Social competence constructs play an important role in the developmental theory and research. It has gained importance because it has been considered both as an index and a predictor of healthy psychological adaptation across the life span. Critical components of social competence are currently being identified and conceptualized both with children and adults. Previously a little was known about social competence in preschool years. It is only recently that the preschool period has been subjected to extensive empirical investigation and now a large body of research regarding social competence of preschool children is available.

A number of studies have shown associations between home-characteristics and social competence. More recently, large scale survey studies have begun to link specific attributes of parents to social competence of children. In this connection it was thought that parental locale, socioeconomic status and education would affect the development of social competence of preschool children. This important aspect has not been given due attention by the researchers. Specially in India it has been almost neglected. Therefore, the present study was undertaken with a view to examine the role of parental locale, socioeconomic status, and education in social competence of children. Age-and sex-difference in social competence has also been studied in the present research.
The study has been divided into six chapters. In the first chapter, the concept and measurement of social competence has been explained. The second chapter reviews the relevant studies. In the third chapter problems and related hypotheses have been specified. The fourth chapter describes the methodology adopted in the study. The obtained results have been discussed in the fifth chapter. It has been observed that the residential locale of the parents have been found to influence children's social competence. The urban children have shown the highest degree of social competence and the tribal, the lowest. The rural children have occupied an intermediary position. Socioeconomic status of the parents is also found to affect the social competence of the children. The children coming from high socioeconomic status have shown the higher social competence than the children coming from low socioeconomic status. The role of sex in social competence has revealed the mixed results. The rural and the tribal male children have shown higher social competence than the female children but no sex-difference has been observed in urban children. The obtained results have been discussed in the light of different socialization processes that are reflected in different locales, socioeconomic status and education of the family. A precise resume of the study has been presented in the sixth chapter.

It is hoped that the results of the present research would be helpful in developing an understanding of psychodynamics involved in social competence. We hope that the results of
the present study would enable the parents, teachers, academicians and social workers in particular and the society in general, in understanding the factors that regulate the socially competent behaviour in the children. It has been discussed that different locales affect the social competence of children through different patterns of socialization which are reflected in their parenting, behaviour-patterns, language etc. Positive improvements in parenting behaviour, language etc. may help children to develop their social competence. A positive influence of socioeconomic status on children's social competence suggests, that one way, in which economic factors impact upon children's development of social competence is by affecting the degree to which parents are available for their children to satisfy their needs and to present opportunities for their multifacet development. An evidence of comparatively low level of competence of children coming from low educated family suggests that educating parents may be helpful in building up a healthy generation needed for proper development of the society. It is expected that these informations would probe into a better understanding of the concept of social competence which may prove useful in eradicating various problems which are related to the early childhood experiences caused by parental attributes.

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(Keete Thakur)