A detailed description of the various steps involved in studying the problem undertaken is presented in this chapter.

The Design of the Study

The present study attempts to find out the relationship between parenting style of mothers and the social competency of their children. Accordingly, the design of the study included identification of the dominant parenting style of selected mothers and measurement of the social competence of children. It also sought to determine the relationship between parenting style and children’s social competence by controlling a number of other variables including the educational and occupational status of mothers, kind of employment of mother, sex and birth order of children, and place of residence. The design of the study also included an inventory of parenting style of mothers and a scale for rating the social competence of children. The participants of the study included 451 children of both sexes, 451 mothers and 23 teachers.

Area of Study

The present study was done in two revenue districts, namely, Dindigul and Madurai. Children and mothers included as rural participants were selected from the rural areas of Dindigul district while the children and
mothers included as urban participants were selected from Dindigul city and Madurai city. Of the 12 blocks in Dindigul district, from among 3 blocks namely, Dindigul, Alhoor and Nilakottai Blocks, the rural participants were selected.

According to 1991 census the population of Dindigul district was 17,60,601. The geographical area is of 6266.64 square kilometers. The districts' rural population was 13,83,580 and the urban population was 3,77,021 (District Statistical Hand Book, 1997). Dindigul city is an industrial area where people are employed in lock making, leather and handloom industries. People in the rural areas are mostly farm labourers. They work either in their own farms or as wage labourers in others' farms.

The second major city which provided the urban participants was Madurai. Madurai city is about 60 kilometers from Dindigul town and 50 kilometers south of Gandhigram where the university is located. Madurai is the third largest city in Tamilnadu. As per the statistics provided by National Information Centre (1997) at Madurai, the city had a population of 9,04,987. The major occupations of the people are trade, manufacturing handloom goods, construction work, cultivation and quarry work. There are about seventeen high schools in Madurai city alone.

Two factors, namely proximity and cooperation, influenced the selection of the study area. Gandhigram is well known among people of this area and so cooperation of school authorities and parents could be expected.
Hence the two districts were selected. Dindigul and Madurai are the nearest cities and hence they were included for selecting urban participants.

The Participants of the Study

There were three categories of participants, namely, school-going children, their mothers and teachers. Data on parenting style were collected from children and mothers; data on social competence were collected from mothers, children and class teachers.

Table 3.1 gives the details regarding the participants in the study.

Table 3.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>RURAL</th>
<th>URBAN</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>319</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>451</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mothers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>262</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>451</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The child participants of the study comprised 451 children who were studying in 8th and 9th standards at the time of study and were between 13 and 15 years of age.
Mothers of these 451 children were the second category and twenty-three class teachers were the third category of participants for the study.

Selection of Participants

As the first step headmasters of high schools in Dindigul and Athoor blocks of Dindigul district and Dindigul and Madurai city were approached and requested for permission to collect data from the 8th and 9th standard children. Some of the schools complied with the request and others did not. Six rural schools and four urban schools agreed to cooperate and so they were selected.

From among the six rural and four urban schools, classes 8 and 9 were chosen in which the class teacher was willing to assess the social competence of her/his students in the classroom.

Selection of Children. After choosing the classes, from each class children were selected based on the following criteria:

a) The children should be between the ages 13 and 15 years;

b) they should be selected in equal numbers from urban and rural area

and

c) their mothers should be from different occupational categories.

Children between 13 and 15 years of age were selected because children below 13 years of age could not comprehend and respond to the Social Competency Rating Scale, a fact that was very much evident during
the pretest. Children above 15 years of age enter the period of adolescence and it was presumed that there would be more of peer influence and this might affect their assessment of parenting style.

All those children who satisfied the above criteria and who were willing to be the participants in the study were included.

Selection of mothers. As said earlier, mothers of those children selected as child participants alone were included as second category of participants. Only those mothers who were willing to be participants were chosen.

Selection of teachers. As a child spends a considerable part of his waking hours in school, just as parents, the teachers are also good assessors of social competence. Also school situation provides better opportunities for expressing social competence. For this reason teachers were also included as sources for assessing peer related social competence. Only those teachers who had been class teachers for a minimum period of six months were included as sources for data because at least that much of time is necessary to come to know of the competencies of children.

Tools for Data Collection

For collecting data two tools were prepared, one for identifying the parenting style of mothers and the other for measuring the social competence of children. The former was an inventory of parenting practices and the latter one was a rating scale. The inventory is referred to as Parenting Style
Inventory (PSI). The rating scale is referred to as Social Competence Rating Scale (SCRS).

**The Parenting Style Inventory (PSI)**

This inventory consisted of statements about parenting behaviour, which reflected the three major parenting styles, namely, authoritarian, authoritative and permissive. The classification is based on the parenting styles identified by Baumrind (1971). There were 27 statements representing the three parenting styles. Appendix 1 gives the Parenting Style Inventory (PSI) used by mothers and children. The same inventory was given to children also to identify the parenting styles of their mothers. However, there was a slight variation in the PSI given to mothers and children. The PSI given to mothers began with sentences "I " while PSI given to children began with "My mother...".

Construction of PSL An extensive review was made of literature related to parenting style. A number of statements reflecting authoritative permissive and authoritarian parenting style were prepared. Scales already available in areas of psychology and human development like Vineland Social Maturity scale were perused. There were 50 statements in all. After the preparation of these statements, expert opinion was sought to determine the appropriateness and validity of each of the statements. Five experts in all in Sociology, Human Development and Psychology were consulted before finalising the inventory.
Pretesting of PSI. The inventory was pretested with 20 children of the high school in Gandhigram and with 20 mothers and teachers. Based on the experience, the statements were modified or deleted as the case might be.

Scorina: As for the Parenting Style Inventory, for each mother, the total number of authoritarian, authoritative and permissive statements checked by her was calculated. Of the statements denoting different parenting styles, those that had been checked highest were taken to be the predominant parenting style. In case where equal number of statements had been checked, weightage was given to classify them definitely into one category of parenting style or other.

Validity and Reliability of the PSI. The best criterion of the goodness of a measure/test/tool is its validity, that is whether the measure is measuring what it intends to measure (Baker, 1988).

The content validity of PSI was tested with a group of five experts in Sociology, Psychology and Human Development. As content validity alone is not an adequate test of validity, construct validity was also established for the PSI. It was hypothesized that authoritative parenting style was related to academic achievement, and so the academic achievement scores were correlated with Parenting Style Inventory scores of the 20 pretest participants. A correlation of .63 showed that the PSI had construct validity.

In order to check for reliability, the inventory was administered twice after an interval of one month to the same children and parents and the results were compared. The statistical technique employed for comparison
was Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation. The $r$ obtained was 0.73. Split half reliability test was also employed. The scale was divided randomly into two halves. Each of the two sets of items was treated as a separate scale and scored accordingly. The two subscales were then correlated. The coefficient of correlation obtained was 0.747, which showed that the inventory had good reliability.

**Preparation of the Social Competence Rating Scale (SCRS)**

SCRS consisted of statements, which reflected different degrees of social competence. The same scale was used by children, mothers and teachers to assess social competence of children. As the first step in the preparation of the rating scale, items of behaviour, which express social competence, were identified from psychology and human development textbooks. Thirty six such components were identified which included items such as problem solving ability, leadership, social acceptance, peer popularity, communication skills, adjustment, self esteem, etc. Each of the 36 statements was rated on a three-point scale indicating high, average and low competency. The score values corresponding to high, average and low competency were 2,1,0 respectively. A composite score for each respondent was obtained by adding all the scores.

After constructing the tool, the investigator got experts' opinion on the validity of items in the rating scale. Incorporating the suggestions given by the experts, the final form of the scale was arrived at.
Pretesting of SCRS. The final inventory had 36 statements. Care was taken to see that there was enough number of statements and that they were culturally relevant. Each statement had three levels of agreement, namely, 'Always', 'Some times' and 'Never' stated explicitly, it was considered that agreeing with 'always' meant permissive behaviour, agreeing with 'some times' meant authoritative and agreeing with never meant authoritarian behaviour.

Validity and Reliability of the SCRS. In order to determine the construct validity of SCRS it was hypothesized that SCRS was related to high peer popularity. The pretest SCRS scores were correlated with peer popularity. It was observed that children who scored high in SCRS also had high peer popularity. Thus the construct validity was established.

The reliability of the scale was ensured by split half and test retest methods. The correlation coefficient was 0.81 in each case.

Data on family characteristics. In addition to these tools, a general proforma was prepared and used for collecting information on the family background of the sample. Information related to place of residence, type of family, birth order, age, educational level and occupation and income of family was collected using this proforma.
Method of Data Collection

Training of Investigators

Two fluid investigators were appointed for collecting data. They received intensive training for 5 days with focus on the method of approaching the school, students and the parents and the method of administering the questionnaire.

Data Collection with Children

The children were given the inventories to be filled during working time. They were administered the inventory and the rating scale in groups as per the following procedure:

1. Students of the given class were met at the specified time. They were informed about the purpose of the research tools.
2. They were given the SCRS and PSI and asked to go through it and clarify doubts if any.
3. They were given an example by the investigators as to how the disagreed and agreed statements have to be marked in the Inventory and Rating Scale.

Data Collection with Mothers

The mothers included in the sample were from different educational levels. Some of the mothers were illiterates. Mothers who could not fill up the inventory were interviewed. Educated mothers were given the inventory to be
filled by them. Working mothers were contacted on Saturdays and Sundays to collect data, as they were not available on working days.

**Data Collection with Teachers**

They were first apprised of the purpose of the study and importance of the data to be collected from them. Teachers were given the SCRS for each child to assess the social competence of the children selected as sample in their classes.

**Analysis of Data**

In the analysis of data both descriptive and analytic statistics were used. Percentages were used to describe the general nature of data and their classification. Chi Square test was extensively used for finding out the association between sub groups and major variables. Computer facility was used for data analysis.

**Limitations of the Study**

1. Observation method would have been ideal to study parenting style and social competence but because of practical difficulties, only an inventory and a rating scale were used for data collection.

2. The number of participants was restricted to 451 because for each child, five different types of data were to be collected and a higher sample number would have taken much more time.

3. Participants were selected using convenience-sampling technique, as the population of total mothers could not be enumerated. However adherence to certain predetermined criteria in selecting participants has
lent validity to the study. At the same time, the inherent defect in convenience sampling must also be acknowledged. Great caution needs to be exercised in generalising the findings.

4. In the original design it was planned to include equal or almost equal number of sample from rural and urban areas and from different occupational status. But during the study it was found that the proportion of women occupying positions such as teachers, doctors and other highly paid professions was smaller when compared to non-working and poorly paid women. Accordingly, the mothers from highly paid category were restricted to a small number and hence the final sample did not have equal number of participants from all categories of working mothers.