

UNDERSTANDING HELICOPTER PARENTING: EFFECTS ON STUDENT DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

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Abstract:

A parent who is very involved in their children's lives to the point where they are controlling, overprotective, and perfectionistic is said to be a helicopter parent. The proliferation of "helicopter parents" is largely attributable to the rise of modern communication and surveillance technologies. Although helicopter parents act in this way to ensure their children's safety, research shows that such beliefs harm their children's development and make these people more vulnerable to problems down the road. The purpose of this research is to add to the existing body of knowledge on the topic by reviewing previous studies that have looked into helicopter parenting styles and their impacts on children and adults, and to provide guidance to researchers in this area. First, the study reviews research on helicopter parenting, including studies that have examined its definition, history, and evaluation of the helicopter attitude. The next step was to look at what makes parents with helicopter attitudes tick, what sets them off, and how research has shown that helicopter attitudes vary between parents and children. Lastly, research was compiled that looked at how helicopter attitudes affected people's development and how these attitudes were linked to psychopathologies.

Index Terms: Helicopter Parenting, Emotional development, Parenting style, psychological effect, Mental Health.

Introduction:

"Reassure a child that, irrespective of successes or failures, they are loved, respected, and cherished for their intrinsic worth, rather than their accomplishments" ...

*Mass General Brigham
Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist*

The environment individuals encounter, and the relationships they form, significantly influence their lifelong development. The familial environment and parental dispositions are the most significant factors (**Arslan and Kiral 2022**). Parenting is a complex phenomenon characterised by techniques of defence, nurturing, protection, and care, which are influenced by cultural changes and the conceptual frameworks they encompass (**Batu and Tos 2022**). The evolution of various parenting techniques has been unavoidable due to the evolving perceptions of childhood over time (**Dursun Çirci 2021**). Parenting methods vary based on numerous characteristics, including gender, geographic location, age, educational attainment, age at marriage, and the number of offspring (**Sak et al. 2015**). In his work on parental attitudes, **Baumrind (1966)** identified four main categories. These include communication, control, warmth/nurturing, and expectations. The three main types of parenting styles—authoritarian, permissive, and authoritative—are influenced by these characteristics. A permissive parent communicates well, is warm and nurturing, and has minimal expectations. Avoiding exerting control, they provide children unrestricted freedom and assume that youngsters will make all the decisions. Absolute norms and rules apply to authoritarian parents, and their children are expected to follow them without question. Low levels of warmth/nurturing and communication coexist with high levels of expectation and control in this type of parenting. All aspects are high in an authoritative

parenting style, where the parent considers the child's unique needs and interests while also imposing their own values and beliefs.

Parenting styles can be broadly categorized into four types, according to **Maccoby and Martin (1983)**: authoritarian, democratic, permissive, and neglectful, all derived from Baumrind's work. Based on demandingness and sensitivity, we examine this categorisation. A child's behaviour can be managed through the control dimension, which is demandingness. Provides for the child's unique requirements, demonstrates warmth, permits personalisation, and encourages the growth of a sense of identity; this acceptance dimension is known as sensitivity. There is less intimacy between children of authoritarian parents, and such parents are very demanding and controlling. Parental democraticism is characterised by openness, control, and a lack of restriction. In contrast to authoritarian parents, who demand a great deal from their children, permissive parents are more lenient and put the needs of their children first.

What actually Helicopter Parenting is?

In 1969, **Ginott** coined the term "helicopter parent" in his book "Between Parent and Teenager." In 2011, the term was added to the scientific literature, following a child's description of his mother as hovering over him like a helicopter (**Yilmaz 2020b**). **Cline and Fay (1990)** were the first to establish the notion in an essay for the parenting book series. According to **Bernstein and Triger (2010)**, **Kuppens and Ceulemans (2018)**, and **Juang et al. (2013)**, helicopter parents overprotect their children. Another term for this style of parenting is tiger parenting. "Hovercrafts," "hummingbirds," "stealth fighters," and "black hawks" are some of the other labels given to parents who act like helicopters (**LeMoyné and Buchanan 2011**).

Helicopter parenting begins prior to childbirth and persists till graduation (**Ritter 2011**), occasionally extending into professional and marital realms (**Yoo et al. 2016, Gençer 2020**). Helicopter parenting commences during pregnancy, as parents pursue information on optimal pregnancy maintenance and ideal child-rearing practices, and persists postnatally, with efforts to encase the child in a protective "bubble" or "armour" utilising surveillance cameras and security devices (**Bernstein and Triger 2010**).

According to research by **Padilla-Walker and Nelson (2012)**, helicopter parenting differs from behavioural control in that it doesn't aim to limit the child's psychological or intellectual autonomy. However, it does involve some elements of behavioural control, such as providing excessive warmth and support and limiting the child's autonomy too much for their age. According to **Padilla-Walker and Nelson (2012)**, a helicopter parent is more likely to exhibit positive traits in their relationship with their child, including emotional support, guidance in their parent-child relationships, disclosure, and psychological and behavioural control. Consistent with the findings of Padilla-Walker and Nelson (2012), **Alsancak Akbulut and Kömürçü Akik (2024)** demonstrated that parents who exert an excessive amount of control over their children can do so through psychological control mechanisms.

There has been a 60% increase in the proportion of parents exhibiting helicopter parenting attitudes over the past 30 years, according to **Stone et al. (2011)**, who compared findings from early studies with those from more recent studies. According to **Yilmaz (2020b)**, fathers exhibit a greater increase in helicopter parenting attitudes than mothers. The proliferation of "helicopter parents" is, according to some scholars (**LeMoyné and Buchanan, 2011**), partly caused by the ease with which parents can monitor their children's activities thanks to technological advancements. According to research by **Kelly et al. (2017)**, parents' ability to exert control over their children and the prevalence of "helicopter parents" were both boosted by the proliferation of mobile phone technology.

Traits of Helicopter Parents:

Parents exhibiting helicopter parenting tendencies offer excessive guidance and needless assistance to their children across all subjects (**Segrin et al. 2012**). These parents are often characterised by overprogramming, protectiveness, perfectionism (**LeMoyné and Buchanan 2011, Lee and Kang 2018, Zienty and Nordling 2018**), and controlling behaviour (**Schiffrin et al. 2014, Kelly et al. 2017**). Parents exhibiting this approach overly concentrate on their children (**Rousseau and Scharf 2017**), rendering them the exclusive focal point of their lives (**Odenweller et al. 2014**). The terminology employed by helicopter parents about their children reveals insights into their attitudes.

They typically advocate for their children and employ multiple subjects in their statements (**Kelly et al. 2017**). They exhibit minimal or no regard for their children's aspirations and desires (**Hesse et al. 2018**). Helicopter parenting tendencies emerge in children at a very young age (**Hong et al. 2015**). Consistently monitoring their children and

guiding their behaviours and play (**Bradley-Geist and Olson-Buchanan 2014**), as well as dictating their friendships and activities (**Bristow 2023**), are typical behaviours of helicopter parents.

One of the most prominent characteristics of helicopter parents is their expectation of elevated achievement from their children (**Odenweller et al. 2014**). These parents assume significant responsibility for their children's lives, particularly for their success or failure (**Somers and Settle 2010, Yilmaz 2020b**). Helicopter parents, excessively preoccupied with their children's academic achievements, often engage in behaviours such as rigorously scrutinising homework as if it were their own and offering excessive assistance with assignments and school projects (**Duygulu 2018, Gençer 2020, Bristow 2023**).

Yilmaz's (2020b) research indicates that parents' helicopter views on fundamental confidence, life skills, and emotional-personal life differ substantially. The helicopter parenting tendencies of moms exceed those of fathers in both areas. Furthermore, while there was no notable difference in the overall helicopter parenting attitude based on the children's gender, an analysis of the sub-dimensions revealed a more pronounced attitude towards boys concerning academic matters and towards girls regarding ethical and moral issues.

According to research, helicopter attitudes are more prevalent in families with fewer children (**Bradley-Geist and Olson Buchanan 2014, Turan et al. 2024**). In households with many children, it was shown that the middle children showed the least amount of helicopter attitude, while the first children showed the highest level compared to other siblings (**Yilmaz 2020b**). The results of the student research revealed that secondary school students' perceptions of helicopter parenting were greater than those of students at other educational levels. This discrepancy is believed to be caused by parents' increased helicopter attitudes as a result of pre-adolescent developmental traits and academic worries about the future (**Yilmaz 2020b**). Furthermore, it was discovered that people with physical disabilities had more helicopter attitudes than people without disabilities (**Turan et al. 2024**).

According to research (**Luebbe et al., 2018**), parents' extreme worry and dread of negative consequences for their children's lives is a root cause of helicopter parenting.

Theories that elucidate the phenomenon of helicopter parenting:

Three ideas in developmental psychology explain helicopter parenting and its effects on children.

1. Self-Determination Theory (SDT):

According to Self-Determination Theory (SDT), there are three fundamental psychological requirements that children must have to grow and thrive: relatedness (feeling loved and connected), competence (the ability to do things well), and autonomy (the flexibility to make one's own decisions). Parents who engage in helicopter parenting tend to be too controlling, stifling their children's independence by constantly micromanaging their every move. Since kids have fewer opportunities to figure things out on their own, their competency suffers as a result. Despite a high level of relatedness resulting from parental participation, a lack of competence and autonomy can cause low self-confidence, increased worry, and diminished internal motivation.

2. The Circumplex Model of Family Systems:

The Circumplex Model of Family Systems elucidates family functioning via three dimensions: cohesiveness (emotional intimacy), flexibility (capacity to modify roles and regulations), and communication. From the standpoint of helicopter parenting, families typically exhibit elevated cohesiveness (over participation or enmeshment) and diminished flexibility (parents exert stringent control and decision-making). Despite the frequency of communication, it frequently remains unilateral, characterized by parents directing rather than engaging in active listening. This disparity can restrict the child's independence and hinder the development of autonomy and sound decision-making abilities.

3. Family differentiation theory:

Family Differentiation Theory, derived from Bowen's family systems theory, emphasizes an individual's capacity to preserve their identity while remaining emotionally linked to the family unit. From a helicopter parenting standpoint, distinction tends to be minimal, resulting in children becoming excessively reliant on their parents for decision-making, emotional support, and validation. Due to parental over-involvement and control, children may find it challenging to cultivate autonomous thought and emotional self-regulation. Consequently, they may struggle to manage stress, make autonomous decisions, and operate autonomously beyond the familial context.

Helicopter Parenting and Its Impact on Education:

Helicopter parenting affects education by augmenting parental oversight of a child's learning experience. While such involvement may enhance academic achievement temporarily through meticulous oversight and direction, it constrains the cultivation of autonomous learning abilities. Students exhibit diminished capacity for critical thinking, problem-solving, and self-management of academic obligations. This reliance may diminish intrinsic drive and elevate academic anxiety over time. As a result, students may encounter challenges in higher education, where discipline, self-reliance, and self-directed learning are crucial for success.

Conclusion:

Despite the prevalence of favourable assessments regarding helicopter parenting due to parental good intentions, research indicates that such behaviours typically result in adverse effects on the quality of life of individuals raised in these environments. Therefore, the topic requires additional examination, and new factors must be incorporated into the study. The topic is still relevant today because there hasn't been much research on the topic of helicopter parenting in India, in comparison to international literature. Helicopter parents' attitudes, which have grown in popularity in recent years, are influenced by numerous things. It is critical to quantify the extent to which helicopter parenting is prevalent in India, identify the characteristics that contribute to its development, and figure out how to mitigate its harmful impacts. One way to lessen the impact of helicopter parents is for researchers to look for additional factors that might mitigate the connection between helicopter parenting and mental health issues in future studies. Research that follows the same people over time may also shed light on how helicopter parents' views develop, what sets them off, and how their children are affected by them. Those who aren't parents yet should be made aware of helicopter parenting through awareness-raising studies, and parents who already have these views should be informed of the pros and cons of them based on the latest research.

To address the issue of helicopter parenting and its detrimental impacts, it is important to raise awareness about parents' attitudes and behaviours. Experts in the field can provide information in family counselling and education centres, as well as in relevant institutions and digital platforms, to help parents and children develop healthier relationships.

Children whose parents hover over them may be better prepared to handle life's challenges if teachers and psychologists help them develop a sense of independence and self-reliance from the start of their educational journey and offer therapy assistance as needed.

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