactive play. Of the 62 parents that

participated in the current investigation 11.3% (n = 7) were male and 88.7% were (n = 55) female. The participants' ages ranged between 28 and 48 years old.

3.3. Measures

3.3.1. The Neuroticism Extraversion Openness - Five Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI) – (Appendix D)

This study assessed personality by making use of the shorter version of the Revised NEO Personality Inventory (NEO PI-R) (Costa & McCrae, 1985), namely the NEO-Five Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI) (McCrae & Costa, 2004), which has 60 items of the original 240 items from the NEO-PI-R, making use of 12 items to measure each of the five personality domains. These domains consist of Neuroticism, Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, and Openness to Experience (McCrae & John, 1992). The NEO-FFI is a self-report, quick, reliable, and accurate measure of the domains of the Five Factor Model and the internal consistencies were reported to be good to excellent: Neuroticism = .79, Extraversion = .79, Agreeableness = .75, Conscientiousness = .83, and Openness to experience = .80 (McCrae & Costa, 2004). Also, the test-retest reliability is good, showing consistency over long periods of time (McCrae & Costa, 2004).

According to the literature, there have been mixed reviews about the appropriateness of using the NEO-PI-R, and by extension the NEO-FFI, as a personality measure in a South African population as it was developed for a Western culture. The main concern about using the NEO-PI-R in South Africa is related to culture and linguistic differences (Branco e Silva & Laher, 2008). There have been numerous studies conducted in order to establish the universality of the Five Factor Model personality traits and the use of the NEO-PI-R in different cultures, but South African studies have shown mixed results as to the use of the NEO-PI-R. Laher (2008) demonstrated that culture and linguistics are anomalies to the American personality measure. Being a multicultural and bilingual population has proven to put South Africa at a disadvantage to other Western cultures with regards to personality measures (Branco e Silva & Laher, 2008).

Despite this, the NEO-PI-R has been shown to be the most popular choice of personality measure across cultures and it has been published in numerous different South African languages including Afrikaans, Southern Sotho and Xhosa (McCrae & Costa, 2004). Heuchert (1998) investigated the suitability of the FFM in a South African context by using the NEO-PI-R which was completed by 226 South African students. The results from these students were then compared to the US normative sample. Reliability for most of the facet scales proved to be good, leading Heuchert (1998) to conclude that the NEO-PI-R could be a useful instrument to use in the evaluation of personality in South Africa.

3.3.2. Parenting-Relationship Questionnaire (PRQ) (Appendix E)

There are few well-developed instruments that concentrate on the relationship between parents and children and the parenting role (Rubinic & Schwickrath, 2010). The Parenting Relationship Questionnaire (PRQ) (Kamphaus & Reynolds, 2006) fills this void and is designed to objectively capture parents' observations of the parent-child relationship. The PRQ was developed in order to provide information about the parent-child relationship that could in turn help clinicians understand and treat behavioural issues experienced by the child (Kamphaus & Reynolds, 2006).

The PRQ has two forms, which can be completed by the mother, father or other primary care givers. These are separated based on the ages of the children in question. For the purposes of this study, the 45-item pre-school questionnaire (PRQ-P) was used. This questionnaire focuses on perceived parent-child relationships of children between the ages of two and five years old. It is important to note that the age specification of the current study was inconsistent with the specified age group of the PRQ-P, however the PRQ-P was developed for preschool children and only children who recently turned six and were still in preschool were included in the sample. Furthermore in the South African population children attend preschool until six years old and begin primary school at the age of seven.

The PRQ-P consists of the following scales: Attachment, Discipline Practices, Involvement, Parenting Confidence, and Relational Frustration (Kamphaus & Reynolds, 2006).

The Attachment scale measures the affective, cognitive, and behavioural relationship between the parent and the child that results in feelings of closeness, empathy, and understanding on part of the parent for the child (Kamphaus & Reynolds, 2006). The Discipline Practices scale assesses the tendency of the parent to consistently apply consequences or punishment in response to a child's misbehaviour, it is considered to be a positive discipline style as parents who score low suggest that they are overly permissive and show little parental concern or interest (Kamphaus & Reynolds, 2006). The Involvement scale assesses the extent to which a parent and child participate in mutual activities that enhance common interests, as well as the knowledge a parent has of their child's activities outside the home (Kamphaus & Reynolds, 2006). The Parenting Confidence scale measures a parent's feelings of comfort, control, and confidence when involved in the parenting process or when making important parental decisions (Kamphaus & Reynolds, 2006). The Relational Frustration scale assesses a parent's level of stress or distress in relating to and controlling the behaviour and affect of the child in addition to assessing the tendency to overreact or become frustrated in parenting activities (Kamphaus & Reynolds, 2006).

The PRQ-P contains statements that depict common thoughts, beliefs, feelings, and situations that a parent or guardian may experience when caring for his or her child. The questionnaire is designed to be easy to use and employs a 4-point Likert scale with *never, sometimes, often, always* (N, S, O, A) as response options (Rubinic & Schwickrath, 2010). It takes 10-15 minutes to complete the questionnaire and in order to do so parents must be able to read at a grade three (Grade 3) reading level at the very least. The internal consistency was rated as fairly high, with coefficient alphas ranging from .82 to .87 (Kamphaus & Reynolds, 2010). Test-retest reliability analysis, whereby respondents were asked to repeat the questionnaire within a couple weeks, revealed coefficients which ranged from .75 to .89 indicating a fair correlation (Rubinic & Schwickrath, 2010). Validity tests demonstrated moderate correlations between the scales that were in the expected directions (Kamphaus & Reynolds, 2010). Convergent validity was tested by comparing the results of the PRQ-P to other parent-child relationship instruments such as the Parent-Child Relationship Inventory (PCRI) and the Parenting Stress Index (PSI), these comparisons yielded that the PRQ-P showed strong correlations with the scores of the PCRI, but negative and weak correlations when compared to the scores of the PSI (Rubinic & Schwickrath, 2010).

3.3.3. Social Competence Scale - Parent Version (SCS-P) – (Appendix F)

The Social Competence Scale (SCS) (CPPRG, 1995) is a 12-item scale used to evaluate children's positive social behaviours. The behaviours include emotion regulation, pro-social behaviours, communication skills, and self-control (Corrigan, 2003). Parents are required to rate how closely the items describe their child on a five-point scale ranging from 0 (*not at all*) to 4 (*very well*).

Two subscales are assessed in this scale namely: Prosocial/Communication Skills measured by items (see Appendix F for an example of the questionnaire) 4, 7, 9, 10, 11 and 12; and Emotional Regulation Skills measured by items 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, and 8 (Corrigan, 2003). Additionally a total score on the 12 items is also reported, all three scores are calculated as the mean of responses. Internal consistency, based on a normative and a high-risk sample, was reported to be from .76 to .82 for emotion regulation; from .74 to .84 for pro-social or communication skills; and from .84 to .89 for the total SCS (Corrigan, 2003).

3.4. Procedure

The sampling procedure used to select participants was a non-probability sampling method known as convenience sampling. This is the most commonly used method of sampling in behavioural psychology (Gravetter & Forzano, 2009). In this method participants are selected on the basis of their availability, resulting in a willingness to participate. It is an easier, less expensive form of sampling, and it is considered to be a weaker sampling method in that the participants are selected on a random basis and the researcher has no control of the process, resulting in a potentially biased sample that may not entirely be representative of the population (Gravetter & Forzano, 2009). However, a large sample size limits the potential effect of spuriousness, thereby allowing for a reasonably accurate reflection of reality as predicted by the central limit theorem (Gravetter & Forzano, 2009). Generalisation of this study was, therefore, limited to parents who could afford to send their children to private pre-schools and day care centres. Due to the small sample size, the results of this study must be interpreted with caution because the interpretations are limited to the sample studied.

Various crèches and pre-schools in and around Johannesburg were approached and invited to participate in the study. Once permission was granted by the school, letters were sent home with the children inviting the parents to participate in the study. These letters contained the Participant Information Sheet (Appendix A) which informed them of the aims of the study as well as assured them of anonymity among other considerations. If the parents consented to taking part in the research study, they were asked to complete the questionnaires, which were enclosed in the envelope with the Participant Information Sheet. In order to maintain confidentiality, no signatures were required and consent was implied when they filled out the questionnaire packs. A confidential, sealed drop box was left at the back of the classroom and parents were able to drop off their completed questionnaires at their convenience. Only classes consisting of children aged three to six years of age were invited to participate.

Before distributing the various questionnaires, ethical clearance was sought and granted from the University of the Witwatersrand Ethics Review Committee. Participants were then given an in-depth explanation about the aim and relevance of the present study and were assured that the information provided by them would be kept strictly confidential. The respondents were given detailed instructions regarding how to respond to each questionnaire. They were requested to answer objectively and without discussing the responses with the other participating parents, so as to keep the information as truthful as possible. The parents were asked to provide demographic information regarding their age, gender, and ethnic background. They were also asked to provide the age and gender of their child. Parents with more than one child were asked to fill out and respond to the questionnaire with just one of their children (within the target age group) in mind.

3.5. Data analysis

Once the data was collected and inputted, statistical analysis was used to organise the data into scores. These scores consisted of basic descriptive statistics including means and standard deviations of the sample. The Pearson Product Moment correlations test was used to compare the scores of the questionnaires. This test of correlation measures interval data that is linear; it uses a

calculation to provide a correlation coefficient (*r*) which indicates the size of the correlation between the two variables (Caldwell, 2007).

Social competence in the represented children was analysed by considering the results from the two subscales namely Prosocial Behaviour and Emotional Regulation. The five dimensions of the NEO-FFI measuring parents' personality was also analysed by considering the subscales individually. Similarly it was useful to look at the five individual subscales of the PRQ-P to assess the parents' relationship with their children and how it correlated with their personalities and their children's perceived levels of social competence.

The individual items of the PRQ-P are not reliable as an indicator of the broader parent-child relationship dimensions and many items assess specific aspects of that relationship (Kamphaus & Reynolds, 2006), consequently, looking at the individual subscales provided specific information about the parent-child relationships. This process of analysing the data from the various instruments by looking at their subscales was conducted in order to examine whether underlying processes exist for each of the factors.

A mediation analysis was also used to establish whether the independent variable from the NEO-FFI measure, was associated with the mediator which was extracted from the PRQ-P measure, and whether the independent variable was correlated with the outcome variable from the SCS measure. In other words, a mediation analysis was conducted in order to test whether or not personality predicted overall parent-child relationship quality which then predicted social competence. Associations between the variables suggested an implication of a causal path that linked them together, that is, the independent variable caused the outcome variable because the independent variable caused the mediator variable which caused the outcome variable (Baron & Kenny, 1986). Baron and Kenny (1986, p.1176) stated that a variable may serve as a "*mediator to the extent that it accounts for the relation between the predictor and the criterion*" variables. This suggests that the mediator variable could be responsible for the relationship between the two main variables and not accountable for the predicted variable that is, if the mediator variable were absent then there would probably still be a significant relationship between the independent and outcome variables (Baron & Kenny, 1986).

The proposed mediation model was conducted using a series of regression analyses. The reason for using a multiple regression analysis was due to the comparison between two outcome variables (Prosocial Behaviour and Emotional Regulation) and five independent variables (Openness to Experience, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, Agreeableness and Extraversion). The Sobel method (Sobel, 1982) was used to test the significance of the *b* weights associated with each of these paths in an attempt to test the secondary aspect of this research.

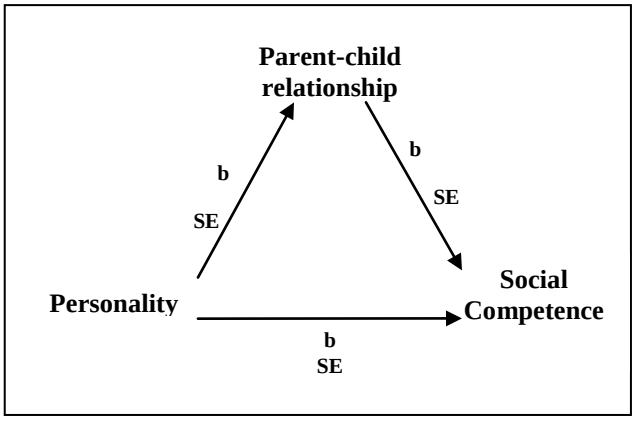


Figure 1. Proposed mediation model.

The model above depicts the mediation. This model suggests that the-parent child relationship is just a part of a more complicated set of factors that predict social competence. Parent personality is likely to be a factor that predicts the nature of the parent-child relationship which then is associated with social competence, thereby presenting a full mediation.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

This study investigated the effects of parents' personality and parents' perceptions of the parent-child relationship on levels of social competence in preschool children. This chapter presents the results of the current study by first reporting on the descriptive statistics such as means and standard deviations. Thereafter, the results of the hypotheses testing will be presented and a discussion of the assumptions of each statistical procedure used will precede this discussion.

The first three Hypotheses were tested using a Pearson's Correlation analysis followed by a mediation analysis as proposed by Hypothesis 4. The analyses specifically focused on the relationships between the PRQ-P (Kamphaus & Reynolds, 2006) parenting dimensions, which are, Attachment, Discipline Practices, Involvement, Parenting Confidence, and Relational Frustration; the NEO-FFI (McCrae & Costa, 2004) personality dimensions, namely, Neuroticism, Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, and Openness to Experience; and the two dimensions of the SCS (CPPRG, 1995), that measure Prosocial Behaviour and Emotional Regulation.

4.1. Preliminary Analyses

4.1.1. One-Way Analysis

In order to ensure that there were no systematic differences between the four schools on the three main variable categories, a series of one way analysis of variance (ANOVA) procedures were conducted. The results, as shown in Table 1 and Table 2 below, determined that the four schools did not differ significantly on any of the parent personality, social competence or parent-child relationship variables. However, it is important to mention that while the four schools did not differ on any of the key variables, a significant difference was found in parent age whereby one of the schools (School 3) had an average parent age that was significantly higher than each of the other three schools, $F_{(3,61)} = 4.78$, $p = 0.005$. Considering that the schools did not significantly differ on any of the key study variables, the assumption was made that all four schools were drawn from the same population and the responses from the four schools were pooled together to form the sample for this research.

Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations by School

Measure	Variable	Means School 1	Std Dev School 1	Means School 2	Std Dev School 2	Means School 3	Std Dev School 3	Means School 4	Std Dev School 4
NEO-FFI	Neuroticism	28.75	7.12	32.67	5.63	34.14	7.82	30.17	7.68
	Extraversion	41.45	5.76	40.90	4.24	37.90	3.92	38.83	7.57
	Agreeableness	44.00	6.19	44.67	4.98	42.76	5.86	41.33	4.37
	Conscientiousness	47.4	6.76	52.00	6.80	47.38	5.89	52.00	2.76
	Openness	30.5	7.41	29.33	4.81	30.86	4.83	28.83	9.60
PRQ-P	Attachment	36.67	4.75	34.43	5.06	35.86	4.21	35.50	5.54
	Discipline	26.25	4.95	28.14	5.07	28.24	4.76	26.50	4.72
	Involvement	23.75	4.84	22.86	3.59	23.15	4.51	23.83	5.53
	Confidence	21.73	2.92	21.29	3.77	20.76	2.66	22.33	4.72
	Relational Frustration	15.82	4.30	18.21	3.31	18.19	3.17	16.17	2.56
SCS	Prosocial Behaviour	14.92	4.27	15.00	5.46	15.43	3.68	14.17	5.42
	Emotional Regulation	11.78	3.96	11.67	4.42	11.38	3.63	11.50	3.01
SD	Parent Age	36.1	3.73	37.00	5.33	36.43	4.30	43.83	6.15
	Child Age	4.70	0.80	4.73	0.96	4.81	0.68	5.5	0.55

Table 2

One-Way Analysis of Variance of Schools by Key Variables

Measure	Variable	*df*	*SS*	*MS*	*F*	*P*
NEO-FFI	Neuroticism	61	327.40	109.13	2.16	.10
	Extraversion	61	152.37	50.79	1.99	.13
	Agreeableness	61	65.01	21.67	0.68	.57
	Conscientiousness	61	295.10	98.37	2.54	.07
	Openness	61	33.31	11.10	0.28	.84
PRQ-P	Attachment	60	42.00	14.00	0.63	.60
	Discipline	60	53.78	17.93	0.75	.53
	Involvement	60	8.78	2.93	0.14	.93
	Confidence	60	15.93	5.31	0.5	.68
	Relational Frustration	60	79.48	26.50	2.08	.11
SCS	Prosocial Behaviour	61	22.43	7.48	1.69	.18
	Emotional Regulation	61	1.74	0.58	0.04	.99
Age	Parent Age	61	301.27	100.42	4.78	.005**
	Child Age	61	3.18	1.06	1.71	.18

Note $N = 62$

** $p < .01$.

4.1.2. Descriptive Statistics

The means and standard deviations for the variables that were assessed are represented in Table 3 below. These include the five domains of the NEO-FFI, the five domains of the PRQ-P, the two domains of the SCS, the children's age, and the parents' age. The total pooled sample (*N*) consisted of 62 parents of children from four different preschools. The sample consisted of 7 fathers (11%) and 55 mothers (89%). The children that were represented in the sample consisted of 35 boys (56.5%) and 27 girls (43.5%) with a mean age of 4.82 years (*SD* = 0.8). The children's ages ranged from three to six years old. The mean age of the parents was 37.18 years

with a standard deviation of 4.99, ranging between 28 (minimum age) and 48 (maximum age) years old.

Table 3

Means and Standard Deviations

Measure	Variable	N	Mean	Std Dev	Minimum	Maximum
NEO-FFI	Neuroticism	62	31.66	7.30	16.00	47.00
	Extraversion	62	39.86	5.17	27.00	51.00
	Agreeableness	62	43.48	5.62	32.00	56.00
	Conscientiousness	62	48.95	6.46	31.00	60.00
	Openness	62	30.18	6.18	7.00	46.00
PRQ-P	Attachment	61	35.76	4.68	26.00	44.00
	Discipline	61	27.39	4.86	18.00	36.00
	Involvement	61	23.34	4.44	16.00	32.00
	Confidence	61	21.35	3.20	13.00	28.00
	Relational Frustration	61	17.22	3.67	10.00	27.00
SCS	Prosocial Behaviour	62	16.15	2.14	9.00	20.00
	Emotional Regulation	62	11.59	3.80	3.00	19.50
SD	Parent Age	62	4.82	0.80	3.00	6.00
	Child Age	62	37.18	4.99	28.00	48.00

4.2. Correlations

An initial correlation analysis was conducted across the main variables in the study in order to determine if there were any relationships between parenting, as measured by the PRQ-P, parents' personality types, as measured by the NEO-FFI, and the parents' perceptions of their preschool child's social competence, as measured by the SCS. Results indicated that there were numerous statistically significant correlations. The correlation matrix is shown in Table 4 below.

Table 4

Correlation Matrix Across the Variables in the Study.

Measure	Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
NEO-FFI	1. Neuroticism	1.00											
	2. Extraversion	-.29*	1.00										
	3. Agreeableness	-.38**	.31*	1.00									
	4. Conscientiousness	-.20	.27*	.11	1.00								
	5. Openness to Experience	.16	.29*	.06	-.15	1.00							
PRQ-P	6. Attachment	-.19	.31*	.11	.09	.09	1.00						
	7. Discipline Practices	-.01	.07	.14	.13	-.06	.03	1.00					
	8. Involvement	-.009	.25	.01	.10	.18	.67**	-.24	1.00				
	9. Confidence	-.48**	.34**	.31*	.36**	.003	.53**	.18	.47**	1.00			
	10. Relational Frustration	.44**	-.19	-.26*	-.005	.07	-.36**	.24*	-.32*	-.63**	1.00		
SCS	11. Prosocial Behaviour	-.16	.19	.67**	.03	.10	.25*	.20	.12	.19	-.03	1.00	
	12. Emotional Regulation	-.37**	.12	.20	.17	-.10	.36**	-.005	.23	.58**	-.57**	.15	1.00

Note N = 62

* p < .05. ** p < .01.

4.2.1. Parent Personality and the Parent-Child Relationship

With regards to Hypothesis 1, *parents' personality has an effect on the parent-child relationship*, the following results were noteworthy.

a) Neuroticism

Neuroticism was significantly but negatively related to Parenting Confidence ($r_{(60)}$ = -.48, p = .0001). It was also significantly but positively related to parenting Relational Frustration ($r_{(60)}$ = .44, p = .0003). This suggests that parents who are more neurotic in their personality structures are less confident and more frustrated in their relational interactions with their child.

b) Extraversion

Extraversion was significantly and positively related to Parenting Confidence ($r_{(60)}$ = .34, p = .007) and parenting Attachment ($r_{(60)}$ = .31, p = .02). However, although Extraversion was non-significantly related to Involvement ($r_{(60)}$ = .25, p = .06) on the PRQ scale, it is noteworthy that the p-value approached significance. The possibility that this effect is significant in the general population cannot be excluded as it is possible that it was non-significant in this sample due to a lack of statistical power given the sample size. The correlations suggest that the more extraverted a parent is, the more confidence they report in their interaction with their children and the better the attachment is between parent and child. In addition to this we can cautiously suggest that it is probable that extraverted parents are more involved in their children's lives, however the small sample size could account for the non-significant correlation.

c) Agreeableness

Agreeableness proved to be significantly correlated with Parenting Confidence ($r_{(60)}$ = .31, p = .02) and significantly but negatively related to Relational Frustration ($r_{(60)}$ = -.26, p = .04). This suggests that parents who have agreeable personality structures tend to report more parenting confidence and report less relational frustration in their interactions with their children.

d) Conscientiousness

Conscientiousness was only significantly correlated with Parenting Confidence ($r_{(60)}$ = .36, p = .004), suggesting that conscientious parents have more confidence when relating with their children.

e) Openness to Experience

Openness to Experience on the personality scale yielded no significant correlations with any of the variables in the PRQ-P domains or the SCS domains. This implies that openness to experience is not necessarily related to parent-child relationships or child social abilities.

4.2.2. Social Competence and Parent Personality

Looking at the relation between parent personality and social competence in the child, while considering Hypothesis 2 that *parents' personality has an effect on the child's level of social competence*, this sample showed the following significant correlations.

a) Prosocial Behaviour

Of the five personality dimensions, only Agreeableness in parents proved to be significantly related to Prosocial Behaviour in the children ($r_{(60)}$ = .67, p < .0001), strongly suggesting that parents who have more agreeable personalities have children that demonstrate more prosocial behaviours.

b) Emotional Regulation

Neuroticism was the only personality dimension that showed to be significantly but negatively related to the child's Emotional Regulation ($r_{(60)}$ = -.37, p = .003), demonstrating that neurotic parents tend to have children who are less able to regulate their emotions when interacting with others.

4.2.3. Parent-Child Relationship and Social Competence

The next set of correlations that were noteworthy was those between the parent-child relationship dimensions and the child's social competence as measured by prosocial behaviour and emotional regulation. Following from Hypothesis 3, *parents' reports of the parent-child relationship is related to parents' perceptions of social competence levels in their children*, the following correlations were meaningful.

a) Attachment

Attachment was the only parenting dimension that proved to be significantly related to Prosocial Behaviour ($r_{(60)}$ = .25, p = .05). Attachment also showed a strong significant relation with Emotional Regulation ($r_{(60)}$ = .36, p = .004) abilities on the SCS. These results alluded to the fact that the better the attachment between a parent and child, the more prosocial behaviours and emotion regulation abilities the child exhibits, thus demonstrating a child who is more holistically socially competent.

b) Parenting Confidence

Parenting Confidence was significantly related to Emotional Regulation ($r_{(60)}$ = .58, p < .0001). This implies that children of parents who are more confident in their interactions with their children are more likely to demonstrate better emotional regulation abilities.

c) Relational Frustration

Relational Frustration was significantly but negatively correlated with Emotional Regulation ($r_{(60)}$ = -.58, p < .0001) suggesting that parents who have a frustrated relationship with their children tend to also report that their children may have lower levels of emotion regulation abilities. In other words, parental relational frustration may be associated with a child who is not able to regulate their emotions when interacting with others.

4.2.4. The Parent-Child Relationship

Finally, although not hypothesised, relationships between variable subsets within the PRQ-P showed significant correlations that were noteworthy, these are expressed as follows.

a) Attachment

Attachment showed strong significant relations to Involvement ($r_{(60)}$ = .67, p < .0001) and Parenting Confidence ($r_{(60)}$ = .53, p < .0001). Attachment also showed a strong negatively significant correlation with Relational Frustration ($r_{(60)}$ = -.36, p = .05). These results alluded to the idea that the better the attachment between a parent and child, the more involved the parent is in their child's life and the more confidence they possess in these interactions. Furthermore, perceived positive attachments suggest lower levels of relational frustration between the parent and the child.

b) Parenting Confidence

Parenting Confidence was significantly but negatively related to Relational Frustration ($r_{(60)}$ = -.63, p < .0001). This implies that parents who are more confident in their interactions with their children are less likely to experience stress from these exchanges.

c) Involvement

Involvement showed a significant relation to Parenting Confidence ($r_{(60)}$ = .47, p < .0001), and was significantly but negatively correlated with Relational Frustration ($r_{(60)}$ = -.32, p = .01). These results are indicative of the idea that parents who are more involved with their children in daily activities tend to be more confident and suffer less tension from interacting with their children.

d) Discipline

Discipline was significantly associated with Relational Frustration ($r_{(60)}$ = .24, p < .0001). This implies that parents who enforce more negative and inconsistent discipline practices tend to be more distressed by their relations with their children.

Overall, it is evident that there are numerous significant correlations between the three main variable characteristics that support the hypotheses that were proposed. The correlations illustrated that parents' personalities do have an influence on parenting and the parent-child relationship. In addition to this, parenting influences the child's perceived social abilities and skills. These correlations will be further discussed in the discussion section of this paper.

4.3. Main Analysis

As was previously discussed, the proposed mediation between parents' personality, the parent-child relationship and the child's level of social competence was tested. It was proposed, according to Hypothesis 4, that the parent-child relationship serves as a mediator for the relationship between parents' personality types and the child's level of social competence. In order to test this proposition a regression analysis was run in order to obtain the standard error and parameter estimates of the significant variables (Baron & Kenny, 1986). Regression weights were keyed into a Sobel (Sobel, 1982) test calculator to establish whether the mediator variable, noteworthy parent-child relationships, meaningfully accounted for the significant effect between the independent variable, parents' relevant personality types, and the outcome variable, child's level of social competence. That is, whether the indirect effect of the independent variable on the outcome variable through the mediator variable was significant (Baron & Kenny, 1986). In order to achieve this aim, four steps were followed as proposed by establishing this mediation. The steps, taken from Baron and Kenny (1986) and Judd and Kenny (1981), are as follows:

> *Step 1* required one to show that the independent variable (IV), that is parents' personality, was correlated with the outcome variable (OV), namely child's social competence. This step establishes that there is an effect that may be mediated.
>
> *Step 2* required one to show that the IV was correlated with the mediator variable (MV), parent-child relationship factors. This step in essence involves treating the mediator as if it were an outcome variable.
>
> *Step 3* needed one to show that the MV affects the OV. It is not sufficient to simply correlate the MV with the OV; the mediator and the outcome variables may be correlated because they are both caused by the IV. Thus, the IV must be controlled in establishing the effect of the mediator on the outcome.
>
> *Step 4* necessitated one to establish that the MV completely mediates the IV-OV relationship, the effect of the parent personality characteristics (IV) on the child's social

competence abilities (OV), controlling for the parent-child relationship variable (MV), should be zero. The effects in both *Steps 3* and *4* are estimated in the same evaluation.

If all four of the above steps are met, then the data are consistent with the hypothesis that the parent-child relationship *completely* mediates the parent personality - child social competence interaction. The results are as follows.

4.3.1. Mediation between Parenting Confidence, Neuroticism and Emotional Regulation.

In fulfilling Baron and Kenny's (1986) first step it was shown that the predictor variable, Neuroticism, was significantly but negatively correlated with the outcome variable, Emotional Regulation. Furthermore, Neuroticism was the only personality dimension that showed a significant but negative relation to the child's Emotional Regulation (r = -.37, $F_{(1,61)}$ = 9.4, p = .003). Secondly Neuroticism was significantly but negatively correlated with the proposed mediator, Parenting Confidence (*Step 2*) (r = -.48, $F_{(1,60)}$ = 17.22, p = .0001). Satisfying *Step 3* it was shown that Parenting Confidence was significantly related to Emotional Regulation (r = .58, $F_{(1,61)}$ = 30.33, p < .0001).

The regression analysis suggested that Parenting Confidence was a predictor of Neuroticism, b = -0.21, t(61) = -4.15, < 0.001, with a significant portion of the variance in Neuroticism explained by Parenting Confidence, $F_{(1,60)}$= 17.22, p < .0001. To test for mediation, a Sobel test was conducted (Sobel, 1982) using an online Sobel test calculator (Soper, 2012) statistical analysis. Neuroticism and Parenting Confidence were entered as predictor variables and Emotional Regulation as the outcome variable (see Figure 2).

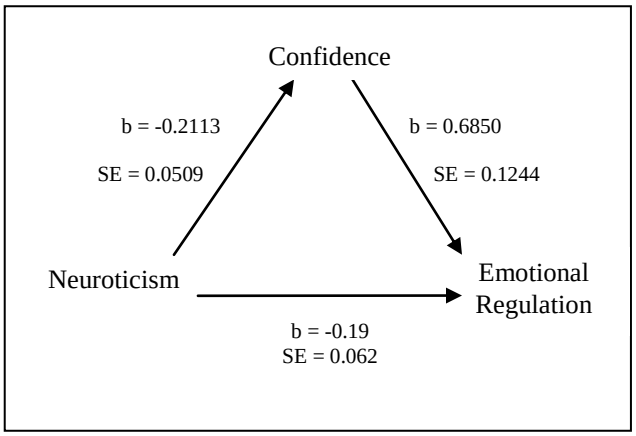


Figure 2. Mediation between Parenting Confidence, Neuroticism and Emotional Regulation.

The Sobel test statistic for this mediation was (B = -3.31) with both the one-tailed (p = .0004) and the two-tailed (p = .0009) probability values significant at the 99th percentile, that is both gave p-values less than 0.01. Therefore this suggests that, in this sample, parental Neuroticism was associated with a lack of Parenting Confidence which in turn was found to be predictive[1] of difficulties in regulating emotions in the preschool child. In other words the relation between parental Neuroticism and Emotional Regulation difficulties in the child could be accounted for by the decreased Parenting Confidence that perhaps results from the more neurotic disposition of the parent. In sum, parental Neuroticism in itself is not predictive of Emotional Regulation problems in the preschool child. However, Neuroticism perhaps results in a parent-child relationship characterised by less Parenting Confidence, which perhaps, in turn, results in Emotional Regulation difficulties in the child.

4.3.2. Mediation between Relational Frustration, Neuroticism and Emotional Regulation

As shown above the predictor variable, Neuroticism, was significantly but negatively correlated with the outcome variable, Emotional Regulation, (r = -.37, $F_{(1,61)}$ = 9.4, p = .003). Secondly Neuroticism was significantly correlated with the proposed mediator, Relational Frustration, more specifically (r = .44, $F_{(1,60)}$ = 14.51, p = .0003). Satisfying *Step 3* it was shown that

[1] Please note that while cause and effect cannot be determined in correlational research, the regression procedure does result in a line of best fit that allows for the prediction of one variable, given the level of another variable. Hence it is appropriate and indicated to speak of "prediction" when discussing regression analyses (Baron & Kenny, 1986)."

Relational Frustration was significantly but negatively related to Emotional Regulation (r = -.58, $F_{(1,61)}$ = 29.10, p < .0001). The regression analysis suggested that Relational Frustration was a predictor of Neuroticism, b = 0.23, t(61) = 3.81, p = .0003, with a significant portion of the variance in Neuroticism explained by Relational Frustration. To test for mediation, a Sobel (Sobel, 1982) test statistical analysis was conducted and Neuroticism and Relational Frustration were entered as predictor variables and Emotional Regulation as the outcome variable (see Figure 3).

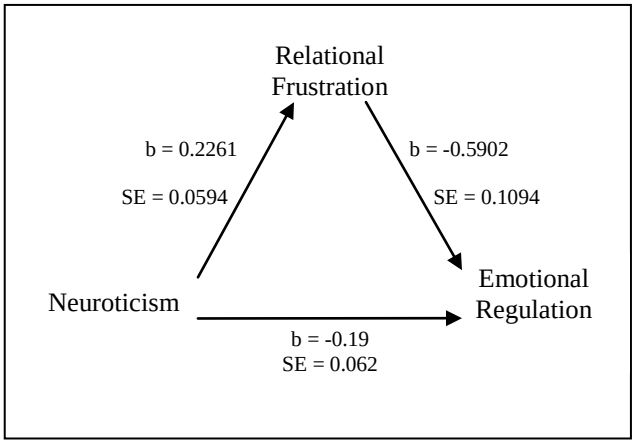


Figure 3. Mediation between Relational Frustration, Neuroticism and Emotional Regulation.

The Sobel test statistic for this mediation was (B = -3.11) with both the one-tailed (p = .0009) and the two-tailed (p = .002) probability values significant at the 99th percentile, that is both gave p-values less than 0.01. Therefore this suggests that the relation between parental Neuroticism and Emotional Regulation difficulties in the child could be accounted for by the increased Relational Frustration that perhaps results from the more neurotic disposition of the parent. In sum, Neuroticism in itself is not predictive of Emotional Regulation problems in the preschool child. However, Neuroticism in parents perhaps results in a parent-child relationship characterised by more Relational Frustration, which perhaps, in turn, results in Emotional Regulation difficulties in the child.

4.3.3. Mediation between Confidence, Agreeableness and Prosocial Behaviour

In fulfilling Baron and Kenny's (1986) first step it was shown that the predictor variable, Agreeableness, was significantly correlated with the outcome variable, Prosocial Behaviour, (r = 0.67, $F_{(1,61)}$ = 48.23, p < .0001). Secondly Agreeableness was significantly correlated with the proposed mediator, Parenting Confidence, more specifically (r = 0.31, $F_{(1,60)}$ = 6.12, p = .02). *Step 3* was not satisfied as it was shown that Parenting Confidence was not significantly related to Prosocial Behaviour (r = 0.19, $F_{(1,61)}$ = 2.26, p = .14). The regression analysis suggested that Parental Confidence was a predictor of Agreeableness, b = 0.17, t(61) = 2.47, p = .02. To test for mediation, we conducted a Sobel (Sobel, 1982) test statistical analysis and entered Agreeableness and Parenting Confidence as predictor variables and Prosocial Behaviour as the outcome variable (see Figure 4).

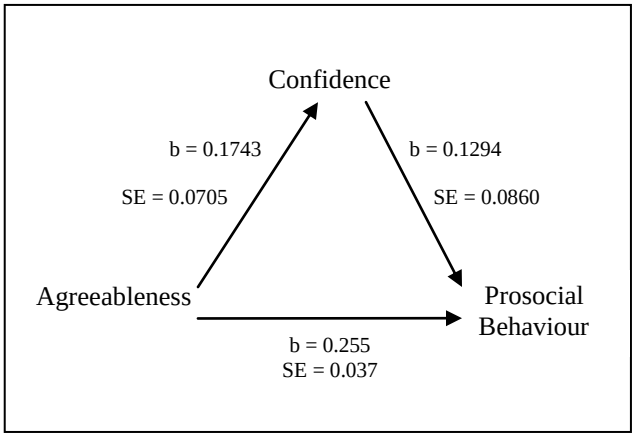


Figure 4. Mediation between Parenting Confidence, Agreeableness and Prosocial Behaviour.

The Sobel test statistic for this mediation was (B = 1.29) with both the one-tailed (p = .0993) and the two-tailed (p = .1986) probability values being non-significant. Therefore this suggests that Parenting Confidence does not mediate the relation between parental Agreeableness and preschool child's Prosocial Behaviour in this sample. These findings ultimately suggest a more direct relation between Agreeableness as a personality characteristic in the parent and Prosocial Behaviour in the preschool child.

4.3.4. Mediation between Relational Frustration, Agreeableness and Prosocial Behaviour

As was shown above, the predictor variable, Agreeableness, was significantly correlated with the outcome variable, Prosocial Behaviour, (r = 0.67, $F_{(1,61)}$ = 48.23, p < .0001). Secondly Agreeableness was significantly correlated with the proposed mediator, Relational Frustration, more specifically (r = -.26, $F_{(1,60)}$ = 4.27, p = .04). *Step 3* was not satisfied as it was shown that Relational Frustration was not significantly related to Prosocial Behaviour (r = -0.03, $F_{(1,61)}$ = 0.05, p = .83). The regression analysis suggested that Relational Frustration was a predictor of Agreeableness, b = -0.17, t(61) = -2.07, p = .04. To test for mediation, we conducted a Sobel (Sobel, 1982) test statistical analysis and entered Agreeableness and Parenting Confidence as predictor variables and Prosocial Behaviour as the outcome variable (see Figure 5).

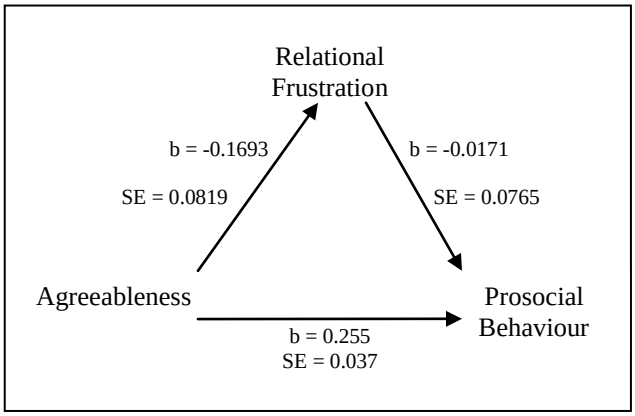


Figure 5. Mediation between Relational Frustration, Agreeableness and Prosocial Behaviour.

The Sobel test statistic for this mediation was (B = 0.22) with the one-tailed (p = .4121) and the two-tailed (p = .8242) probability values were non-significant at the 99th percentile. Therefore this demonstrates that parental Agreeableness is not necessarily associated with Relational Frustration and the preschool child's Prosocial Behaviour. These findings further suggest a more direct relation between Agreeableness as a personality characteristic in the parent and Prosocial Behaviour in the preschool child.

Finally, correlations were used to determine if there were any significant interactions between each pair of independent and mediator variables, and each pair of mediator and outcome variables, further ensuring a relation between each independent and outcome variable.

Conscientiousness, Openness to Experience and Extraversion did not demonstrate a noteworthy relationship to the outcome variable hence the mediation analysis was not conducted as they did not satisfy the four steps to indicate a significant mediation relationship. While used for different purposes, that is, a correlation is used to describe a relationship between two variables and regression is used to predict a relationship, regression is the squared correlation coefficient, therefore the correlation can be used to determine whether it is even warranted to look for a mediation as proposed or not.

4.4. Assumptions of regression

The four principle assumptions of regression, namely (1) linearity of the relation between outcome and independent variables, (2) independence of errors, (3) homoscedasticity and (4) normality of the error distribution were tested in order to prevent Type I or Type II errors (Osborne & Waters, 2002). Analysis of the dependent and independent variables revealed that the above assumptions were sufficiently fulfilled. After reviewing the partial scatterplots of the independent variables (parents' personality) and the outcome variables (child social competence), linearity was a sensible assumption. Normality was tested via examination of the un-standardised residuals and statistics suggested a relative normality. A relatively random display of points in the scatterplots of studentised residuals against values of the independent variables, as well as against predicted values suggest evidence for confirmation of independence. Considering the residual plots, it was inferred that due to the plots being the same for all values of the predicted dependent variables, homoscedasticity was an agreeable assumption.

CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION

The aim of this study was to investigate whether parents' personality and parents' perceptions of the parent-child relationship were associated with perceived social competencies in young children. The main focus was on looking at specific aspects of the parent-child relationship in relation to the five domains of personality as delineated by the Five Factor Model, and how they correlate with the two social competence domains, namely Prosocial Behaviour and Emotional Regulation. More specifically, the aim was to determine whether parents' personality was associated with children's social competence and whether this relation was mediated by the nature of the parent-child relationship. After having conducted a correlational analysis and a multiple regression analysis on the data, the results of this study provided numerous significant observations that confirmed what previous literature has stated. These results are discussed below.

5.1. Correlations

In this study Neuroticism on the personality inventory was significantly but negatively related to Parenting Confidence. It was also significantly but positively related to parenting Relational Frustration. This suggests that parents who have more neurotic personality structures might have less certainty about their ability to be a positive caregiver to their child and could become more perturbed by their relational interactions with their child. Costa and McRae (1980, p.673) suggest that "*Neuroticism predisposes individuals toward negative affect*", and that highly neurotic individuals tend to be more anxious, hostile, depressed, self-conscious, and unable to handle stress (Costa & McRae, 1992). Numerous studies have suggested that higher levels of Neuroticism in parents are related to lower levels of involvement, responsiveness and sensitivity, as well as higher levels of irritability, negative discipline and hostility toward children. In sum, Neuroticism could perhaps be strongly related to negative aspects of parenting (Belsky & Barends, 2002; Bornstein, Hahn & Haynes, 2011; Metsapelto & Pulkkinen, 2003; Spinath & O'Connor, 2003; Urman, 2012). More specifically Urman (2012) implied that males with higher levels of Neuroticism were more likely to portray negative parenting behaviours such as harsh

discipline practices, while Freud (1970) suggested that neurotic mothers were more likely to reject their children. Bornstein, Hahn and Haynes (2011) also suggested that mothers who scored higher on the Neuroticism scale reported lower confidence levels in their parenting abilities.

Furthermore, studies have alluded to the idea that positive parenting characteristics such as healthy discipline practices, emotional positivity, maternal directiveness, and parental responsiveness strongly relate to the development of positive social skills in children (Denham, Renwick & Holt, 1991; Leve & Fagot, 1997). Turner and Harris (1984) proposed that parental rejecting attitudes were negatively associated with social competence behaviours in their children. These observations are replicated in the results of the current study which revealed that Neuroticism was the only personality dimension to show a significant but negative relation to the child's Emotional Regulation. This suggests that the more neurotic the parent is the less confident they are in their interactions with their children and this could have had an effect on their increased level of relational frustration, as a lack of confidence could hinder their ability to manage difficult situations with their children and increase aggravation in the relationship. These interacting factors may contribute to social competence difficulties as the child is perhaps more likely to evidence problems with regulating their feelings due to relational difficulties experienced with their parents.

Extraversion, also known as positive emotionality, is exhibited by people who are warm, gregarious, assertive, active, and are usually more affectionate and cheerful (Costa & McRae, 1992; Finkel, 2009; Urman, 2012). In the current study Extraversion was significantly related to Parenting Confidence and Parenting Attachment, that is, extraverted parents reported higher levels of confidence in their interactions with their children and also possibly felt a stronger attachment to their children. Belsky and Barends (2002) proposed that parents who were more extraverted were more inclined to be responsive, sensitive and emotionally engaged with their children. An alternate study conversely suggested that extraverted parents exhibited harsher discipline practices, tended to be more forceful, and were more likely to engage in power assertion relationships with their children (Kochanska, Aksan, Penny & Boldt, 2007). Thus it is evident that there are vast inconsistencies in the literature regarding extraverted parents. This inconsistency could be elucidated by the idea that extraverted parents may yearn for stimulating

interactions with other adults and may not always receive that stimulation from their children. Interestingly the current study illustrated that parental Extraversion was not significantly related to social competence abilities in young children. If one considers the desire to interact with others and be conversational as social aspects of Extraversion then the fact that this study did not find a significant correlation with the child's social competence abilities, makes it inconsistent with the literature which propose that parents' social skills have a positive effect on the sociability of their children (Okumura & Usui, 2010), even if only for those of the same gender. In this regard the size and population of the current sample could explain the discrepancy as Okumura and Usui's (2010) study was conducted on the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth in the United States of America and consisted of a large sample size (Okumura & Usui's, 2010).

The Agreeableness subscale, in this study was significantly correlated with Parenting Confidence and Prosocial Behaviours in children. It was also significantly but negatively related to Relational Frustration. This suggests that not only do parents who have more agreeable personality types possibly report less relational frustration with their children, but perhaps they are also possibly more confident in their parent-child interactions. Agreeableness is depicted by individuals who value getting along with others and are usually friendly, helpful, generous, courteous and willing to compromise (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Parents high on the agreeableness dimension seemed to have more socially competent children who evidence more prosocial behaviour in the current study. It could possibly be due to the agreeable nature of parents' putting the needs of their children before their own, and perhaps being more responsive and caring with them, which could perchance influence a nurturing and positive parent-child relationship, consequently enhancing the child's sociable and non-aggressive behaviours thus possibly making it more comfortable and less stressful for parents. Furthermore, Agreeable parents might have a higher tolerance for negative behaviours from their children thus reducing stressful interactions between parent and child. These findings are confirmed by numerous literature studies which imply that Agreeableness is related to parenting and child behaviour. For example, Urman (2012) and Finkel (2009) suggested that Agreeableness had a significantly positive relationship with all positive parenting characteristics that were explored in that study, these characteristics included bonding, discipline, education, responsivity, and sensitivity. Bornstein and colleagues also suggested that Agreeableness might be related to the affectionate

and warm manner in which parents interact with their children which could likely influence positive parenting (Bornstein et al., 2007).

Another consideration of the present study was that Conscientiousness did not present with any significant correlations with respect the social competence domains, but it did show a significant relationship with Parenting Confidence. This suggests that conscientious parents report more confidence in their interactions with their children. These findings can be explained by looking at the theory which states that conscientious individuals are more robust, resilient, and employ task oriented coping styles (Campbell-Sills, Barlow, Brown & Hoffman, 2006), which would possibly be beneficial in maintaining a positive parent-child relationship. Individuals, who are less conscientious however, tend to be less organised and careless. These individuals procrastinate and are easily distracted (Costa & McCrae, 1992), which would probably make parenting an arduous task. In addition to this Swick and Hassel's (1990) study, which explored the relationship between parental efficacy and social competence in young children, suggested that both parental locus of control and interpersonal support were very influential in the child's development of social competence. The current study partially corroborates Swick and Hassel's (1990) study in that conscientiousness could demonstrate parental locus of control and confidence.

In the current study, when considering children's social competencies as illustrated by the SCS, Prosocial Behaviour alludes to children's ability to express manners that are helpful, cooperative, caring, sharing and comforting, all characteristics that are considered by society to be desirable (Junttila, Voeten, Kaukiainen & Vauras, 2006). Emotional Regulation on the other hand refers to the child's capacity to recognise different feelings inside of them, show those feelings to others in a manner that is not hurtful, and cope with their emotions. Parents' perceptions of the nature of Attachment was significantly related to both domains of children's social competence abilities. Attachment was assessed by the PRQ-P in terms of the parents' ability to effectively consider their child's emotions and thoughts by reflecting on the parents' closeness, empathy and understanding of their child (Kamphaus & Reynolds, 2006). While the current study does not report on attachment types, there is research suggesting that parents' perceptions of their attachment with their children, and the strength thereof may be associated with their ability to

mentalise different life experiences for their children, which is also associated with attachment type (Fonagy, Steele & Steele, 1991). Attachment was also strongly related to parenting Involvement and Parenting Confidence on the PRQ-P. In addition to this Attachment was negatively correlated with Relational Frustration.

These results alluded to the idea that the better the attachment between a parent and child, the more involved the parent is in their child's life and the more confidence they possess in these interactions. Furthermore, perceived positive attachments suggest lower levels of relational frustration between the parent and the child. The findings of this study, with regards to attachment and parenting as well as socially competent children, is in accordance with Bowlby's (1969) Attachment Theory which states that children who have healthy attachments with their primary caregivers are better able to establish positive relationships outside the family environment, since children develop a cognitive understanding of relationships based on early experiences with their caregivers (Bowlby, 1969). This suggests that, in the current study, parents' perceptions of having stronger attachments with their children were possibly associated with children who displayed more prosocial behaviour and were perhaps better able to regulate their emotions displaying overall healthier social competence capabilities.

Moreover, due to these healthier competencies in their children, it is likely that the parent-child relationship endured fewer difficulties, therefore possibly making it easier for parents to interact with their children which could likely increase parents' feelings of competence in the parent-child interaction. These findings are in accordance with the results obtained from the study conducted by Rose-Krasnor, Rubin, Booth and Coplin (1996) where it was suggested that securely attached 4-year-old children were found to be more socially engaged than insecurely attached children. Their 1991 study also implied that insecurely attached children demonstrated higher levels of negative affect in social interactions. It should be considered that Bowlby's (1969) Attachment Theory was based on objective measures that assessed parent-child attachments. As a result the findings of the current study should be interpreted with caution as it was based on self-reported parent perceptions of the attachment relationship which could possibly be distorted by parental biases.

Parenting Confidence was positively related to children's reported Emotional Regulation abilities and negatively related to Relational Frustration in the current study. Parenting Confidence in the PRQ-P assesses parents' feelings of comfort, control, and confidence when actively involved with their children (Kamphaus & Reynolds, 2006). Thus the results suggest that parents who are more comfortable and feel in control of their relationship with their children tend to have less frustration in these relationships and possibly result in rearing children who are better able to regulate their emotions in social situations. This coincides with research conducted by McDowell and Parke (2005) which implied that parental control and affect was related to children's social competence with peers. In particular, positive mother-child interactions were rated by peers as less negative and by teachers as more positive. Due to the fact that Relational Frustration on the PRQ-P assesses the parents' level of stress relating to their child (Kamphaus & Reynolds, 2006) it could be suggested that the results of this study coincide with those found in Anthony and colleague's (2005) who implied through regression analyses that parenting stress accounted for a significant amount of the variance in social competence, internalizing, and externalizing behaviours in young children (Anthony et al., 2005). This could be due to the fact that parental stress could possibly increase negative and harsh parenting behaviours such as being overly critical and less emotionally responsive thus perhaps influencing aggressive behaviour and social incompetence in children (Mitchell & Cabrera, 2009). Furthermore, it was suggested by Abidin (1992) that parenting stress was strongly linked to feelings of incompetence in the parenting role, which corroborates with the findings of the present study, with the significant relation between Parenting Confidence and Relational Frustration. Supportive and confident parents, who are emotionally comfortable in interacting with their children, most likely teach their children effective emotional regulation tactics and coping skills that could possibly assist them in being socially competent and perhaps better able to manage difficult emotions (Denham, Mitchell-Copeland, Strandberg, Auerbach & Blair, 1997).

Discipline Practices was not significantly correlated with any of the personality domains or the social competence domains in the present study. These results are in accordance with some studies such as that conducted by Finkel (2009) and Urman (2012) who suggested that discipline practices were not significantly related to any parent personality domains. Coie and Dodge (1998) suggested that acts of disobedience or aggression that was not disciplined by parents

correlated with children who demonstrated asocial behaviour. It should be noted that discipline can be a very negative aspect of parenting, if it is harsh, punitive and inconsistent this type of discipline possibly results in children who are aggressive and perhaps lack Prosocial Behaviour and Emotional Regulation (Berg, 2011; Kreig, 2003). Finkel (2009) and Urman (2012) did however suggest that such studies suggested significant relationships with discipline and Neuroticism, yet just like in the present study, the Discipline domain on the PBIQ-R and Discipline Practices on the PRQ-P are not necessarily considered to be a negative parenting characteristic. The PRQ-P describes Discipline as parents' inclinations towards enforcing rule abiding demeanours in their children by reacting consistently and appropriately to their child's misbehaviours, this is indicative of parents who are not overly permissive or uninvolved in their children's daily activities (Kamphaus & Reynolds, 2006). In the current study, nonetheless, there were intra-test correlations with Discipline Practices that could be interpreted with extreme caution, these include, Parental Involvement and Relational Frustration. Given the high likelihood that these findings were not significant due to the small sample size of the study, the results will be tentatively interpreted. The outcomes tentatively suggest that parents, who reported that disciplining their children was not important, also reported less Parental Involvement and increased Relational Frustration. This perhaps suggests that parents who do not discipline their children consistently could be too lenient with their child's misconduct possibly resulting in children who continually break the rules and are most likely difficult to manage. Children with such behaviours could influence a strained parent-child relationship and perhaps increase parents' levels of frustration with the relationships with their children. Erstwhile studies suggest that harsh discipline practices are often adopted by parents who are more authoritarian in nature. These parents lack in nurturance and care, and tend to set high standards and guidelines for their children, also obedience is paramount and love is equated to success (Berg, 2011). Permissive parents are equally unconstructive as they avoid disciplining their children and have little or no expectations of them. They often view their children as friends and can be overindulgent (Berg, 2011).

In this study, parents' perceptions of Parental Involvement were positively related to Parenting Confidence and negatively related to Relational Frustration. There were no significant social competence relations. These findings suggest that parents who perceived themselves as more

involved with their child, reported more confidence in their parenting abilities. They also tended to report less frustration or stress in their relationship with their child. Parental Involvement can be described as the interaction between a parent and their child in a number of common activities, as well as the parents' knowledge of their child's activities (Kamphaus & Reynolds, 2006). A study conducted by Mitchell and Cabrera (2009) suggested that when fathers were more involved with their children in terms of didactic activities such as reading, playing or singing songs, their children were more likely to exhibit socially competent behaviour. Parental Involvement was found to be an important aspect of study due to its impact on the development of children's social-emotional competence (Overbeek, Stattin, Vermulst, Ha, Engels & Rutger, 2007). This could be explained by Bandura's (1977) social learning theory wherein children learn to be social beings through observing and interacting with their parents or caregivers. In a literature review conducted by Mulder (2008) it was stated that Grolnick and Ryan (1989) suggested that parents, especially mothers, who were more involved tended to have children who were better socially adjusted, it also implied that autonomous support, parental involvement, and family structure played key roles in the development of social competence in the children that were assessed. This suggests that parental involvement as well as assistance from the greater family network is perhaps necessary to assist parents in possibly maintaining positive behavioural interactions with their children.

5.2. Mediations

In addition to the above correlations, a mediation analysis was conducted to test whether parent-child relationships could serve as a mediator for the relationship between parents' personality types and the child's level of social competence. The correlations of the current study led to confirm the theoretical mediation analysis which suggests that parental neuroticism was associated with a lack of parenting confidence which in turn was found to be predictive of difficulties in regulating emotions in the preschool child. In other words the relation between parental neuroticism and emotional regulation difficulties in the child could be accounted for by the decreased parenting confidence that perhaps results from the more neurotic disposition of the parent. Additionally, the relation between parental neuroticism and emotion regulation difficulties in the child could be accounted for by the increased relational frustration that perhaps

results from the more neurotic disposition of the parent. These mediations do not suggest direct cause and effect relationships between the variables Neuroticism, Parental Confidence, parental Relational Frustration and the child's Emotional Regulation, but it strongly suggests that one can predict the direction of one variable given another. In other words the correlations between these variables are strong enough to suggest that they are interrelated and interdependent.

However, the mediation analysis between Agreeableness and Prosocial Behaviour as either mediated by Parenting Confidence or Relational Frustration, were not confirmed in the current study. This is due to the fact that Parenting Confidence and Relational Frustration individually attained non-significant mediation values, suggesting that they did not sufficiently mediate the relation between parental Agreeableness and the preschool child's Prosocial Behaviour. These findings ultimately suggest a more direct correlation between Agreeableness as a personality characteristic in the parent and Prosocial Behaviour in the preschool child. Therefore this implies that parental agreeableness is not necessarily associated with relational frustration and the preschool child's prosocial behaviour.

5.3. Limitations

There are several limitations to the present study. Firstly the sample population is not completely representative of the general population as it was selected using a convenience sampling method and consequently only the parents that chose to participate in the study were considered. The parents who chose to partake in this study could be systematically different from those who chose not to participate. For example, those who participated could have done so due to perhaps a greater sense of investment in their children's social abilities and or greater positivity with regards to their interactions with their children. It should also be noted that the sample only consisted of parents of children who attended middle and upper middle class crèches and day care centres. In addition to this there were more mothers (89%) that responded to the questionnaires than fathers (11%). Consequently the generalizability of these results may be limited to such a population and may not necessarily be representative of the greater population of Johannesburg pre-school parents.

Additionally, it should be considered that parenting behaviour and the parent-child relationship could be influenced by the child's characteristics just as much as the parents', as they are a mutually dependent relationship. As a result, although a parent may influence social competence in their children, there are still aspects of the child, such as temperament, that could predispose him or her to socially competent behaviour. Such characteristics were not measured in this current study. Similarly children can influence their parents' reactions to them and thus influence parenting behaviour. This symbiotic relationship between child and parent variables was not measured in the current study. Future research should explore the reciprocal relation between child characteristics such as temperament and parent characteristics such as personality style and perceptions of the parent-child relationship.

Furthermore it should be noted that there is no evidence of the PRQ-P previously being used in a South African context, thus there is limited research available for studies using this specific measure, as such the literature discussed in this study was based on aspects of the parent-child relationship that are not always in accordance with the dimensions specified in the PRQ-P. One of the many aspects of the PRQ-P that did not coincide with the South African population is the age groups between the preschool scale and the child and adolescence scale. The PRQ-P states that the preschool age should range between two to five years old however in the South African population preschool ages range from two to six years old, as a result the sample of the current study obtained results for children between the ages of three and six years old and made use of the PRQ-Preschool version. However, it is important to mention that while the average age of starting school in the USA (where the PRQ-P was normed) is five years of age, South African children tend to start school in the year they turn seven. As such, considering that the scale was normed for use on pre-schoolers, it was deemed appropriate to use it on South African pre-schoolers, even if they had already turned six.

The fact that only parents' perceptions were used in the current study is also an important limitation. As with any self-report instruments, there are implications in terms of social desirability and patterned responses. While it is deemed perfectly appropriate and desirable for use of parents' perceptions in this preliminary inquiry into the relations between parent level variables and social competence, it would also be desirable to use a multi-trait multi-method

approach to explore these relations more objectively. Future research should perhaps explore using teacher reports and child objective reports, in conjunction with these parents' perceptions, in order to gain deeper insight into the causal relations between parent characteristics and children's social competence abilities.

An additional limitation of the current study pertains to the relatively small sample size. A larger sample size could have resulted in more statistical power. As such, the possibility of Type II errors in the present research cannot be excluded.

CHAPTER 6
CONCLUSION

6.1. Concluding Comments

The study of social competence in young children has received a lot of attention in the past due to its developmental implications for children (Barblett & Maloney, 2010). Specifically, research has focused on various aspects of parent-child interactions that possibly influence children's abilities to develop social competencies that could help them achieve overall wellbeing. However, despite the large literature of work that assesses the parent-child milieu, there are still certain aspects of the parent-child relationship that require further examination, in particular parents' perceptions of the parent-child relationship and the effects this may have on the child's social competence. Parents' personality is also an important characteristic to consider when exploring parents' conceptualisations of the relationship they have with their children. The current study attempted to investigate parents' perception of the parent-child relationship as a factor that may be related to the child's social competence by focusing on parents' personality. Additionally it was a preliminary study as it utilised a South African sample.

Research suggests that parent perceptions of the parent-child relationship may be associated or even predictive of parenting behaviour and in turn this may influence aspects of children's developmental outcomes (Turiano, 2001). Belsky and Barends (2002) suggested that, amongst other contextual factors, parent personalities could have had a significant effect on child developmental outcomes including the child's social competence development.

This study consisted of a correlational research analysis which used data captured from a sample of parents of children from day care centres and crèches in and around Johannesburg. Parental interaction characteristics were measured quantitatively using the objective Parenting Relationship Questionnaire (PRQ-P). Parents' personality was measured using the NEO-FFI, and child social competence abilities were measured using the parent version of the Social Competence Scale (SCS).

Using Pearson's Correlation and multiple regression analyses the results of the study indicated that not only does personality relate to the parent-child relationship but that the parent-child relationship does show a correlation with the level of social competence in the child. More specifically, two personality patterns that showed significant correlations were Neuroticism and Agreeableness. Neurotic parent structures were more likely to experience relational frustration and less likely to be confident in their interactions with their children. Additionally, parents with more neurotic personality structures appeared to have a more distressing relationship with their children which could have impacted on the child's limited emotional regulation abilities. Agreeable parent personality types were more likely to be confident in their interactions with their children who were less likely to experience relational frustration and were reported to have more prosocial behaviours. Conscientious parent personalities were also more inclined towards having confidence in their parent-child interactions.

Additionally, it was implied that Attachment could possibly be an important aspect of the parent-child relationship as it was associated with preschool children's overall social competence capacities in this study. Although Discipline Practices was not strongly related to any of the independent or dependent variables, it is still necessary to note the possibility that positive discipline practices, such as consistently encouraging rule-abiding behaviour and appropriately punishing bad behaviour, could most likely have an impact on a child's social capacity by perhaps promoting healthy and positive demeanours when they interact with other children (Berg, 2011; Kreig, 2003).

Furthermore, a mediation analysis revealed that Emotional Regulation significantly mediated the relationship between Neuroticism and Parenting Confidence. In addition to this, Relational Frustration significantly mediated the relationship between Neuroticism and Emotional Regulation. There were no other correlations that fulfilled the criteria for a mediation analysis, which could be indicative of the small sample size and illuminate the limitations of the represented sample.

It should be noted that the present study was purely a relational assessment, conducted to determine whether there could be any correlations that could possibly influence the parent-child

dyad. It does not suggest that one variable or the other directly impacts children's social competence abilities. This is due to the fact that there may be numerous factors that impact on a child's resultant ability to develop social competent behaviour. The limitations found in this study possibly opens up an array of ideas that could be explored in future research studies.

6.2. Implications for Practice

The results of this study illuminate the importance of parents' interactions with their children and the possible effects these interactions may have on a preschool child's development, specifically with regards to social competence. Although a person's personality is enduring and consistent across situations (Larsen & Buss, 2010), and certain child characteristics could possibly influence the parent-child relationship, there are ways of managing difficulties in everyday interactions, especially with regards to parenting. Parental training workshops could benefit parents who perceive difficulties in their relationships with their children, by attempting to alleviate some of the stressors which exacerbate problems in the parent-child relationship. It is necessary to improve parent-child interactions, especially at an early age, as research has suggested that these early connections are critically important to a young child's development.

The results that were arrived at in this study suggested that parents with more neurotic personality types were more inclined to have less confidence but increased frustrations in their interactions with their children, which could possibly have a negative effect on children's ability to regulate their emotions in social situations. Considering what the literature suggests about the importance of social competence in the healthy emotional development of a young child (Anthony et al., 2005; Denham et al., 2003; Fantuzzo & McWayne, 2002; Lee, 2006; Mulder, 2008; Wight & Chapparo, 2008), parents of a neurotic personality type should be encouraged to seek assistance with managing their confidence levels as a parent so as to possibly improve their parent-child interactions. Furthermore the study suggested that Attachment could perhaps be an important positive aspect of the parent-child relationship because it is likely to be associated with preschool children's overall healthy social competence capacities. Thus it is suggested that parents should encourage positive attachments with their children so as to possibly enhance their child's social development.

Parents who feel uncomfortable and insecure in their parenting abilities should be encouraged to seek help in learning positive parenting habits that could possibly improve their confidence when interacting with their children, which could perhaps assist their children's social competence progress. Help seeking could also improve parent-child interactions that could possibly enhance parental involvement. This improvement could have a positive effect on children's development of constructive social capabilities. Parent training workshops and professionals working with parents should encourage parents to seek assistance that could inform their interactions with their children and encourage positive parental behaviours.

Overall, in this study Neuroticism, Agreeableness and Extraversion were strongly related to various parent-child interactions. More specifically in order to improve the parent-child relationship and increase the child's social competencies, Neurotic parents should seek assistance in reducing their stress, anxieties, and self-conscious behaviours in order to improve their parental confidence and reduce their relational frustration. This improvement should be directed at gaining characteristics of an Agreeable personality as it has been suggested to be the most positive in relation to the preschool child's social competence and positive parental confidence.

6.3. Future Recommendations

Future research could focus on attempting to use a larger sample size with a more heterogeneous group that could coincide more closely with the general population. Also a focus on children that do not attend day care centres and crèches could yield differing results between the parent and the child.

Taking personality into consideration, there are various complexities in personality and the parenting role. As a result it might be informative to break down the array of possible mediators and moderators that could elucidate the parents' personality and the parent-child relationship and the possible effects on the developing child.

Future research could consider the role that parents' age and gender play in their interactions with their children and how this may affect their children's social competence abilities and other areas of development.

This study focused mainly on determining whether a relationship existed between parents' personality, the parent-child relationship and the child's social abilities, it did not aim to determine a causal relationship, consequently future research could aim to determine the direction and impact of these relationships which could inform programmes that aim at increasing positive parent-child relationships and healthy child development.

Furthermore, this study focused on numerous variables, it is possible that research that focuses on specific aspects of personality and parenting, or narrows research aims to look at the parent-child relationship and children's social competence, may be more informative.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Demographic Form



UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

School of Human and Community Development
Private Bag 3, Wits 2050, Johannesburg, South Africa
Tel: (011) 717-4500 Fax: (011) 717-4559

Participant Number: _____

Age of parent: _____

Sex (parent):

Male	Female

Age of child: _____

Sex (child):

Male	Female

What is your ethnicity or cultural group: (for descriptive purposes only)

_____

Appendix B: Information Sheet for Parents

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

School of Human and Community Development
Private Bag 3, Wits 2050, Johannesburg, South Africa
Tel: (011) 717-4500 Fax: (011) 717-4559

Dear Parent

My name is Levandri Pillay; I am a Clinical Psychology Masters student at the University of Witwatersrand. As part of the Masters course we are required to complete a research paper. My research aims to explore the ways in which aspects of how children are parented are associated with the ways in which children develop as social beings. It is hoped that by gaining important information about the impact various aspects of parenting have on young children's social competence, this study can inform preventative interventions for children who may be struggling socially at school and in other settings.

For my research paper in this course, I would like to invite parents of children between the ages of three and six years old to fill out three questionnaires. The first questionnaire consists of questions relating to parents' interactions with their children and should take between 10-15 minutes to complete. The second questionnaire asks questions about how to you tend to approach different circumstances in life, in general. This questionnaire should take another 10-15 minutes to complete. The last questionnaire asks questions about your child's behaviour and social interactions; this should take 5-10 minutes to complete. Thus the overall time involved will be between 25-40 min. The information gathered from these questionnaires will enable me to complete the required report. I would like to invite you to participate in this study.

The questionnaires are attached to this letter. If you are interested in taking part in this research, please fill the questionnaires out and return them in the sealed, confidential boxes located in your child's classroom. This process will ensure that you remain anonymous and your responses remain confidential. The teachers will have no access to the contents of this box whatsoever and the completed questionnaires will be kept confidential, and will only be accessible to me and my research supervisor at the university.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you are not obligated to participate in any way. There are no perceived risks or benefits to you or your child by participating in this study. Your contribution will be invaluable as it will not only assist my research but also add to the body of literature on social competence in young children.

Should you feel uncomfortable at any point during the study you may choose to opt out, without any consequences. Please feel free to ask any questions before, during or after the study by calling me at 083 387 5526 or e-mailing me at levandri@gmail.com. Alternatively, you may contact my supervisor, Dr. Esther Price at esther.price@gmail.com should you have any concerns or queries.

If you are interested in the results of the study, the abridged findings will be made available to your child's school once the research has been completed, probably in March 2013.

Sincerely yours,

Levandri Pillay
(Masters Researcher)
University of Witwatersrand
levandri@gmail.com
083 387 5526

Dr. Esther Price
(Research Supervisor)
University of Witwatersrand
esther.price@wits.ac.za
083 570 2016

Appendix C: Information Sheet for School



School of Human and Community Development
Private Bag 3, Wits 2050, Johannesburg, South Africa
Tel: (011) 717-4500 Fax: (011) 717-4559

Dear School Head,

My name is Levandri Pillay; I am a Clinical Psychology Masters student at the University of Witwatersrand. As part of the Masters course we are required to complete a research paper. For my paper I proposed to explore the ways in which parents' personalities, parenting styles and their perceptions of the parent-child relationship, impact on social interactions (social competence) of young children. It is hoped that by gaining important information about the impact various aspects of parenting have on young children's social competence, this study can inform preventative interventions for children deemed at risk of future social developmental problems.

For my research paper in this course, I would like to invite parents of children between the ages of three and six years old to fill out three questionnaires. Firstly there is a questionnaire that consists of questions relating to parents' interactions with their children and should take between 10-15 minutes to complete. Secondly, they will be asked to complete a questionnaire that contains questions pertaining to parents' personality types and takes 10-15 minutes to complete. The last questionnaire contains questions relating to a child's behaviour and social interactions; this should take about 5-10 minutes to complete. Thus the overall time involved will be between 25-40 minutes. The information gathered from these questionnaires will enable me to complete the required report.

I will likely invite parents by sending children home with envelopes which will include information about the study and a request for consent to participate. Questionnaire packs will be included in the packets. If parents would like to take part, they will be invited to fill the questionnaires out at home, and they will then bring them back to the school. With your permission, I would like to put a sealed, confidential drop-box in the classes to make it easier for parents to anonymously return their questionnaires. The completed questionnaires will be kept confidential, and will only be accessible to me and my research supervisor at the university.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary and the parents (as well as the school) are not obligated to participate in any way. Also, should the school or the parents feel uncomfortable at any point during the study they may choose to withdraw their consent. Also, please feel free to ask any questions before, during or after the study by calling me at 083 387 5526 or e-mailing me at levandri@gmail.com. Alternatively, you may contact my supervisor, Dr. Esther Price (clinical psychologist) at 083 570 2016 should you have any concerns or queries.

If you are interested in the results of the study, the abridged findings will be made available to your office for interested parents to access once the research has been completed, probably in March 2013.

Sincerely,

Levandri Pillay
(Masters Researcher)
University of Witwatersrand
levandri@gmail.com
083 387 5526

Dr. Esther Price
(Research Supervisor)
University of Witwatersrand
esther.price@wits.ac.za
083 387 5526

Appendix D: Personality Questionnaire – NEO-FFI

		Strongly disagree	*Disagree*	*Neutral*	*Agree*	*Strongly agree*
1.	I am not a worrier.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	I like to have a lot of people around me.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	I don't like to waste my time daydreaming.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	I try to be courteous to everyone I meet.	1	2	3	4	5
5.	I keep my belongings clean and neat.	1	2	3	4	5
6.	I often feel inferior to others.	1	2	3	4	5
7.	I laugh easily.	1	2	3	4	5
8.	Once I find the right way to do something, I stick to it.	1	2	3	4	5
9.	I often get into arguments with my family and co-workers.	1	2	3	4	5
10.	I'm pretty good about pacing myself so as to get things done on time.	1	2	3	4	5
11.	When I'm under a great deal of stress, sometimes I feel like I'm going to pieces.	1	2	3	4	5
12.	I don't consider myself especially "light-hearted".	1	2	3	4	5
13.	I am intrigued by the patterns I find in art and nature.	1	2	3	4	5
14.	Some people think I'm selfish and egotistical.	1	2	3	4	5
15.	I am not a very methodical person.	1	2	3	4	5
16.	I rarely feel lonely or blue.	1	2	3	4	5
17.	I really enjoy talking to people.	1	2	3	4	5
18.	I believe letting students hear controversial speakers can only confuse and mislead them.	1	2	3	4	5

		Strongly disagree	*Disagree*	*Neutral*	*Agree*	*Strongly agree*
19.	I would rather cooperate with others than compete with them.	1	2	3	4	5
20.	I try to perform all the tasks assigned to me conscientiously.	1	2	3	4	5
21.	I often feel tense and jittery.	1	2	3	4	5
22.	I like to be where the action is.	1	2	3	4	5
23.	Poetry has little or no effect on me.	1	2	3	4	5
24.	I tend to be cynical and sceptical of others' intentions.	1	2	3	4	5
25.	I have a clear set of goals and work toward them in an orderly fashion.	1	2	3	4	5
26.	Sometimes I feel completely worthless.	1	2	3	4	5
27.	I usually prefer things done alone.	1	2	3	4	5
28.	I often try new and foreign foods.	1	2	3	4	5
29.	I believe that most people will take advantage of you if you let them.	1	2	3	4	5
30.	I waste a lot of time before settling down to work.	1	2	3	4	5
31.	I rarely feel fearful or anxious.	1	2	3	4	5
32.	I often feel as if I'm bursting with energy.	1	2	3	4	5
33.	I seldom notice the moods or feelings that different environments produce.	1	2	3	4	5
34.	Most people I know like me.	1	2	3	4	5
35.	I work hard to accomplish my goals.	1	2	3	4	5
36.	I often get angry at the way people treat me.	1	2	3	4	5
37.	I am a cheerful, high-spirited person.	1	2	3	4	5
38.	I believe we should look to our religious authorities for decisions on moral issues.	1	2	3	4	5
39.	Some people think of me as cold and calculating.	1	2	3	4	5

		Strongly disagree	*Disagree*	*Neutral*	*Agree*	*Strongly agree*
40.	When I make a commitment, I can always be counted on to follow through.	1	2	3	4	5
41.	Too often, when things go wrong, I get discouraged and feel like giving up.	1	2	3	4	5
42.	I am not a cheerful optimist.	1	2	3	4	5
43.	Sometimes when I am reading poetry or looking at a work of art, I feel a chill or wave of excitement.	1	2	3	4	5
44.	I'm hard-headed and tough-minded in my attitudes.	1	2	3	4	5
45.	Sometimes I'm not as dependable or reliable as I should be.	1	2	3	4	5
46.	I am seldom sad or depressed.	1	2	3	4	5
47.	My life is fast-paced.	1	2	3	4	5
48.	I have little interest in speculating on the nature of the universe or the human condition.	1	2	3	4	5
49.	I generally try to be thoughtful and considerate.	1	2	3	4	5
50.	I am a productive person who always gets the job done.	1	2	3	4	5
51.	I often feel helpless and want someone else to solve my problems.	1	2	3	4	5
52.	I am a very active person.	1	2	3	4	5
53.	I have a lot of intellectual curiosity.	1	2	3	4	5
54.	If I don't like people, I let them know it.	1	2	3	4	5
55.	I never seem to be able to get organized.	1	2	3	4	5
56.	At times I have been so ashamed I just wanted to hide.	1	2	3	4	5
57.	I would rather go my own way than be a leader of others.	1	2	3	4	5
58.	I often enjoy playing with theories or abstract ideas.	1	2	3	4	5

		Strongly disagree	*Disagree*	*Neutral*	*Agree*	*Strongly agree*
59.	If necessary, I am willing to manipulate people to get what I want.	1	2	3	4	5
60.	I strive for excellence in everything I do.	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix E: Parenting Relationship Questionnaire – PRQ-P

		Never	Sometimes	Often	Almost Always
1.	My child enjoys spending time with me	1	2	3	4
2.	It is easy for me to make decisions about what my child should do	1	2	3	4
3.	My child tests my limits	1	2	3	4
4.	It is important for a child to follow family rules	1	2	3	4
5.	I can sense my child's moods	1	2	3	4
6.	I am confident in my parenting ability	1	2	3	4
7.	Children should do what parents tell them to do	1	2	3	4
8.	My child and I play games together	1	2	3	4
9.	I overreact when my child misbehaves	1	2	3	4
10.	I enjoy spending time with my child	1	2	3	4
11.	My child and I do things together outdoors	1	2	3	4
12.	It's hard being a parent	1	2	3	4
13.	When upset, my child comes to me for comfort	1	2	3	4
14.	I read to my child	1	2	3	4
15.	I insist that my child follow the rules of the house	1	2	3	4
16.	I know when my child wants to be left alone	1	2	3	4
17.	My child and I go on outings together	1	2	3	4
18.	I punish my child when he or she misbehaves	1	2	3	4

		Never	Sometimes	Often	Almost Always
19.	My child is hard for me to handle	1	2	3	4
20.	I know when my child will become upset	1	2	3	4
21.	I make good parenting decisions	1	2	3	4
22.	I teach my child how to play new games	1	2	3	4
23.	Our family eats together at the dinner table	1	2	3	4
24.	I know what to say to calm down my child	1	2	3	4
25.	My child knows the house rules	1	2	3	4
26.	I make a lot of mistakes when dealing with my child	1	2	3	4
27.	I punish my child if he or she shows disrespect to an adult	1	2	3	4
28.	I know what my child is thinking	1	2	3	4
29.	I am in control of my household	1	2	3	4
30.	I punish my child if he or she talks back to an adult	1	2	3	4
31.	My child and I work on projects together	1	2	3	4
32.	During the last year, my child has been difficult to take care of	1	2	3	4
33.	When my child is upset, I can calm him or her	1	2	3	4
34.	My child and I take walks together	1	2	3	4
35.	I lose my patience with my child	1	2	3	4
36.	It is my responsibility as a parent to punish all of my child's misbehaviour	1	2	3	4
37.	My child and I plan things to do together	1	2	3	4
38.	I punish my child so he or she learns the proper respect for others	1	2	3	4
39.	I know how my child will react in most situations	1	2	3	4

		Never	Sometimes	Often	Almost Always
40.	I remain calm when dealing with my child's misbehaviour	1	2	3	4
41.	I punish my child if he or she destroys someone else's things	1	2	3	4
42.	I lose my temper with my child	1	2	3	4
43.	I know what my child is feeling	1	2	3	4
44.	I have the energy that I need to cope with my child	1	2	3	4
45.	My child and I do arts and crafts together	1	2	3	4

Appendix F: Social Competence Scale - Parent Version – SCS-P

	Not at All	A Little	Moderately Well	Well	Very Well
1. My child can accept things not going his/her way.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. My child copes well with failure.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. My child thinks before acting.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. My child works out problems with friends or brothers and sisters on his/her own.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. My child can calm down by himself/herself when excited or all wound up.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6. My child does what he/she is told to do.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7. My child is very good at understanding other people's feelings.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8. My child controls his/her temper when there is a disagreement.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9. My child shares things with others.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10. My child is helpful to others.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11. My child listens to others' points of view.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
12. My child can give suggestions and opinions without being bossy.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐