**Parenting styles and maternal self-efficacy as predictors of emotional and social adjustment among preschoolers.**

**Introduction**

The current research study examines the contribution of parenting styles and maternal self-efficacy as predictors of social and emotional adjustment among preschoolers. Childhood is a period fraught with rapid consecutive life transitions and changes between varying stages of development that is more complex than any other life period.Through each transition the child passes through a process of change in which he/she must part with what has come before and adapt to a new situation. Each transition requires dealing with many new and varied demands, matched with different expectations, but also represents a new beginning and an opportunity to create new relationships (The Department for Pre-School Education, 2010, [Heb]).

The transition from the home into the kindergarten setting poses new challenges for children who must now adjust to new social and material statuses with regard to their peers (Adelman & Taylor, 1991). This has become more of a factor in recent years as the age of entrance into the school system has been reduced, beginning in 1984 with Israel’s amendment to the education laws requiring free compulsory education for all children ages 3 to 4 (The Commission for the Investigation of Methods for Early Childhood Education, 2008, [Heb]).

Children have begun to interact with their friends at an earlier age, but in addition to this change, now both parents and teachers are asking that reading and writing be introduced into the preschools. Such learning may come at the expense of the social learning and social and personal development of the child. The assumption is being made incorrectly that both social skills and cognitive ability are acquired automatically and spontaneously. This may be the reason that in the context of today’s preschool setting, the many needed different activities aimed at encouraging the development of cognitive skills within a social setting are being neglected and are not being sufficiently systematically supplied. Even a cursory look at the contents of a preschool classroom will reveal the urgent need for a serious and in-depth study for improving the social adjustment, social competence, and mental health of the children.

Such improvement can and must begin in early childhood because any change there will affect development in later life. Such changes will not occur by themselves. Whatever we invest in early childhood relationships will pay off later, because at this age, children begin to develop the social relationship tools, skills, values, references, approaches, and goals that will affect both positively or negatively their quality of life in later years (Becker, 2009, [Heb]).

In addition, the preschool setting forms a basis for expanding the social world of the preschooler through the development of relationships with their peers, as well as with significant adults, in addition to their family. They are able to acquire life skills and behavioral norms, and learn to resolve conflicts in ways that allow for the creation of relationships and friendships (The Department for Pre-School Education, 2010, [Heb]). This creates an increase in the importance of the role played by social and emotional adjustment at an early age.

Studies of the effects of social adjustment problems among children show that social adjustment disorders predict other problems such as attention seeking, difficulties in communicating with others, and displays of nervousness (Hampton & Fantuzzo, 2003).

Children with low levels of social-emotional adjustment are perceived as being more aggressive, less accepted by their peers, more cowardly than their classmates, more hyperactive, and more violent (Hulya & Alev, 2013). In addition, adjustment problems may be expressed through different social anxiety problems. Young children who suffer from social anxiety are often threatened by the need to communicate with their peers, with the incidence of social anxiety standing at about 0.5% among young children, and at about 2% - 4% among adolescents (Chvria & Stein, 2005). In addition to the difficulties it creates with regard to the social and emotional adjustment to kindergarten and elementary school, it is a frequent cause of absenteeism and truancy (Patterson- Mallin, 2003).

On the Individualism-Collectivism Scale (ICS), Arab society in Israel is considered as being collectivistic (Dwiery, 1998), since it functions in conjunction with the modern Jewish society, which is based on a progressive industrial and technological foundation, and also because of the ongoing conflict between these two societies. Therefore, especially in recent years, this society has come to expect modernization and change in such areas of life as: a change in the status of the father as the head of the family, a weakening of the status of the clan and extended family, greater reliance on education in general and especially higher education and the beginnings of change in the status of women, changes which have led to friction within Arab society (Al-Haj, 1989, 1995). These changes can affect the behavior of the Arab family which may in turn affect the social and emotional adjustment of young children.

In addition, the changing technology affects the development of social skills in children who now rarely play together as playtime has moved from the playground into the home and consists mainly of electronic games that do not require the presence of other children (Becker, 2009).

Social adjustment has been examined in connection with shyness in children in China (Chen & Wang, 2011), contact with peers in kindergarten (Hulya & Alev, 2013), parental involvement in kindergarten (Dubeau & Coutu, 2013), social rejection (Beenstock, 2003, [Heb]), parenting styles (Kanj, 2011, [Heb]), quality of parenting (Haskett & Willoughby, 2006), maternal parenting (Chen & Chang, 2005).

The present study examines the contribution of parenting styles and maternal self-efficacy in predicting social and emotional adjustment among children in Arab society in Israel. The existing literature contains references regarding the impact of parenting styles on social adjustment, however, these studies relate to Western societies and there are no studies of maternal self-efficacy in relation to social and emotional adjustment within the context of early childhood. Very few studies have focused on emotional social adjustment among adolescent Arabs in Israel (Kanj, 2011 [Heb]), and none have examined this variable in early childhood.

**The research questions relate to the following areas:** common parenting styles;

1. Maternal competence levels among mothers; social and emotional adjustment levels among preschoolers and,
2. The contribution of parenting styles and maternal self-efficacy as predictors of social and emotional adjustment among preschoolers.
3. **Theoretical Background**

**1.1 The concept of adaptation:**

The concept of adaptation is defined as getting accustomed to a new situation. The individual adapts himself to the environment in which he is living and responds to that environment as he sees it (Avinoel, 1997, [Heb]). Smit and Wandel (Smit & Wandel, 2006) define the concept of adaptation in evolutionary terms. Just as in evolution the individual adapts to his environment, in order to achieve balance and to fit in, this desire is expressed as a quest for balance in every area possible.

Piaget (Piaget, 1966), defines adaptation as change and in particular with reference to the environment. This change consists of two processes: integration (assimilation) of new knowledge into the individual’s existing information, and the adaptation (accommodation) of the individual with his environment in accordance with the new data that have been internalized. These two processes complement each other and allow individuals to maintain their identity while learning new norms, and to sustain a balance between themselves and the environment. When it comes to the adaptation of children within an educational framework, the desired adaptive behavior is grounded on the values of the larger society and thus on the expectations attached to the role of a child in an educational setting. Therefore, it is clear that the child’s assessment of how to adapt is greatly influenced by his conception of what the teacher considers to be proper adaptive behavior (Ladd, Birch & Buhs, 1999).

It is common practice to assess the child’s adaptation to the social environment within three areas of function: the total social environment in which the child relates to other children and his place within a group of children, the emotional sphere including self-confidence, and his emotional self-control and general adjustment within a learning framework and study environment as reflected through the completion of educational tasks. These three areas of adaptation each influence the other: the child’s sense of security and feelings of social acceptance all affect his ability to focus on learning the tasks set before him. The child’s success at learning will affect his self-esteem and his future social and emotional adjustment (Welsh, Parke, Widaman & O'Neil, 2001). Although difficulties that the child may have in adapting in any one of these areas may be a predictor of future problems, one study indicates that a combination of adjustment problems in several areas is a stronger indicator of future problems (Gutman, Sameroff & Cole, 2003).

**1.1.1 Emotional adaptation:**

This is the process by which the individual fits the satisfaction of his own inner needs to conform with the moral values that exist in the outside world (Searle & Ward, 1990). An emotionally adjusted child is one who is defined as having the ability to deal with stress, has high self-esteem, high self-confidence, is independent and proactive (Halberstadt, Denham & Dunsmore, 2001). Children who know how to express their feelings accurately also enjoy good control of their social abilities (Denham, et al., 2003). And have more good social relationships with their peers (Izard, 2002). Children with self-confidence also develop a sense of high self-worth and are able to rely on their skills. They view the outside world socially in a more positive light (Feldman & Eidelman, 2008). Problems in the area of social adjustment may be expressed as reduced self-confidence, shyness, a greater tendency to worry, a greater sensitivity to criticism, and low self-esteem. Children such as these may be expected to be more lonely, less popular, less willing to adapt, and to have negative self-worth (Denham et al, 2003).

**1.1.2. Social adaptation:**

Eshkol (2008) defines social adaptation as the ability of the individual to manage relations with others in society, has social skills, is also able to improve social adjustment and also has self-confidence, is therefore able to be of help in various settings, to make friends and carry on conversations, to adapt properly to a workplace environment, to maintain fair relations, and to promote proper ties with colleagues and friends.

Social adaptation refers to how children get along with their peers, the extent to which they are able to maintain socially acceptable behavior and the extent to which they inhibit repulsive behavior. The extent to which children are thought to be able to properly adjust socially depends on the extent to which they manage to acquire social skills throughout their life, and in addition, proper social adjustment relates to the extent to which children are able to achieve personal goals through social interactions, while maintaining the integrity of their relationships with others. In varying social environments, socially adjusted children are able to exhibit friendly and pro-social behavior (Rubin, Stewart & Chen, 1995).

A child’s behavior is socially adaptive when it reflects the behavioral norms of the group, the ability to meet expectations, to work in teams, the ability to engage socially and the possession of knowledge of what is permissible and what is forbidden. The child is able to play with other children in a cooperative manner, and to express pleasure (Smilansky & Shfatyah, 1993 [Heb]). Children with social adjustment capabilities are more popular and receive more love and acceptance from their peers (Ladd & Kochenderfer, 2002). It was found that popular children are particularly adept at solving problems, communicating with their peers and are mature and sensitive, are more willing to join in games as they are able to quickly learn the rules and to make comments during play. In contrast, disruptive children are rejected from social activities because they tend to disrupt the play and to gain the hostility and enmity of their peers (Binestock, 2004). Social rejection can cause the child to be exposed to loneliness, leading to social anxiety and depression (Peake & Rodrigues, 2000), preventing the support of others, leading to envy and inappropriate attempts to control the behavior of others, inappropriate behavior that can cause difficulties in the social adaptation of these children (Ayduk, May, Downey & Higgins, 2003). In addition, the degree of social acceptance or rejection of the child by his colleagues is an important component of social adaptation (Downey, Mougios, Ayduk, London & Shoda, 2004).

One of the difficulties of social adaptation relates to aggressive responses. These responses are a reflection of a lack of psychological control. For example, children who are in conflict with their environment and have a false perspective and understanding of other’s intentions, may react aggressively (Rubin, Stewart & Chen, 1995). Social skills of children are reflected in two ways: friendships where relationships are expressed in constant close relations, which are characterized by reciprocity and preferences for some children, and social interaction, where relationships and social connections are with peer groups that are at the same stage of development (Prinstien, Cheach & Guyer, 2005).

The ability to establish meaningful fun relationships with friends of the same age group is a major predictor of mental health and life satisfaction (Milevsky, Schlechter, Netter & Keehn, 2007). Children with high levels of social skills adapt better in school and reach higher levels of achievement than their counterparts with lower levels of social skills (Ang & Goh, 2006).

There is a consensus in the literature with regard to the importance of the initial social ties of the child as a factor in his shaping of his own self-conception of himself as a person and as a student and in their forming a basis for his future social interactions (Prinstien, Cheach & Guyer, 2005). Already during kindergarten the child begins to spend much of his time in the company of other children of his age. The social encounters in kindergarten include diverse expressions of cooperation, mutual help and friendship along with manifestations of competitiveness, aggression and fighting. Furthermore, the period of school is for the child one of the most important stages as regards social adaptability (Walker, 2004).

Emotional development and social development are very much related to each other (Kandır & Alpan, 2008), within the context of social interaction, as emotions and cognitive skills can affect behavior and reactions to the existing situation (Izard, 2001). Therefore, it is possible to argue that social adaptation is very related to emotional development (Lemerise & Arsenio, 2000).

Social and emotional adaptation begins with the social interactions of children in the first years of life, and kindergarten is a natural environment, for viewing daily interactions between peers and the positive social interrelations of daily life. The kindergarten is the child’s social world, which gives him or her many opportunities to come into contact with other children in situations of play, work, and learning (Wellman, Cross & Watson, 2001). Creating effective relationships with other children in the early years is a significant stage in the development of the child (Mostov, Izard, Fine & Trentacosta, 2002). The relationships with friends during the kindergarten years can influence the child’s social behavior and success in studies in future years (Hay, Payne, Chadwick, 2004).

Many studies have shown that acceptance from peers during childhood helps children in acquiring cognitive abilities, social problem solving abilities, socially acceptable behavior, and in regulating emotions (Eisenberg, Fabes, Shepard, Murphy, Guthric, Jonrs, Friedman & Mszk, 1997; Parke et al., 2002). Proper social adaptation can contribute to creating emotional closeness and cooperation between children (Mostov et al., 2002).

Social and emotional adjustment can be affected by various factors, one of which is the early style of parenting used to raise them (Berg, 2011).

**1.2 Parenting styles:**

Parents in early childhood act as a source of both positive and negative reinforcement. They are the central figures in the life of the young child and their influence is felt even at a later stage. They play a major role in their children’s lives. They have attitudes, behavior, beliefs, values and varying family backgrounds. Parenting style and children’s education preferred by parents are positively related to the children’s development (Farzana, 2013).

Specific attitudes and behavior patterns that parents demonstrate influence their children’s life. Parents should provide a suitable environment for children to develop self-esteem, self-confidence, self-control, and to develop meaningful relationships with others outside the family circle (Feldman & Eidelman, 2008). The beliefs that parents adopt regarding parenting are influenced by several factors: the history of the parent as a child, previous daily life experiences, socio-cultural factors, personal experiences as a parent, the parent’s personality, and views appearing in the popular literature on parenting (McGillicuddy-De Lisi & Sigel, 1995).

Social and emotional adaptation develops during everyday interactions. Therefore, parents must understand that the feelings that they express are affecting their children’s feelings. Successful parents take note of their child’s emotions and endeavor to train them toward exhibiting proper behavior, less successful parents ignore their feelings. Successful parents are aware that emotion is a part of their child’s life and teach their children to express themselves in acceptable ways. They use emotions to teach children about the world and to build warmer relations with the child (Gottman & DeClaire, 1997).

Parents who develop positive relationships with their children have a strong influence on their children’s development. Positive relationships are a factor in the building of trust, controlling of emotions, the building of social problem solving abilities, the strengthening of self-confidence, achieving higher test scores and creating more positive relationships with peers (Gail, 2003).

Child-rearing and parenting and parenting styles in particular, are among the topics that have attracted the attention of researchers from various populations. Many researchers have argued that parents have an influence on the behavior and growth of children (Feldman & Eidelman, 2008). Researchers have tried to develop models of patterns that combine different types of control and parental support in order to create a qualitative distinction between parenting styles. The main approach of these is that of Baumrind (1971), which defines parenting styles as child-rearing practices that include elements of control and supervision over the children’s behavior and their actions, and the support and care on the side of the parents (Baumrind, 1971). Baumrind offers a model of parenting styles based on different types of parental control, which distinguishes between three different types of parenting styles.

**Authoritarian parenting style:** Endeavors to shape and control the behavior of the child according to clear standards that he sets, and expects the child to obey these rules, and will not hesitate to punish the child when he senses that his directions are being rejected (Zupancic, Podlesek & Kavcic, 2004). He expresses little affection or words of comfort, is not inclined to negotiate, literally does not support the child’s independence or autonomy, and believes that the child must except his words as they are (Berg, 2011). Does not explain the rules to the child, nor does he believe in open communication with the child. Does not allow the child freedom of choice, expects the child to obey and to be completely submissive to the rules, or treats him as a rebel or someone totally undesirable (De Lisi, 2007).

**Authoritative parenting style:** This parent combines efforts at high levels of control with high levels of parental support. On the one hand he is supportive of the child, and on the other hand he sets clear rules for the child and works to enforce them. But he also recognizes and considers the personal opinions and desires of the child. He tries to shape the child’s behavior while providing explanations for his actions and allowing room for negotiation (Zupancic et al., 2004). He believes in supervision within the family, but considers the children’s interests and their special way of doing things. He knows that maintaining control while maintaining a proper response to the needs of his children requires both discipline and giving. He is more democratic, allows for greater flexibility, and is more sensitive of the child’s needs. At the same time, he maintains strict order while giving support and positive guidance. He prefers to make logical demands, and encourages open communication (Berg, 2011; Weiss & Schwarz, 1996).

**Permissive parenting style:** A parent that has this style is characterized by low parental control and high child support. He is accepting of the wishes and actions of his child and does not punish, and does not require the child to conform to fixed external principles. This type of parent is seen by the child as a source for fulfilling his or her desires, and not as one whose job it is to shape his or her behavior. This parenting style is rooted in expressions of warmth and affection from the parents, and the avoidance of expressions of control (Zupancic et al., 2004). The permissive style of parenting is not concerned with the child’s following instructions, ignores inappropriate behavior and uses a neutral tone of emotions. He gives the child a high level of freedom, and does not restrict him accept when he or she is in physical danger (Rossman & Rea, 2005).

Permissive parents are afraid their kids will not like them if they set rules and boundaries for them. They see themselves as being friends to their children and not as their parents. These children grow up to be irresponsible for their actions, have problems in their relationships with others and look at the world with a jaundice eye (Le- Febvre, 1997). Permissive parents allow their children to regulate activities on their own and in accordance with their own wishes, and consult with them with regard to family policy decisions. They believe in the equality of rights between children and adults, and do not see the need to stand as authority figures (Baumrind, 1991). In this parenting style, parents are less involved in the lives of their teenage children (Santrock, 2004).

These three styles of parenting have been investigated as factors that shape the interaction between parents and children and as affecting the development of personality traits in children, their emotional and behavioral development, and in the promotion of elements of good parenting (Kaufmann, Gesten, Lucia, Salcedo & Gadd, 2000). Maccoby and Martin (Maccoby & Martin, 1983), offer another key model in the field of parenting styles based on two significant dimensions. The first dimension is “demandingness” and the second is “responsiveness.”

The dimension of demandingness refers to the extent to which the parent subjects the child to demands and instructions and controls and monitors his behavior. And the dimension of responsiveness refers to the extent to which the parent responds to the needs of the child and offers support (Fletcher, Walls, Cook, Madison, & Bridges, 2008). These two dimensions affect emotional development, social networking and the level of secure bonding among children (Karavasilis, Doyle & Markiewicz, 2003).

These two dimensions of parenting style form the basis for an additional parenting style labeled **indifferent-uninvolved**, which is characterized by a low level of demandingness and a low level of responsiveness. This type of parent reduces to a minimum the time allowed for interacting with the child, and gives the child absolute freedom (Maccoby & Martin, 1983).

In accordance with these two dimensions, the authoritarian parenting style is characterized by a high level of demandingness and a low level of responsiveness on the part of the parent toward the child. The authoritative parenting style is characterized by a high level of demandingness and a high level of responsiveness. And the permissive parenting style is characterized by a low level of demandingness and a high level of responsiveness. Each of the four styles includes elements of acceptance and compliance to requirements on the one hand, and demand and control on the other (Garcia & Garcia, 2009).

**1.2.1 Characteristics of children raised with different parenting styles:**

Over the years, relationships between parenting styles and different aspects of child function have been investigated. According to the existing literature parenting style affects the welfare of the children, their ability to acquire social skills, their academic achievement, psycho-social development, and is a factor in the development of behavior disorders of children (Kaufmann, et al., 2000).

**Children of authoritative parents:** The authoritative parenting style has a significant impact on normal child development through the establishment of good relationships with children (Tam, Lee, Kumarasuriar, & Har, 2012). The authoritative parenting style is related to the positive aspects of child and adolescent development in general, and especially to their emotional development (Deslandes & Bertrand, 2005; Minke & Anderson, 2005; Sheldon & Epstein, 2005.) And it has a positive effect on their development over an extended period of time (Simons & Conger, 2007). Its positive effects appear already in the early years of childhood (Berg, 2011).

The children of parents with an authoritative style of parenting grow up to be more successful and have a greater number of friends than the children of parents who prefer a different style. These children exhibit high levels of self-confidence, are able to complete assigned tasks and know how to control their emotions (Dekovic & Janssens, 1992; Denham et al., 2000; Pearson & Rao, 2003). Other studies have shown that children of authoritative parents fail to develop at a higher social level than other children (Abu- Talib, 2012; Brink, 2006; McGillicuddy De- Lisi & De- Lisi, 2007). And they demonstrated better social skills than children who experienced different parenting styles (Allen, Boykin & Bell, 2000).

Studies have found that mothers who demonstrate an authoritative parenting style tend to develop strong self-esteem in their children, a sense of satisfaction with their lives, and lower levels of depressive thinking (Milevsky, Schlechter, Netter & Keehn, 2007). Other researchers have found that authoritative fathers were associated with fewer worries in studies of academic students (Azhar, Silva, Dorso, & Renk, 2007) Authoritative parenting has been shown to create greater hope and confidence in boys than in girls. Girls with authoritative parents show less confidence than boys (Heaven & Ciarrochi, 2008). In addition, weaker relationships between parents and girls are marked by greater symptoms of depression among the girls (Boutelle, Eisenberg, Gregory & Neumark-Sztainer, 2009).

**Children of authoritarian parents:** Some studies have found that the children of parents with an authoritarian parenting style exhibit characteristics of low self-esteem (Mantzicopoulos & Oh- Hwang, 1998.) It was found that children of authoritarian parents grow up to be more problematic (Fletcher, Walls, Cook, Madison, & Bridges, 2008) Children of authoritarian parents obtain lower grades at school, and demonstrate lower levels of achievement (Nyarko, 2011). They suffer from poor social ability, a poor self-image, and higher levels of depression. They grow up to be lonely and unhappy, concerned, lacking self-confidence, and respond with hostility to frustrations (Finzi-Dottan, Bilu & Golubchik, 2011; Scott, 2008), and are less able to solve problems on their own, or to rely on themselves and their own social abilities (Aunola, Stattin & Nurmi, 2000; McClun & Merrell, 1998). In addition, this type of parenting relationship exhibits little openness and contributes to high levels of anxiety (Wolfradt, Hempel & Miles, 2002), high internal stress and lowered abilities to adapt emotionally and socially (Fletcher, Steunberg & Dornbuch, 1995.)

Baumrind (1991) adds that this type of parenting style creates children who tend to be unfriendly toward their peers and others. It is also argued that the effects of authoritarian parenting are more harmful on boys than on girls. However, within various cultures, for example, Chinese, Turkish, Afro-American and Arab cultures, children perceive the authoritarian parenting style as an expression of the positive attitude of parents towards them, characterized by caring, love, respect, and protection. In these cultures, the authoritarian parenting style is not related to psychological disorders, but rather to improved social and emotional adjustment (Chao, 1994; Dwairy, Achoui, Abouserie & Farah, 2006; Kagitcibasi, 2005; Randolph, 1995).

**Children of permissive parents:** Childrenof parents with a permissive parenting style are more likely to worry, have more internal problems, are more likely to be depressed, lonely and withdrawn from others (Rossman and Rea, 2005). The children of permissive parents are more likely to rebel, to act more impulsively, and are less successful in reaching objectives. They are also more likely to be dependent on others, be selfish, and to act aggressively, and irresponsibly (Wu, 2009). According to Baumrind (1991), this parenting style is associated with less independence of children, increased school absenteeism, and greater involvement in criminal activities. Other studies have found that children of parents with a permissive parenting style are characterized by a lack of self-control, a lack of social skills, the inability to deal with independence, a lack of maturity, low self-esteem, and feelings of alienation toward their families (Santrock, 2004). However, it is important to note that there are studies that consider the more permissive parenting style positively. Wolfradt et al. (2002), found that adolescents with permissive parents rank high on indices of social competence and self-confidence, and have low ratings with regard to psychological distress and anxiety.

**Children of indifferent/uninvolved parents:** Children of indifferent parents are lacking in social ability, demonstrate anger toward others, demonstrate low levels of self-esteem, are antisocial and exhibit patterns of delinquent behavior (Straus, 1994).

In summary, warm relations between parents and children are the foundation on which is built a healthy home environment and a successful experience in kindergarten and at school. The attitudes of parents along with their preferred parenting style, the family standards that they set, and the warmth of communication with their children, are variables that have been found to affect their children’s future development. The more authoritarian parents raise weaker kids. Authoritative parents are raising children that are more successful, and permissive indifferent parents are raising irresponsible children (Farzana, Chaudhry, Abid Awan, Tariq, 2013).

**1.2.2 Parenting styles and social and emotional adjustment:**

Children who grew up in homes characterized by an authoritative parenting style received higher scores on a wide range of adjustment indices, including social development, self-esteem and mental health, as compared to peers who grew up in homes characterized by other parenting styles (Baumrind, 1991, 2005; Steinberg, Lamborn, Darling, Mounts & Dornbusch, 1994). Other studies have found that children from homes with authoritative parenting styles are healthier emotionally, demonstrate higher levels of social adaptation abilities and exhibit fewer behavioral problems (Kaufmann, et al., 2000). They demonstrate better social adaptation abilities and greater psychological health than children and adolescents with parents of other parenting styles (Mckinney, Donnelly & Renk, 2008; Steinberg, 2001), and higher levels of emotional adjustment (Milevsky et al., 2007; Tafarodi, Wild & Ho, 2010). Berg (2011) found that preschool children whose parents chose an authoritative style, will demonstrate normal emotional-social development. An Israeli longitudinal study dealt with the long-term impact of mother-child interactions observed at age four, on the child’s later adaptation to school and kindergarten, academically, socially and behaviorally. The study also examined the child’s internalization of the mother’s behavior. The study found that adjustment of the child to kindergarten and to school is indeed regulated by the internalized concepts of the child and by behavioral regulations. In fact, the readiness of the child for kindergarten and school can already be determined at age four and is a function of the relationship of the mother to the child at that age (Salomonica-Levi, Yirmiya & Oppenheim, 2008)

In a study that was carried out by Rossman & Reason (2005), it was discovered that in Western society authoritative parents raised children with better adaptation skills, less aggression, and good learning abilities. Parents of children with more permissive parenting styles raised children who worry more, are more introverted, more depressed, lonely, and more withdrawn from others. From another perspective, a study by Chen, Dong & Zhou (1997), that was carried out in Asian countries, found that authoritative parents raise children with more aggression, fewer social skills, less academic achievement and negative adaptability. An authoritative parenting style has been linked positively to good social-emotional adjustment, also in later years. The sons of parents with an authoritative parenting style were found to adapt better to basic training than were the sons of parents with an authoritarian parenting style (Mayseless, Scharf & Sholt, 2003).

Most studies conducted in Western societies link authoritarian parenting styles to children with negative psycho-social abilities (Kaufmann, Gesten & Santa-Lucia, 2000; Kochanska & Knaack, 2003; Stansbury & Zimmermann, 1999), and to problems in adapting during childhood and adolescence (Henderson, Dakof, Schwartz, & Liddle, 2006; Paulussen- Hoogeboom, Stams, Hermanns, Peetsmaa & Wittenboer, 2008). It has also been shown that an authoritarian parenting style inhibits the ability of the child with regard to self-control and reduces his or her ability to adapt socially (Eisenberg, Chang, Ma & Huang, 2009; Zhou, Eisenberg, Wang & Reiser, 2004).

In contrast to these studies, studies conducted among Arabs in Israel have shown that an authoritarian parenting style is perceived as positive and as not being linked with psychological disorders, is not a negative factor in terms of mental health and does not affect social adaptation in adolescence (Dwairy, 2004; Dwairy et al., 2006). Another study conducted among Arab teenagers in Israel indicates that the authoritarian parenting style is associated with low levels of social-emotional adjustment (Kanj, 2011 [Heb]).

Other studies have found that children of parents with permissive parenting styles exhibit low levels of self-control, difficulties in adjusting, and difficulties in relating to their peers (Heller, Baker, Henker & Hinshaw, 1996; Jewell & Stark, 2003). They are likely to demonstrate antisocial behavior and to experience difficulties in adjusting socially (Wu, 2009).

In summary, the two parenting styles, both the authoritarian and permissive, are seen as being less effective than the authoritative parenting style in many aspects of child development (Farzana et al., 2012). Therefore it is likely that these parenting styles result in lower levels of adjustment in children. Therefore, the first study hypothesis will be that differences found in the social-emotional adjustment of the kindergarten child are related to the parenting style of the child. When the mother’s parenting style is characterized as being authoritative, (as measured by a high score for authoritative parenting style on the parenting styles questionnaire), the child’s level of adjustment will be high (defined as being a high score on the child’s adjustment questionnaire). When the mother’s parenting style is characterized as being authoritarian or permissive (as measured by a high score for an authoritarian or permissive parenting style on the parenting styles questionnaire), the child’s level of adjustment will be low (defined as being a low score on the child’s adjustment questionnaire).

**1.3 Self-efficacy:**

One of the factors associated with both parenting style and children’s adjustment is the parent’s sense of self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is defined as the belief of the individual in his or her ability to perform the necessary behavior that is required to obtain desired results that his behavior will bring what he hopes for (Bandura, 1977, 1986). Bandura (1993) further stresses that the belief of the individual in his ability to control his future can play a major role in how he approaches future tasks. Self-efficacy is described as affecting both the individual’s emotions and motivation, by which he is able to exercise his full potential.

The concept of self-efficacy is a major component of Bandura’s theory of education (1977), and explains much of the individual’s behavior and motivation to perform. This concept also incorporates within it the elements of self-perception and self-esteem. In addition to Bandura, self-efficacy has been defined by other researchers who have emphasized different dimensions: Shell, Bruning & Colvin (1995) have stressed the ability of the individual to control his inner world, and define self-efficacy as the ability of the individual to organize their cognitive skills and abilities, and the behavioral and social skills required to successfully perform their job. Lee, Dedrick & Smith (1991) define it as feeling capable of fulfilling perceived expectations and to achieve the desired results through one’s personal effort. In other words, it is a cognitive process that includes identifying a goal, assessing the effort necessary to achieve that goal, possessing the skills to achieve it and actually doing it.

A sense of self-efficacy acts as a mediator between the individual’s sense of freedom, the task set before him, and the skills required to perform and to complete the task. The individual may be expected to perform certain behaviors from within a range of possible behaviors, when he believes that he is able to perform the mission and that what he does will lead to the expected results, i.e. the actions and behaviors employed to a large extent are determined by how the individual perceives his own capabilities and the probability that he is able to cope successfully with the environmental requirements and other challenges facing him (Grant-Flumin, 1998 [Heb]). Studies have shown that self-efficacy is based on personal perceptions regarding knowledge, the ability to perform and maintain control, and is related to specific future operations (Goddard, Hoy & Woolfolk-Hoy, 2004).

One’s sense of self-efficacy can influence an individual’s interests, values, goals, actions and the manner in which he functions professionally (Pinquart, Juang & Silbereisen, 2003). A person with a high sense of self-efficacy will demonstrate more goal oriented behavior and perseverance when dealing with difficulties as compared with one who has a low sense of self-efficacy. High self-efficacy is related to positive thinking, high self-esteem, and the setting of higher goals (Evangelos, Konstantionos & Georgios, 2007).

Belief about the self is based on information that comes from four sources: personal experiences, alternative experiences, verbal persuasion, possible physical reactions and emotions. This information develops into cognitive knowledge with an emotional dimension that affects a person’s ability to exercise or not exercise his skills (Usher & Pajares, 2008).

**1.3.1 Maternal self-efficacy:**

Within the context of parenting, self-efficacy is defined as parental efficacy. This is the sense of being able to perform the role of the parent and to solve problems as parents. Parental efficacy is the extent to which parents perceive themselves as capable of performing various tasks connected with the role of the parent, in an efficient and effective manner (Kaplan-Toren, 2004, [Heb]).

A parent with a high level of self-efficacy has a high level of self-confidence in his ability to act as a parent, is willing to invest in this task, is inclined to believe that he has the ability to positively affect the development and behavior of his child, to demonstrate positive behavior on the part of the parent and to react to the child’s needs in both an efficient and correct manner (Jones & Prinz, 2005; Pelletier & Brent, 2002).

Parental self-efficacy has been found to be associated with positive parenting strategies (Giallo, Kienhuis, Treyvaud & Matthews, 2008). A positive relationship has been found to exist between the self-efficacy of the parent and effective child-rearing practices (MacPhee & Miller-Heyl, 2003). With regard to mothers, a positive correlation has been found to exist between a high level of self-efficacy and the mother’s confidence in her child rearing methods. Mothers who view themselves as having high levels of self-efficacy are more likely to demonstrate a warm and responsive style of parenting combined with strict discipline and control over the child’s behavior. Parental efficacy has been linked to child adjustment in various areas (Jones & Prinz, 2005). With regard to the academic achievement of the child, the parents’ confidence in their ability to solve problems related to the child and his capability as a parent, has been found to be positively related to the child’s accomplishments at school (Ames, De Stephano, Watkins & Shldon, 1995; Pelletier & Brent, 2002). With regard to behavior, it has been found that children of parents with high parental efficacy tend to report fewer behavioral problems than children of parents with low parental efficacy (Bogenschneider, Small & Tsay, 1997).

Ardelt & Eccles (2001), found that parents with higher self-efficacy tend to use more advanced parenting strategies and thus increase the chances of the success of their children, academically and socially-emotionally. Keller (2012, [Heb]), has found a positive relationship between the parental efficacy of the mother, and the social-emotional and behavioral adjustment of the child.

Other studies have looked at using structured observation of the mother-child interactions of preschoolers (Bringin, Damon, Mone, Pipp-Siegel, Skillern & Stratton, 2005) while studying the effect of the mother-child relationship on the behavior of 4 and 5 year old kindergarteners. They found that maternal sensitivity during play with the child and the ability of the mother to join into the game is associated with a low level of aggressive behavior on the part of the child in the kindergarten. They also found that the absence of hostility on the part of the mother – hostility being defined as a lack of patience, and showing boredom or anger toward the child – after a period of separation, is also associated with low levels of aggressive behavior on the part of the kindergarten child.

Studies conducted among mothers and infants have found that mothers who reported high self-efficacy were more competent mothers. Parental self-efficacy of mothers has been a mediating variable among a number of psychosocial variables such as socio-demographic status, temperament of the baby, social support and situational pressure. In other words, psychosocial variables do not directly affect parental functioning but their influence is manifested in their ability to undermine the perception of competence (Teti & Gelfand, 1991).

The research literature raises the fact that mothers are usually more involved in the life of the child than are fathers, and that even today mothers spend much time with the children. Children tend to be closer to mothers compared to fathers, and spend more time with them (Brunner, 2009, [Heb]). Therefore, the present study focuses on mothers. Previous studies indicate that a connection exists between the self-efficacy of the parent and the adjustment of the child (Jones & Prinz, 2005; Keller, 2012, [Heb]). It is noteworthy that there are almost no published studies regarding the contribution of parenting styles and maternal self-efficacy as predictors of the social and emotional adjustment of kindergarten children in Arab society in Israel, the issue examined in this study.

**1.4 Research hypotheses:**

1. Differences will be found to exist between the social-emotional adjustment of the child that are related to parenting style. As the mother’s parenting style is characterized as being authoritative, the child’s adjustment will be high; and when the parenting style of the mother is characterized as being authoritarian or permissive, the adjustment of the child will be low.

2. A positive correlation exists between the level of maternal self-efficacy and the level of social-emotional adjustment of the kindergarten child.

1. **Method**

**2.1 Participants:**

The study included 151 mothers of children ages 3 to 4 who were enrolled in preschools in the Meshulash region, in addition to the 151 children and their teachers. The study sample was drawn from a sample of government preschools. The study included 151 Arab mothers, with slightly less than half of the participants being between the ages of 20 and 30 (47.7%), slightly less than half of the participants being between the ages of 31 and 40 (47.7%), a small portion of the participants being between the age of 41 and 50 (4.6%), and the remainder aged fifty and up (0.7%). Slightly less than half the participants were high school graduates (45.9%), slightly less than half of the participants had college degrees (43.2%), and a small portion of the participants held degrees from other institutions of learning (8.2%). The remainder had completed a primary education (2.7%). The majority of the participants were married (99.3%), and the remainder divorced (0.7%). One third of the participants had three children (33.1%), one third of the participants had two children (32.5%), less than a third of the participants had more than three children (28%), and the remainder had one child (6%).

The average age of the children of the participating mothers in the study was 4.55 years, with a standard deviation of 0.97, with half of them being boys and half girls (50%), a third of the children were first born (33.8%), a little less than a third of the children were the youngest in the family (38.4%), about a fourth of the children were the middle child in the family (23.2), and the remainder were the only child in the family (4.6%).

**2.2 Tools:**

**Personal Information Questionnaire** (Appendix 1): Mother’s age, mother’s education, family status, child’s age, child’s gender, child’s birth order and number of children in family.

**Parenting Styles Questionnaire** (Appendix 2): Self-reporting questionnaire taken from the article by Abu Talib (2012) on the subject of parenting styles. The questionnaire was constructed by the researcher. She developed a series of questions based on the existing literature, after which the questionnaire was examined by judges. The questionnaire includes 49 items, of which 10 items are descriptive of a permissive parenting style. For example: (No limits are placed on the child in the home). 12 items describe an uninvolved parenting style, for example: (Do not respond quickly to the needs of the child). 14 items describe an authoritative parenting style, for example: (There is a strong connection between myself and my child). 12 items describe an authoritarian parenting style, for example: (I am always in control of my child). Each mother is ranked on a 3 step Likert scale; (1 = high, 2 = medium, 3 = low). Reverse-scoring used. The internal consistency found in the study [Chronbach’s Alpha] (Abu Talib, 2012), (authoritative alpha = 0.82, authoritarian alpha = 0.79, permissive alpha = 0.70, uninvolved alpha = 0.80). In the current study the measures of internal consistency are, general parenting styles α = 0.64, permissive parenting style α = 0.50, uninvolved parenting style α = 0.69, authoritative parenting style α = 0.73, authoritarian parenting style α = 0.74.

**Self-Efficacy Questionnaire** (Aviram, 1990 [Heb]) (Appendix 3): Self-reporting questionnaire for the mother, as a measure of her self-efficacy, based on the self-efficacy questionnaire of Aviram (1990, [Heb]) and a general scale translated into Hebrew for processing self-efficacy, developed by Scherer and Adams (1983). The original questionnaire contains 30 items. It is a valid tool for measuring the individual’s expectations regarding his/her ability to begin and maintain their personal behavior that has been found to be effective for reporting various measures of personality (Scherer & Adams, 1983). In Aviram’s (1990, [Heb]) study, items were omitted with 17 remaining. In addition, the possible number of responses was reduced to four from the five in the original questionnaire, in order to prevent “escape” by choosing the middle option. The Hebrew questionnaire included 17 items, which measured the respondent’s level of agreement with regard to her self-efficacy. For the purposes of this study the questionnaire was written using feminine language forms, for example, a typical item reads: “I feel insecure as to my ability to get things done [the verb in Hebrew uses the feminine form].” Responses are recorded on a four step Likert scale (1 = very much agree, 4 = very much disagree), reverse-scoring used. An index score was obtained by averaging the responses to the items after reverse-scoring five of the positively-keyed items (items 2, 3, 6, 9, 12). The lower the score, the lower the level of parental self-efficacy. This index appears commonly in the scientific literature. The Hebrew questionnaire used by Aviram (1990) was found to demonstrate a high level of internal consistency with Chronbach alpha = 0.83 (Eliraz, 2005, [Heb]). The reliability coefficient of the study questionnaire (Keller, 2012, [Heb]) was also high, alpha 0.86. In the current study the reliability coefficient for general self-efficacy was α = 0.62.

**Adjustment Questionnaire** (Appendix 4): Child adjustment was measured using the “Adjustment scale of children to kindergarten and school for teachers” of Smilansky and Shfatyah (2001, [Heb]). The scale includes 18 questions and measures adjustment in three areas: adjustment to study assignments, emotional adjustment and social adjustment. In the development of scales for evaluating adjustment effort was made to minimize as much is possible the subjective element that is inherent in the verbal definition of children’s behavior. Each question includes five statements describing and rating the child’s behavior with the respondent being instructed to select the most appropriate response. For example, questions are asked regarding academic adjustment such as: “Does the child demonstrate perceptive abilities?” The responses are ranked from 1 “Responds very slowly, does not always understand even after repeated explanations,” to 5 “Is quick-witted and understands things exceptionally well.” In the area of behavioral and emotional adjustment: “Is the child well disciplined?” The responses are ranked from 1 “Is always interrupting and resisting regular routines and procedures,” to 5 “Is always well disciplined and there is never the need to punish him.” In the area of social adjustment: “Is the child friendly?” The responses are ranked from 1 “Is usually a loner,” to 5 “Makes friends easily, and has many strong relationships.”

The reported level of internal consistency for the scale according to Chronbach alpha is α = 0.88 for all the scale and α = 0.66; 0.77; 0.68 for academic adjustment, and emotional and social adjustment respectively. The measures of internal consistency reported for a study by Bouley (2011) for the “Adjustment Assessment Scale,” were α = 0.91 according to Chronbach for the entire scale, and α = 0.73; 0.77; 0.88 for academic adjustment, and emotional and social adjustment, certainly sufficient levels of reliability for this tool. In a study that examined the validity of the “Children’s Adjustment Scale,” it was found that the measure of general adjustment as reported by the kindergarten teacher positively correlated with predicted academic achievement of the children at the end of the first grade and at the end of the second grade (coefficient, r between .25 and.37), and it was also found that the measure of adjustment was a greater predictor of academic achievement at the end of the first and the end of the second grades and had more impact than the child’s kindergarten IQ score. Combining the “adjustment scale” with the child’s IQ score resulted in a high positive correlation (r = .34 to .55) with academic achievement at the end of first grade and at the end of the second grade. For the current study, the measure of reliability for general adjustment was α = 0.94, for emotional adjustment α = 0.82, and for social adjustment α = 0.84.

**2.3 Research process:**

In the first phase of the study all the questionnaires were translated into Arabic, according to the “back translation” method (Butcher, 1982). In this way the questionnaires were first translated into Arabic and then translated by someone else from Arabic into Hebrew. A comparison was then made between the two versions in Hebrew, the original text and the translated version, to make sure they matched.

The study was carried out in six public preschools in the Meshulash region, during the 2013 – 2014 school year. The study was carried out after receiving the required approvals from the government’s Chief Scientist and from the parents.

Each child received a letter for their parents, briefly explaining the subject of the study and its purpose. The letter included an explanation of the anonymity of participants and their ability to withdraw from the study at any time. The letter explained that questionnaires would be distributed to mothers by way of the child and requested the written consent of the mother for her participation. Questionnaires were distributed to each child in envelopes, which they were instructed to bring to their mother. Each envelope contained the following: a sheet identifying the mother, the Personal Information Questionnaire, the Parenting Styles Questionnaire, the Self-Efficacy Questionnaire, and the teacher filled out a social-emotional adjustment questionnaire for each child. In order to allow for a match between the questionnaires, the mother’s questionnaires and that of the kindergarten teacher were assigned the same coded number (according to a list of children’s names). Printed instructions appeared on each envelope telling the mother to return the questionnaires to the kindergarten following their completion. The returned mothers’ questionnaires were collected by the kindergarten teachers.

1. **Results**

**Findings**

Initially calculated means and standard deviations, minimum and maximum values for parenting styles and all its components, as well as those for self-efficacy and general adjustment and all its components, as detailed in Table 1.

**Table 1: Mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum values of study variables. (N=151)**

**Mean STD Min Max**

Self-efficacy 3.19 .66 1.18 2.59

Permissive Parenting Style 1.77 .58 1.22 3.00

Uninvolved Parenting Style 2.96 .83 1.22 2.67

Authoritative Parenting Style 1.36 .24 1.00 2.29

Authoritative Parenting Style 2.37 .31 1.38 2.85

General Adjustment 3.72 .80 1.72 5.00

Emotional Adjustment 3.91 .79 1.67 5.00

Social Adjustment 3.64 .86 1.50 5.00

Table 1 shows high self-efficacy scores for the mothers, medium scores for parenting styles, and scores for adjustment and its components at slightly higher than medium.

**Table 2: Correlation of study variables.**

Self- General Emotional Social Permissive Uninvolved Authoritative Authoritarian

Efficacy Adjustment Adjustment Adjustment Style Style Style Style

(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8)

(1) -

(2) -.28 \*\*\* -

(3) -.30 \*\*\* .91\*\*\* -

(4) -.24 \*\* .94\*\*\* .82\*\*\* -

(5) -.13 .22\*\* .23\*\* .21\*\* -

(6) -.22 \*\* .24\*\* .19\* .24\*\* .27\*\* -

(7) .24\*\* .51 \*\*\* -.49 \*\*\* -.49\*\*\* .01 -.22 \*\* -

(8) -.23\*\* .39\*\*\* .37\*\*\* .39\*\*\* .10 .52\*\*\* -.32 \*\*\* -

\*p<0.05 \*\* p< .01 \*\*\* p< .001

Table 2 shows statistically significant negative correlations between self-efficacy and the different parenting styles (with the exception of the permissive parenting style) and a significant positive correlation with the authoritative parenting style, and statistically significant negative correlations between self-efficacy and all components of adjustment.

A statistically significant relationship exists between the different parenting styles and general adjustment, emotional and social; statistically significant positive correlations exist between permissive parenting style, and between uninvolved parenting style and authoritarian parenting style and general adjustment, emotional and social, and statistically significant negative correlations exist between authoritative parenting style and emotional and social adjustment.

**Table 3: Stepwise regression analysis for predicting adjustment. (N=149)**

**Adjustment**

**General Adjustment Social Adjustment Emotional Adjustment**

∆R2Β∆R2Β∆R2β

**Step 1: Control Variable .17 .21 .10**

**Child’s age .17\*\* .26\*\*\* .19\*\***

**Child’s gender .37\*\* .50\*\* .31\***

**Step 2: Variables .60 .57 .55**

**Permissive parenting style .62\*\* .67\*\* .81\*\*\***

**Uninvolved parenting style .17 .18 -.33**

**Authoritative parenting style -1.32\*\*\* -1.14\*\*\* -1.42\*\*\***

**Authoritarian parenting style .51\*\* .64\*\* .64\*\***

**Self-efficacy -.20\* -.12 -.11**

R2 **General**

**N 125 128 125**

**\*p<0.05 \*\* p< .01 \*\*\* p< .001**

Stepwise regression analysis was employed to test the research hypotheses. The first hypothesis focused on the relationship between adjustment and authoritative parenting style. Table 2 shows that a significant negative correlation exists between overall adjustment and authoritative parenting style (r = .51, p< .001). In the regression analysis of the variables as predictors of general adjustment in Table 3, it is found that authoritative parenting style provides a unique contribution in explaining the variance in general adjustment (B = -1.32, SE = .18, β = .45).

The findings also indicate a significant negative correlation between social adjustment and authoritative parenting style (r = -.49, p< .001). Regression analysis of the study variables as presented in Table 3, as predictors of social adjustment, shows that an authoritative parenting style provides a unique contribution in explaining the variance in social adjustment (B = -1.14, SE = .21, β = -.35).

The findings also indicate a significant negative correlation between emotional adjustment and an authoritative parenting style (r = -.49, p< .001). Regression analysis of the study variables as presented in Table 3, as predictors of emotional adjustment, shows that an authoritative parenting style provides a unique contribution in explaining the variance in emotional adjustment (B = -1.42, SE = .20, β = -.47).

Examination of the relationship between adjustment and the authoritarian parenting style in Table 2 shows that a significant positive correlation exists between overall adjustment and the authoritarian parenting style (r = .39, p< .001). In the regression analysis of the variables as predictors of general adjustment in Table 3, it is found that the authoritarian parenting style provides a unique contribution in explaining the variance in general adjustment (B = .51, SE = .17, β = .21).

The findings also indicate a significant positive correlation between social adjustment and the authoritarian parenting style (r = .39, p< .001). Regression analysis of the study variables as presented in Table 3, as predictors of social adjustment, shows that an authoritarian parenting style provides a unique contribution in explaining the variance in social adjustment (B = .64, SE = .19, β = .24).

The findings also indicate a significant positive correlation between emotional adjustment and the authoritarian parenting style (r = .37, p< .001). Regression analysis of the study variables as presented in Table 3, as predictors of emotional adjustment, shows that an authoritarian parenting style provides a unique contribution in explaining the variance in emotional adjustment (B = .64, SE = .19, β = .25).

Examination of the relationship between adjustment and the permissive parenting style in Table 2 shows that a significant positive correlation exists between overall adjustment and the permissive parenting style (r = .22, p< .01). In the regression analysis of the variables as predictors of general adjustment in Table 3, it is found that the permissive parenting style provides a unique contribution in explaining the variance in general adjustment (B = .62, SE = .17, β = .21).

The findings also indicate a significant positive correlation between social adjustment and the permissive parenting style (r = .21, p< .01). Regression analysis of the study variables as presented in Table 3, as predictors of social adjustment, shows that a permissive parenting style provides a unique contribution in explaining the variance in social adjustment (B = .67, SE = .19, β = .21).

The findings also indicate a significant positive correlation between emotional adjustment and the permissive parenting style (r = .23, p< .01). Regression analysis of the study variables as presented in Table 3, as predictors of emotional adjustment, shows that a permissive parenting style provides a unique contribution in explaining the variance in emotional adjustment (B = .81, SE = .18, β = .27).

The second hypothesis focused on the relationship between adjustment and self-efficacy. Table 2 shows that a significant negative correlation exists between overall adjustment and self-efficacy (r = -.28, p< .001). In the regression analysis of the variables as predictors of general adjustment in Table 3, it is found that self-efficacy provides a unique contribution in explaining the variance in general adjustment (B = .20, SE = .08, β = .14).

The findings also indicate a significant negative correlation between social adjustment and self-efficacy (r = -.24, p< .01). Regression analysis of the study variables as presented in Table 3, as predictors of social adjustment, shows that self-efficacy does not provide a unique contribution in explaining the variance in social adjustment (B = -.12, SE = .08, β = -.09).

The findings also indicate a significant negative correlation between emotional adjustment and self-efficacy (r = -.30, p< .001). Regression analysis of the study variables as presented in Table 3, as predictors of social adjustment, shows that self-efficacy does not provide a unique contribution in explaining the variance in emotional adjustment (B = -.11, SE = .07, β = -.09).

1. **Discussion**

The purpose of the current study was to examine the contribution of parenting styles and maternal self-efficacy as predictors of emotional and social adjustment among kindergarten children in Arab society in Israel.

The study assumes that parents and their attitudes may be perceived as playing an important role in the emotional development, personality and behavior of their children, and therefore two key dimensions were examined to describe parenting approaches and they are parenting styles and maternal self-efficacy. These variables were examined against various criteria associated with a parent or child, and the current study examined them as a function of the adjustment of the child within the kindergarten.

The results confirmed the assumption that parenting styles are associated with emotional and social adjustment among kindergarteners. It was found that a positive relationship exists between the authoritative parenting style and social-emotional adjustment, and a negative relationship was found to exist between an authoritarian parenting style and a permissive parenting style and social-emotional adjustment. And a positive relationship was found to exist between maternal self-efficacy and the child’s emotional and social adjustment to kindergarten.

**Parenting styles and the social-emotional adjustment of the kindergarten child**

The first study hypothesis was, differences found in the social-emotional adjustment of the kindergarten child are related to the parenting style of the child. When the mother’s parenting style is characterized as being authoritative, the child’s level of adjustment will be high; and when the mothers parenting style is characterized as being authoritarian or permissive, the child’s level of adjustment will be low. This hypothesis was confirmed. That is to say, a positive correlation was found to exist between an authoritative parenting style and the social and emotional adjustment of the kindergarten child, and a negative correlation was found to exist between an authoritarian parenting style and a permissive parenting style and the social and emotional adjustment of the kindergarten child.

This finding is supported by studies showing that the emotional and social adjustment of children of parents with an authoritative parenting style who combine warmth and support with flexibility, is higher than that of their peers who have experienced other parenting styles (McKinney et al., 2008; Steinberg, 2001). Furthermore, children who were raised in homes characterized by an authoritative parenting style received higher scores on a wide variety of adjustment indices, including social development, self-esteem and mental health, as compared to their peers who grew up in homes characterized by other parenting styles (Baumrind, 1991, 2005; Steinberg, Lamborn, Darling, Mounts & Dornbusch, 1994).

The first way to explain this finding is that the parental involvement and support which is characteristic of the authoritative parenting style, encourages the child to accept the influences of the parent, resulting in the more effective socialization of the child. Secondly, this combination of support and understanding contributes to the development of abilities for self-control within the child, enabling him to act responsibly. And thirdly, the verbal negotiation between the parent and the child that is characteristic of this parenting style, nurtures within the child the cognitive and social abilities that allow him to function well outside of the confines of the family.

In the study of Berg (2011), it was found that preschool children whose parents have taken on an authoritative style of parenting exhibit normal social-emotional development. These children are able to develop a higher level of social abilities than other children (Abu Talib, 2012). These findings support the findings of the current study that a high level of social competence helps children to adapt well in the kindergarten.

The second part of this hypothesis was supported, that is a negative correlation was found to exist between an authoritarian parenting style and a permissive parenting style of parenting and the social-emotional adjustment of kindergarten children. The finding is consistent with the findings of previous studies that found that the authoritarian parenting style was found to be related with difficulties in social-emotional adjustment during the periods of childhood and adolescence (Baumrind, 1991; Henderson, et al., 2006; McKinney et al., 2011; Paulussen-Hoogeboom, et al., 2008).

A possible explanation for this finding is that authoritarian parents exhibit less involvement with and less trust and commitment toward their children, and do not encourage them to communicate freely, and perhaps as a result of this, their ability to communicate with others is weak, and they find it difficult to adapt to and cope with kindergarten.

Unlike the findings of the current study, studies conducted within the Arab community in Israel have found that the authoritarian parenting style was perceived as being positive, and not harmful regarding adjustment among adolescents (Dwairy, 2004; Dwairy et al., 2006), and that the authoritarian parenting style is seen as an expression of the positive attitude of parents towards them, characterized by caring, love, respect, and protection.

The children of parents with a permissive parenting style are characterized as having low levels of self-control, difficulties in adjusting, and little association with their peers (Heller, Baker, Henker & Hinshaw, 1996; Jewell & Stark, 2003). In line with these findings, the present study found that children of mothers with a permissive parenting style demonstrated a low level of social and emotional adjustment to kindergarten. The findings of the current study support the opinions of those investigators that claim that the children of parents with a permissive parenting style are likely to demonstrate antisocial behavior and to have difficulties in adapting socially (Santrock, 2004; Wu, 2009). A possible explanation for this finding is that the permissive parenting style is characterized by low levels of control and few requirements and does not set standards for acceptable behavior in the family. Neither do the parents set clear boundaries, which is perceived negatively by children ages 3 to 4. They are not able to distinguish between right and wrong behavior so they suffer from a lack of self-control which can lead to involvement in criminal activities, behavioral disorders, and difficulties in integrating with their peers and social problems in the kindergarten.

The findings of the current study agree with those of Dwairy (2004), who found a negative correlation between a permissive parenting style and the social-emotional adjustment of adolescent Arabs in Israeli society, but do not support the study of Kanj (2011, [Heb]), in which he found a positive correlation to exist between the permissive parenting style, and the social-emotional adjustment of Arab adolescents within Arab society, a finding that was explained while taking into account that Arab society today is characterized by two orientations. First, the collective orientation, and secondly, and orientation directed toward individualism, which is the result of processes of interaction and integration with the Jewish society.

**Maternal self-efficacy and the social-emotional adjustment of the kindergarten child**

The second study hypothesis, that a positive correlation exists between the level of maternal self-efficacy and the level of social-emotional adjustment of the kindergarten child, was confirmed by the results of this study.

The current study’s findings support the claims of researchers that parents with high levels of self-efficacy are raising children with normal social-emotional behavioral adjustment (Jones & Prinz, 2005; Keller, 2012 [Heb]). The increased confidence of the parents in dealing with daily parental tasks was found to strengthen the parents’ sense of self-efficacy (Sanders, Markie-Dadds & Turner, 1999).

It is possible to explain the finding of the current study that mothers who see themselves as having a high level of parental self-efficacy are more likely to believe in warm close relationships with their children, and it is possible that this mother-child closeness makes it possible for the child to use all of his/her resources to their fullest. A child who is close to his/her mother is able to trust in her explanations and guidance, is happy to share with her the discovery of a new idea or a new skill and to receive positive reinforcement from her. This sharing of ideas on the part of the mother with the child encourages the child to share with the kindergarten teacher, which in turn strengthens the teacher – child relationship helping the child to adjust well to kindergarten (Bouley, 2011, [Heb]). A child who has close relationships with his mother also feels secure in creating new relationships with children his age and is better able to integrate socially (Howes et al., 1994).

Mothers with high levels of self-efficacy, feel confident in their ability to perform parental tasks, and are concerned about providing a sense of satisfaction and happiness to their children, which in turn intensifies feelings of self-esteem within the child, motivates them, and strengthens their self-confidence. Children who develop self-confidence and a strong sense of self-esteem are more willing to rely on their own abilities and to view the world around them with a sense of hope and sociability (Jones & Prinz, 2005; Pelletier & Brent, 2002).

In summary, the results of the study confirm its hypotheses. Parenting styles were found to be associated with emotional and social adjustment among kindergarteners. A positive correlation was found to exist between the authoritative parenting style which is characterized by listening to and paying attention to the child and being receptive to his/her needs, and the child’s social-emotional adjustment, and a negative correlation was found to exist between an authoritarian parenting style, which is characterized by strictness and demanding obedience, and the social-emotional adjustment of the child, and a negative correlation was found to exist between a permissive parenting style which is characterized by a lack of control, and social and emotional adjustment in kindergarten.

The present study mainly contributes to research findings regarding parental styles and the social-emotional adjustment of children, and the relationship between maternal self-efficacy and the emotional and social adjustment of children, and its unique contribution is the examination of this relationship in early childhood.

In addition, an understanding of the issues that parents are experiencing and dealing with today offers a practical contribution to professionals who work with both parents and children. The findings with regard to maternal self-efficacy and its relation to the social-emotional adjustment of the kindergarten child and their relationship in the light of parenting styles, are unique to this field of research, and have theoretical and practical implications concerning an understanding of the parental experience, especially with regard to mothers, in Arab society in Israel.

**Educational applications of the research findings**

The findings of the present study have shown that there is a positive correlation between and authoritative parenting style and the social-emotional adjustment of the kindergarten child, and that a negative correlation exists between an authoritarian and permissive parenting style and the social-emotional adjustment of the kindergarten child in Arab society in Israel. Therefore, the first practical application of the study’s findings would be the creation of workshops for parents designed to raise their awareness regarding the importance of individual parenting styles, and to explain to them the relationship between parenting styles and the development of the child’s emotional-social adjustment, and how it is possible to provide children with a suitable environment to develop self-esteem, self-confidence, self-control, and the ability to develop meaningful relationships with those outside of the family circle. It would be possible to develop such workshops in connection with “Tipat Halav” (government centers that provide health and medical services to pregnant women, infants and children [from birth to age 6 years] and their families), or in kindergarten’s under the direction of parenting experts.

A second possible application of the findings would be their contribution to the training of parental instructors within the Arab community in order to guide parents and to encourage them to develop positive relationships with their children and to achieve a strong influence on their development. In addition, the findings can be used in the training of educators in general and specifically teachers and kindergarten teachers, by having each student take a course in the social and emotional adjustment of children and the relationship between parenting styles and the social-emotional adjustment of children in kindergarten, and of students in school. The third practical application of the findings would be the establishment of workshops and lectures for mothers on the subject of maternal self-efficacy, to help mothers to see themselves as having a high level of parental self-efficacy and to believe in their ability to function as mothers. Such workshops could be established at parenting and family centers by experts on this subject.

**Limitations of the study and suggestions for future research**

The current study contained several key limitations. First of all, the sample was taken from a defined geographic area and it is not random. The study included six kindergartens which are located in the Meshulash region, and the generalizing of the results to a wider population would be questionable since this would require a random sample that would represent the various strata of the Arab population.

Secondly, the study relies on self-reporting for both the questionnaire for parenting style and that for maternal self-efficacy. Relying solely on self-reporting may lead to finding relationships resulting from reporting bias. Such reporting can at times be skewed namely by the desire to respond in accordance with social conventions. Although studies of this type can never completely avoid such social desirability bias, and it is not possible to determine the exact extent of such an inherent bias, it is necessary to take into account that such a bias might be present in the study’s findings. Future studies can benefit by adding behavioral indices or external evaluations in order to add validity to their results.

Thirdly, the mother’s questionnaires were delivered to them by the children, and were not filled out in the presence of the researcher, meaning that in the case of ambiguity or a lack of clarity when the questionnaire was being filled out, an immediate response was not available. Most of the mothers preferred to deal with the questionnaire on their own, which may have led to findings stemming from different interpretations of the subject.

Fourthly, recent studies suggest that in many families the parenting styles of the fathers and mothers differ one from the other, and that each one has a different effect on their children (McGillicuddy, De- Lisi, & De- Lisi, 2007). The present study focuses only on the reporting of the mothers and of the kindergarten teachers, and this affects the study findings.

And fifth, the parenting styles and self-efficacy questionnaires were used for the first time in the Arab sector, and it is not possible to compare the findings that were obtained with other findings received in the Arab sector. Therefore, further studies are necessary using these two questionnaires.

The present study was conducted against the background of a relative lack of studies of the Arab population in Israel. Therefore it is difficult to compare the current study’s findings with other studies and their findings. Hence, there is a need in future studies to examine the study variables in early childhood, and to examine parenting style variables in conjunction with additional relevant variables relating parents to children, and to look for any intermediate variables operating between parenting style and the adjustment of the child, by way of feelings of parental self-efficacy on the part of the mother, or by way of feelings of parental self-efficacy on the part of the father.

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