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RESEARCH ARTICLE

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The relationship between parenting styles and social competence amongst adolescents.

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The Relationship between Parenting Styles and Social Competence amongst Adolescents

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Abstract

Individual and environmental factors are reported to be determinants in social functioning and integration. Current literature on parenting styles recognises the significant impact of parenting on childhood development and its influence on adolescent's social competence (Dekovic, et al., 2002; Anthony, et al., 2005; Barbarin & Richter, 1999; Barblett & Maloney, 2010; Bradley & Corwyn, 2002; Fantuzzo & McWayne, 2002; Huit & Dawson, 2011; Pillay, 2013; Repetti, et al., 2002). According to attachment theory, initial social functioning involves the continuous reciprocal relationship between an individual and his/her primary caregivers. Children use this relationship as a foundation on which to base their future relationships. Therefore, a strong and secure foundation with a primary caregiver encourages healthy and stable relationships throughout an individual's life span (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Blakely & Dziadosz, 2015; Groh, et al., 2014). However, research investigating the relationship between parenting styles and social competence in South African adolescents is limited (Barbarin & Richter, 1999; Pillay, 2013; Roman., et al. 2016).

Thus this study investigated this relationship by administering questionnaires to a sample of 90 students aged between 12 and 14 years old, from a mainstream public school in Johannesburg. The design was quantitative and Pearson correlation analyses were used to analyse the results. No significant relationships between parenting styles and social competence in a sample of adolescents was found.

Keywords

parenting, childhood development, social competence, adolescents.

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like to thank the principle, teachers and students at the participating school for their co-operation and willingness to participate in this research study.

Introduction and Literature Review

"There is no way in which parents can evade having a determining effect upon their children's personality, character and competence." (Baumrind, 1978, p. 239). Parenting is often considered to be a controversial topic as there is no specific guideline describing how to parent children (Roman N. V., 2014). Kerby Alvy (1981) defines parenting as the carrying out of responsibilites for guiding and nurturing all aspects of a child's development, including their physical, emotional, social and intellectual development (Alvy, 1981). Huit & Dawson (2011) consider the parent-infant relationship as essential to the development of the child. As such, parenting is a crucial influential component to the growth and socialisation of children. Noteworthy is that this influence is not limited to childhood and extends into adolescence (Dekovic, et al., 2002) where parents continue to influence various behaviours in the adolescent.

Parenting adolescents involves many responsibilities, challenges as well as rewards. Child-rearing occurs at various stages of childhood development and parents are expected to adjust to and assist their children to reach progressive developmental milestones (Mathibe, 2015). Additionally, required parenting practices will differ at each progressive developmental milestone (Mathibe, 2015) adding to the complexity of parenting. Cultural practices also play a significant role in determining parenting practices and child-rearing (Roman, 2014).

Since parenting and childhood development is influenced by the parent-child relationship, attachment theory needs to be considered as a key component in this regard.

Attachment

Attachment theory stems from the combined work of John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth. Attachment theory illustrates that "an infant's attachment to a caregiver serves as the foundation for all future social development." (Bowlby as cited in Huit & Dawson, 2011, p. 3).

As children mature they will depend on the security of their attachment relationship with their primary caregiver to explore their environments and form relationships with others (Holmes, 2015). Children who form secure attachments to their primary caregiver are likely to become socially competent (Holmes, 2015). Early experiences with primary caregivers become internalised by the infant in the form of internal working models. These internal working models guide a child's thoughts and behaviours in relation to others which ultimately

contribute to the formation of the child's relationship with others in their environment (Groh, et al., 2014). Based on this premise the relationship one forms with others is dependent upon one's early attachment relationship with their primary caregiver. Interpersonal relationships and secure attachments have a profound effect on the adolescent's attainment of social skills, and the development of appropriate social identity (Bretherton, 1992; Engels, et al., 2001; Holmes, 2015; Kurth, 2013).

Parenting styles

Generally parenting refers to the care and guardianship of parents towards their children in the hope of preparing them adequately for adolescence and adulthood. Baumrind (1960's) drew on the ideas of attachment theory and child-rearing practices in order to identify typical parenting styles. Baumrind identified three initial parenting styles; authoritarian, authoritative and permissive parenting. Later, Maccoby and Martin (1983) expanded upon Baumrind's work and added a fourth parenting style: the uninvolved or neglectful parenting style. In 2005, Baumrind wrote about the multifaceted behaviour of parenting styles. She proposed that her original definitions were exemplars to draw patterns of behaviour and characteristics in order to facilitate defining and understanding parenting styles (Baumrind, 2005). Parenting styles differ between parents and at different developmental stages of a child's life (Baumrind, 2005). Additionally, it is unclear exactly which aspect of the parenting style is responsible for the development of the child (Smith, et al., 2003).

Parenting can also be determined by two factors: responsiveness and demandingness (Bibi, et al., 2013). Parental responsiveness refers to the extent to which parents are supportive and attentive towards their child's needs. Demandingness refers to the type of discipline expected by one's parental figures. A considerable amount of research has been conducted on parenting styles and its influence on childhood development (Baumrind, et al., 2010; Engels, et al., 2002; Eshel, et al., 2006; Lee, et al., 2006; Mathibe, 2015; Milevsky, et al., 2007; Roman N. V., 2014; Roopnarine, et al., 2006; Spera, 2005). However, there is limited research within South Africa that examines the relationship between parenting styles and social competence amongst adolescents.

Rohner, Khaleque and Cournoyer's theory of parental acceptance-rejection is also commonly known as a theory of socialisation (Rohner, et al., 2005). The focus of this theory is on the behavioural, emotional, cognitive and personality development of the child. The theory considers the degree of parental warmth and affection; provided by an essential parental

figure (not necessarily a mother or father), that allows the child to feel accepted or rejected (Bibi, et al., 2013).

Socialisation and Parenting

Social competence is best understood as effective social interaction. It refers to an individual's ability to manage and respond to social behaviours in an acceptable manner within different contexts (Huit & Dawson, 2011; Pillay, 2013; Rydell, et al.,1997). The development of social competence begins within one's home environment through the attachment relationship with one's primary caregivers (Huit & Dawson, 2011). Social competence is a multi-faceted concept involving positive frequent interactions with both family and peers. At each stage of childhood development there exists periods of "pro-social skills (friendly, cooperative, helpful behaviours) and self-control skills (anger management, negotiation skills, and problem solving skills)" (Merrell et al., 1998: 30 as cited in Kruger, 2006, p. 102) that are considered to be key features of social competence. It is through this attachment relationship that the parent models certain appropriate social behaviours which are assimilated and integrated by the infant.

The international literature reports favourable links between parenting styles and social skills in children and adolescents (Engels, et al., 2002; Lee, et al., 2006; Mathibe, 2015; Roopnarine, et al., 2006; Spera, 2005). Research conducted at the University of California in 2002, explored family social environments and its effect on the mental and physical health of children (Repetti, et al., 2002). It was found that children from healthy families learn to rely on their immediate environments to provide support and safety; thus, allowing them to maintain and develop their own emotional development (Repetti, et al., 2002). Results reported that children from risky families, characterised by family environments and relationships that are unsupportive and neglectful, demonstrated lower levels of social competence compared to children brought up in healthy families (Repetti, et al., 2002). Additionally, Milevsky et al., found that parenting styles were related to well-being in adolescence; with authoritative parenting being related to a greater self-confidence and contentment with one's life (Milevsky, et al., 2007). Mensah and Kuranchie (2013) revealed that most parents adopt an authoritative parenting style charactertised by the responsiveness, warmth and care shown towards their children. They also found a relationship between parenting styles and children's sociability. Authrotitative parents were revealed to encourage socially compenent children; as such the researchers inferred that the way in which children

are raised affect their social development. (Mensah & Kuranchie, 2013). Vijila, Thomas and Ponnusamy (2013) found that authoritative parenting style together with aspects of permissive parenting resulted in adolescents behaving in more socially competent ways. Parenting styles play a vital role in the social, emotional and cognitive development of the child (Vijila, et al., 2013).

The present study focused on adolescents, aged between 12 and 14, as social integration is a primary developmental task of this age group. The development of social competence begins in the home and is influenced by parents and siblings (Anthony, et al., 2005; Baumrind, 1991). Relationships with peers become more important for adolescents at this stage and as such, they will utilise the skills they learn from their relationships with their parents or guardians to create lasting and effective relationships with their peers (Pillay, 2013). Therefore, the family has a vital role to play in the development of social competence. However, the dynamics and structures of most families varies within different societies. Lesch and de Jager (2013) consider parents and peer relationships as essential sources of socialisation for adolescents. During adolescence, peers serve as influential agents of socialisation (Hoskins, 2014).

Social Competence and Culture

Parenting styles and expectations of parenting differ across the world and within both western and non-western societies (Bornstein, M.H, 2013; Roman, 2014). Although the practice of parenting and child-rearing mostly occurs in the confines of one's home parenting is influenced by multiple factors and occurs in multiple contexts and cultures (Bornstein, M.H, 2013).

Belsky (1984 as cited in Smith, 2003); described three main influences on parental functioning.

> "The three influences are: A) the personal psychological resources of the parent; which includes parental mental health, their own understandings of relationships and their developmental history B) contextual sources of support; this refers to the network of support available for the parent including family, friends, job and financial security and lastly, C) characteristics of the child; this refers to the personality and temperament of the child." (Smith, et al., 2003, p. 127).

Therefore, parenting is not the only explanation for children's behaviour and competencies. External factors also play a significant role in the development and socialisation of children. However, research on the relationship between parenting styles and social competence amongst children and adolescents in South Africa is limited (Mathibe, 2015; Pillay, 2013).

Pillay (2013), investigated parent's perceptions of their relationship with their children related to a pre-school child's social competence. The study found that personality and characteristics of parents are related to social competence of children. The study showed that parents with positive characteristics influenced positive social skills amongst their children (Pillay, 2013). The study also revealed that healthy parent-child relationships and attachments affect healthy social competencies amongst children (Pillay, 2013). The present study investigated parent's perceptions of the parent-child relationship as a predictor of social competence. Another South African study investigated the relationship between perceived parenting styles, resilience and emotional intelligence among adolescents (Mathibe, 2015). Results found a correlation between parenting, resilience and emotional intelligence in children. These results indicate a correlation between parenting styles and adolescent behaviour and emotional functioning.

A study conducted by the South African Institute for Race Relations (Holborn & Eddy, 2011) illustrates the reality of the challenges many families face in South Africa. The researchers of the study note that "family life in South Africa has never been simple to describe or understand" (Holborn & Eddy, 2011, p. 1) as the western concept of a nuclear family is an inaccurate description of the average South African family.

The concept of family differs within western and non-western societies. Universally, families provide the initial foundation for "nurturance, protection and socialisation" (Trask, 2010, p. 22) of individuals. However, the idea of what constitutes a family differs across cultures. Western societies view parents and parental figures as largely responsible for the development and nurturance of children. Western society encourages parents to teach and guide their children in both intellectual and social development (Barone, 2015). This proactive, directive approach to parenting contrasts to the understanding of childhood development in some non-western societies. Research has found that the relationship between parents and children in a South African context differs to international research (Roman., et al. 2016). Moreover, culture determines how children are treated and regarded as members of society. For example, for the San in South Africa:

> "The relationship between children and adults is easy-going and unselfconscious. Adults do not believe that children should keep to themselves: be seen but not heard. The organization of work, leisure, and living space is such that there is no reason for confining children or excluding them from certain activities." (Draper 1976: 205).

"The concept of the nuclear family has never accurately captured the norm of all South African families." (Holborn & Eddy, 2011, p. 1). A country consisting of millions of people through nine provinces (Statistics South Africa, 2016) multiple languages, various cultures, ethnicities, races and diverse levels of socio-economic status, family life in South Africa is not simple to describe. Therefore, the concept of a nuclear family may not necessarily apply to all contexts, especially South Africa (Amos, 2013). South African families often consist of extended families, where other members of the family or community are involved in the upbringing of children. Within extended families the biological parents are not solely responsibility for taking care of the child; this is supported by the African proverb on parenting which asserts that, "a single hand cannot nurse a child" (Amos, 2013). The extended family, according to Degbey (2012) consists of individuals from several generations including cousins, uncles and aunts living close together. This type of family structure is unified and sees to the economic, social and psychological needs of its members (Amos, 2013). Additionally, Degbey (2012) states that the family system outlines the social norms, customs and traditions of a community as well as provides an exemplary role model preparing children for adulthood. These role models are predominantly the elders in the family and exert a "high degree of social control" over family members (Amos, 2013).

Child rearing practices differ across different cultures. African cultures view the individual as secondary to the family unit and the community (Westwood, 2013). These ideals are integrated into the socialisation process; where the group models and encourages specific social behaviours. Extended families maintain a social system in which children develop social competence through acceptance of who they are (Westwood, 2013). Another important factor to consider is the influence of race and ethnicity in parent-child relations and the outcomes of this on childhood development. McMurtry (2013) explored racial differences in Baumrind's model of parenting styles among Black and White American young Adults. The study found no differences in the authoritative, authoritarian and permissive parenting styles for both Black and White American groups. In addition, a study conducted in 2011 examined parenting behaviours and styles among monoracial and multiracial adolescents. Results

revealed no significant differences between monoracial and multiracial adolescents. However, it was found that on average, Black adolescents reported higher levels of parental control than multiracial adolescents (House, 2011). Noteworthy, Holborn and Eddy (2011) revealed that irrespective of who raises South African youth they remain motivated and hopeful of achieving their goals. These results demonstrate the resiliency and independence of South African youth (Holborn & Eddy, 2011).

Additionally, the schooling environment to which children are exposed on a daily basis and the influence this context plays in the socialisation process should be considered. Classroom structures "determine the peers to which children are exposed and with whom they interact most directly and continuously" (Hoglung & Leadbeater, 2004, p. 533), contributing to the quality of peer interactions.

Additionally, parent education levels are seen to influence social competence amongst children. "Evidence suggests that poorly educated parents are more socially isolated, are less connected to the school system, and generate fewer social learning opportunities for their children outside of the school environment" (Hoglung & Leadbeater, 2004, p. 535) thus limiting children's opportunities to develop interpersonal skills and interpersonal relationships. Low education levels may be inhibit a parent's capacity to effectively and proficiently support their children's socialisation. These parents may be restricted in their capacity to provide social resources to children which encourage and stimulate one's social environment (Hoglung & Leadbeater, 2004).

Encouraging children to develop healthy and effective social competencies allows them to succeed in multiple areas of their lives. Parent-child relationships and interactions affects the adolescent's social competence in relationships with others which in turn could affect a variety of areas in the adolescent's life as he or she moves into adulthood.

Method

Participants

Participants were 90 Grade 6 and 7 learners (56.7% girls, 43.3 % boys) from a mainstream school in Johannesburg. Most of the participants were 12 or 13 years old (i.e. 41.1% of the sample). Learners with signed consent from their parents were allowed to participate in the study. According to the World Health Organisation, adolescence is defined as the period that occurs after childhood and before adulthood, from ages 10 to 19. Therefore, the researcher

purposively chose Grades 6 and 7 as it is at this stage that children are considered entering adolescence and the drive for social integration is intensified. A public school in Johannesburg with a mixed socio-economic profile amongst learners was chosen to ensure a sufficiently representative sample of the general population in South Africa.

Instruments

The Perception of Parents Scale (POPS). Developed by Grolnick, Ryan and Deci the POPS assesses children's perceptions of their parent's support of autonomy, involvement and warmth (Grolnick, Ryan, & Deci, 1991). The scale investigates the adolescent's understanding and views of their parents and is based on the premise that a child's development is influenced by both their mother and father, "for it is through interaction with both parents that children acquire the skills needed for better development." (Kocayoruk, 2012, p. 3). The children were instructed to complete both sections pertaining to mother and father even if it would mean referring to an 'elder' as the primary caregiver.

The POPS is based on a large body of research conducted by Deci and Ryan on Self-Determination Theory (SDT). Self-Determination Theory views parental figures as socialising agents for their children focused on supporting their child's internalisation of societal and cultural values, attitudes and behaviours (Gorlnick, et al., 1997). According to SDT, parents play a vital role in the development and psychological well-being of the adolescent (Kocayoruk, 2012). The child version of the POPS, used in this study, investigates the adolescent's perceptions of their parents parenting styles. The scale has 22 items: 11 for mothers and 11 for fathers. From these items, 6 subscale scores are calculated: mother autonomy support, involvement of the mother and maternal warmth; and father autonomy support, involvement of the father and paternal warmth (Grolnick, et al., 1991). Wintre and Yaffe (1991) found high reliability for the POPS (α=0.938).

Children's Self-efficacy in Peer Interactions Scale (CSPI) (Wheeler & Ladd, 1982) measures youths' perceptions of their ability to be successful in social interactions. It has 22 items which measures youths' perceptions of their ability to be successful in social interactions (Wheeler & Ladd, 1982). The "operational definition of the construct of social self-efficacy focuses on prosocial verbal persuasive skills in specific peer situations." (p. 796). The scale was developed on the premise that social competence refers to being able to influence the behaviour and feelings of others in a socially acceptable manner as such enabling the child to acquire and maintain acceptance from peers. The questionnaire contains two subscales that

measure social self-efficacy in conflict and non-conflict situations. Each item on the scale has a 4 point scoring scale, ranging from “HARD!” = 1 to “EASY!” = 4. The subscales can be used separately or combined into a total score. Reliability for the conflict situations scale is $\alpha = 0.85$ and $\alpha = 0.73$ for non-conflict situations subscale; $\alpha = 0.85$ for the total scale. The scales validity coefficients have also been found to be statistically significant.

Procedure

Following approval by the University of the Witwatersrand Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical) and the Gauteng Department of Education, schools in Johannesburg were approached and invited to participate in the research study. Once school granted permission, the researcher then distributed the participant information sheet and consent letters to all learners and parents. On a day arranged with the school, the researcher distributed the questionnaires to the learners and collected the completed questionnaires on the same day. Learners and parents were assured of confidentiality as well as the voluntary nature of the study.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher gave careful consideration to the ethical nature of the study. The Gauteng Department of Education gave written consent for the research to be conducted at a public school in Johannesburg. Additionally, the principal of the participating school gave written consent for the research to be conducted at the school. Thereafter, each parent was given an information letter explaining the research together with consent forms which needed to be signed and sent back to the researcher. Only learners whose parents had given signed consent were invited to give assent as well. Cognisance was taken of the age of the learners and the sensitivity around each questionnaire; as such, the parent information sheet and consent form stated that the questionnaires were non-maleficent; however, should any issues arise certain information and contact details were provided for learners should they request counselling. The researcher controlled the distribution and collection of the questionnaires to ensure anonymity as well as address any queries or concerns the learners may have had during the completion of the questionnaires. To ensure anonymity, each questionnaire was assigned a unique number and no names were written on the questionnaire.

Data Analysis

Raw data was transferred to an excel spreadsheet for analysis using IBM SPSS. Once collated onto IBM SPSS, Pearson Correlation were run to determine whether social competence correlates with perceived parenting styles.

Results

Reliabilities

Initially, Cronbach Alpha Coefficients were calculated for the scales and their respective subscales to establish internal consistency reliability.

Table 2

Internal consistency reliabilities for the main variables and their subscales

	Number of Items	**Cronbach's Alpha**
CSPI (total)	22	0.84
CSPI- conflict situations	10	0.87
CSPI – non conflict situations	12	0.75
POPS- mother	11	0.7
POPS- father	11	0.73

As depicted in Table 2 above, the social competence questionnaire had high internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.8\ to\ 0.9$), with the exception of the non-conflict subscale. The Cronbach Alpha for non-conflict situations as well as the scores for the POPS, had moderate internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.7\ to\ 0.75$). The results suggest that the scales and subscales used were internally consistent and reliable.

Normal distribution

In order to determine the level of social competence amongst adolescents as well as their perception of their parents parenting style within the sample, descriptive statistics were calculated. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Descriptive statistics and normality for the main variables

Variable	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Min	Max	Skewness	Kurtosis
CSPI total	90	65.39	10.68	36	88	.19	-.23
CSPI- CS	90	29.00	6.17	15	40	-.12	-.52
CSPI- NCS	90	36.39	6.32	21	48	-.28	-.35
POPS- mother	90	30.12	5.01	17	43	-.16	0.06
POPS-father	81	28.53	7.00	11	42	-.70	0.10

The overall level of social competence as measured by the CSPI was high (*M* = 65.39; *SD* = 10.68). The level of social competence for both conflict and non-conflict situations was average (*M* =29.00; *SD* =6.17 and *M* =36.39; *SD* =6.32 respectively). Additionally, the perception of parental support of autonomy, involvement and warmth for both mothers and fathers was average (Mother: *M*= 30.12; *SD* =5.01 and Father: *M*= 28.53; *SD* =7.00).

As seen in Table 3 above, the skewness coefficients for all the scales and subscales were between -1 and 1 indicating that the data was relatively normally distributed. Additionally, the kurtosis values were all relatively close to 0 and within the 3 to -3 range supporting that the data was not heavily skewed. Lastly, according to the Central Limit Theory, sample sizes greater than n=30 can be considered as normally distributed (Kwak & Kim, 2017) . The sample size of the present study was fairly large (n=90) and therefore met the above requirement. The aforementioned information indicates that the data within this study sufficiently met the assumptions for normality and, as such, parametric analytic techniques were used.

Relationship between adolescent's perceptions of their parents parenting style and their self-efficacy in peer interactions (social competence)

A correlations analysis was conducted in order to establish whether or not there was a relationship between the variables of perceived parenting styles and reported social competence amongst adolescents. Pearson's Correlation Coefficients were calculated between the overall CSPI, the two subscales of the CSPI and the two subscales of the POPS. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 4 below.

Table 4

Relationships between Children's Self-efficacy in Peer Interactions (Social competence) and Perception of Parenting styles (n=90)

		CSPI 1 (conflict)	**CSPI 2 (non-conflict)**	**POPS mother**	**POPS father (n=81)**
Total	Pearson Correlation	0.85	0.86	-.02	0.11
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.00	0.00	0.84	0.34
CSPI 1	Pearson Correlation		0.46	0.09	0.10
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.00	0.39	0.39
CSPI 2	Pearson Correlation			-0.13	0.08
	Sig (2-tailed)			0.24	0.48
POPS mother	Pearson Correlation				0.19
	Sig. (2-tailed)				0.082

The correlation matrix in Table 4 above demonstrates that none of the CSPI scales and subscales were significantly related to the POPS subscales. The results showed no significant relationships between the independent and dependent variables.

Item analysis for each item on each subscale

An item analysis was carried out where the frequencies of each response on each item of the scales and subscales were investigated. The results showed no noteworthy response from the participants suggesting that in general; the participants reported average social competences as well as perceived parental support of autonomy, involvement and warmth.

Overall, the results of the present study showed no significant correlation between parenting styles and social competence amongst adolescence; indicating that the adolescent's level of social competence does not change depending on the perceived parenting style of the parents. The non-significance of these results requires understanding of the role of parenting styles in the development of social competence in children from a South African perspective.

Discussion

The goal of the present study was to investigate the relationship between perceptions of parenting styles and social competence amongst adolescents as investigated in a sample of 90 students from a public school in Johannesburg. It should be noted that this sample size is relatively small which would impact the findings of the study as results from a larger sample size influence the generalizability of the findings. The results of the study found no significant relationships between these two variables.

Research investigating the influence of parenting on childhood development has found a link between parenting and various childhood outcomes (Baumrind, et al., 2010; Engels, et al., 2002; Eshel, et al., 2006; Lee, et al., 2006; Mathibe, 2015; Milevsky, et al., 2007; Pillay, 2013; Roman N. V., 2014; Roopnarine, et al., 2006; Spera, 2005). Results indicate that adolescent well-being correlates with positive parenting styles (Milevsky, et al., 2007; Mathibe, 2015).

In accordance with the findings of Holborn and Eddy's (2011) study in which they found that irrespective of who the primary caregivers were, the children maintained good self-reliance and motivation. This study explored different types of family structures within South Africa; namely, orphaned and child-headed households, single-parent households, absent fathers, as well as the impact of Apartheid and poverty on the family unit. Whereas the current study did

not explore the different family backgrounds of the participants; the findings of Holborn's and Eddy's study (2011) could be viewed as an explanation and point of future research since since parenting styles did not influence adolescent's social competence.

Research conducted by Vijila, et al., (2013) and found links between specific parenting styles and social competence. Vijila, et al. (2013) investigated the relationship between parenting styles and social competence amongst adolescents. The Parents scale was used to determine the type of parenting style employed; and the adolescents completed a questionnaire to determine their level of social competence. Relationships were noted between a specific type of parenting style- authoritative- and adequate social competence. Vijila, et al. (2013) included parent's perceptions of their own parenting style. This allows for a unique perspective from both children and parents as opposed to obtaining information solely from children. Similar to the study conducted by Mensah & Kuranchie (2013), this study examined student's perceptions of parenting styles. However, social competence was determined by the teachers perspective and not, like the present study, through their own perspective. Although these studies examined individuals in adolescence they differed in terms of the methodology employed and results obtained. Each study obtained perspectives of parenting style; however, that was obtained from different sources. Additionally, social competence in adolescence was also investigated in each study; however, once again this was examined through different perspectives (namely: the teacher or adolescent).

More specifically, research has reported parental influence on social functioning (Anthony et al., 2005; Baumrind, 1978; Dekovic., et al., 2002; Huit & Dawson, 2011; Repetti, et al., 2002). Pillay (2013) found a link between positive parenting characteristics and outcomes of social competence in children. However, the results of the present study did not confirm this, possibly because of the different stages of development of the participants and the current study did not review these specific variables. This points to a need for further development in this area of research in the South African context.

The results of this study could be due to various factors. As previously mentioned, South Africa has a unique family structure, not typical of the nuclear family (Holborn & Eddy, 2011). The extended families in a South African context are influential in the development of children. Each member who plays a role in the life of the child has a level of influence over his/her development. Within extended families, the biological parents are not solely responsible for the upbringing and development of the children (Rohner, et al., 2005).

Frequently, an elder is responsible for the upbringing and development of the child. This research, looked specifically at mothers and fathers parenting styles which is incongruent to the extended family system which at present dominates the South African context. This is another indicator for further research into this area.

As Belsky's (1984) model explains; child development is influenced not only by parental control but also by the resources available in one's community, the context in which one lives as well as the personality of the individual (Smith, et al., 2003). The participants of the current study attend a modern, well equipped public school and many appropriate and adequate educational resources available to them. Their school environment could of nurtured specific abilities and strengths in a positive way. It is evident that external factors influence the development and socialisation of children.

Conclusions

Definitions and understandings of parenting styles vary across cultures, communities and societies. Much research has been done exploring this subject with no universal prescribed style of parenting established. This notion appears to be culturally dependent and as such results may differ amongst multiple cultures and societies.

Based on the findings outlined above, no significant results were found between parenting styles and social competence amongst adolescents. This study highlights the need for further query into adolescent's perceptions of their parent's parenting styles and their social competence. It suggests that cultural or societal influences play a role in these perceptions when comparing to multiple sources of literature and research.

Strengths and Limitations of the study

The research revealed a need for further in-depth investigation and research into South African adolescent's perceptions of their own social competence as well as their parents parenting styles. The research needs to be focused on different age groups, socio-economic backgrounds, and family structure and urban versus rural contexts.

A limitation of this study was that the instruments used were not designed for the South African population. Additionally, the study had a relatively small sample size from only one public school in Johannesburg; thus limiting the scope, generalizability and demographics of the data. Furthermore, the instruments used (the CSPI and POPS) are self-report measures of the respective constructs of interest. Whilst self-report measures are useful for gaining insight into participants' personal thoughts and feelings, they can also be problematic because they

assume that people are able and willing to accurately self-report on the causes of their behaviours. Even if participants answer as accurately as possible, they are still subject to reactivity. It should be noted that the validation of the POPS scale was investigated using 132 university students (85 females, 47 males), 18-25 years old; this sample differs in age and number to the present study; the validation was done on the adult scale and not the children's scale which was used in this research study.

The demographic questionnaire used in this study did not include any information relative to family structure or the identified caregiver. The content and construct validity of the questionnaires for a SA context has not been determined and this is the first known use of the questionnaires in South Africa with adolescents. Establishing content and construct validity for this context and age group is recommended. This study only focused on adolescents, a time in which children tend to become more independent from their parents and therefore is likely to impact the results.

Directions for future research

Firstly, future research should ideally make use of a larger sample size that is more representative of the population, and would therefore increase the generalizability within the South African context. Additionally, due to scope, this study focused on a specific demographic within a specific province in South Africa. It would be useful for future research to explore this further in order to gain insight into this topic from multiple contexts and cultures.

In order to gain a deeper understanding of parenting styles within a South African context and its link to social competence; it might to worthwhile to conduct qualitative research amongst parents and adolescents at varying stages of development. Given that the scales used in this study focused on specific aspects of parenting styles and social competence, encouraging discussion might allow for a broader understanding into these constructs and the multiple dynamics at play within their environments. Additionally, the instruments used were not standardised for the South African population and there is a need for such tools to be designed. Consideration should also be taken to the number of languages spoken in South African and tools should be designed to accommodate these children. Cultural influences needs to be taken into consideration when conducting studies within multicultural environments; as culture plays a critical role in the development and socialisation of children.

This study established a sense of understanding and introductory insight into a specific factor of childhood development, that being social competence, and its link to parenting styles. However, social competence is just one factor involved in childhood well-being. As such, future research should aim to investigate other potential areas of childhood development.

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