

Relationship Between Helicopter Parenting and Psychological Wellbeing in College Students

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Abstract

Several international studies suggest that helicopter parenting, a type of parenting with psychological control and excessive parental involvement, has a negative impact on emerging adults' psychological wellbeing. Hence, this study aimed to determine whether Maldivian college students perceive over involvement by their parents and if this impacts the students' psychological wellbeing negatively. Seventy-One college students, aged 18 to 25, completed two survey questionnaires: The Helicopter Parenting Scale (LeMoyne & Buchanan, 2011) and the Psychological Wellbeing Scale (Ryff, 2014), the findings of which showed a medium negative correlation between helicopter parenting and overall psychological wellbeing, and stronger negative correlations with environmental mastery and autonomy. Hence, future research needs to explore the impact of over parenting, such as difficulty attaining autonomy and self-efficacy in Maldivian young adults.

Keywords: Helicopter parenting; psychological wellbeing; over parenting; young emerging adults

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Introduction

Helicopter parenting (HP) was first used by Haim Ginott (1969) to describe the overcontrol and surveillance of a child during adolescence by their parents and coined by Foster Cline and Jim Fay (1990). It is a multidimensional construct of parental control, including seeking information about daily life and academic progress, directly intervening to solve interpersonal problems and limiting autonomy by structuring emerging adult offsprings' lives to prevent making mistakes. Seeking information alone can be seen by offspring as caring and supportive behaviour. However, combined with direct intervention and prevention of autonomy, this parenting style can be harmful to the children (Luebbe et al., 2018), similar to other maladaptive parenting styles such as controlling and low-involved parenting (Church et al. 2015; Liga et al., 2017).

Emerging adulthood is a phase of human development where the hierarchical parent-child relationship becomes a symmetrical, autonomous, adult to adult relationship. At the same time, connection with and support from parents continue (Hair, Moore, Garrett, Ling & Cleveland, 2008). Though successful individuation separation from parents is critical to emerging adults' identity development and psychological wellbeing, maintaining a balance between connection and autonomy is difficult for many emerging adult offspring and their parents (Arnett & Schwab, 2012; Nelson, et al., 2007).

Conducting a study targeting college students who are in the emerging adult phase of development, whom helicopter parents have raised requires outlining and defining what helicopter parenting is in contrast to other similar parenting styles such as parental overprotection, parental overinvolvement, intense parental control, and tiger parenting (Barber & Harmon, 2002; Chua, 2011; Fingerman et al., 2012; Givertz & Segrin, 2014). Parental overprotection is control of a child's actions due to parental anxiety that the child may face harm (Clarke et al., 2013). Parental overinvolvement has themes of needing to make every decision for the child, with the decision being based on the parent's own personal wants and desires; being demanding and inconsistent but rarely satisfied and quick to anger, and having tunnel vision towards a viewpoint (van Ingen et al., 2008). Chua (2011) describes tiger parenting as the constant pressure for the child to achieve things that may or may not be outside their ability through physical, psychological, or emotional punishment. Intense parental control can be defined as a form of parental psychological control that serves the parent's agenda rather than the child's best interests (Barber & Harmon, 2002). Withdrawal of love and attention, guilt induction, shaming, emotional isolation, and expression of disappointment are coercive strategies

used for psychological control (Yu et al., 2015). The aforementioned parenting styles are similar in some respects but not exactly the same as helicopter parenting.

Helicopter parenting can be understood as providing intense support from the point of love and care for the child and desire for the child to succeed. However, emotional, financial, and academic responsiveness can often be seen paired with other types of controlling parenting styles (Padilla-Walker, Son, & Nelson, 2021), driven by parents' own anxieties about distancing their emerging adult children (Katrijn, Soenens, Van Petegem & Kins, 2017).

Helicopter parenting is similar to the authoritarian parenting style in the sense that it enforces absolute rules. It also has similarities to other styles, such as psychological control, which negatively affects the child's independence, sense of self and competence (Padilla-Walker & Nelson, 2012). Helicopter parenting or hovering differs from authoritarian parenting in intention, which is benevolence, though the impact is the same despite the intention (Givertz & Segrin, 2014).

Consequences of helicopter parenting in emerging adults

While parents may opt to use helicopter parenting to improve their children's academic performance and future career success, studies suggest that overseeing their activities tirelessly and stepping in to make decisions for the children may have undesirable effects on their development. These effects include mental health issues (Schiffirin et al., 2014) and difficulty developing autonomy (Spokas & Heimberg, 2009). This style of parenting has been found to affect the child's socialization process negatively and can lead to increased chances of developing anxiety and depression from maladjustment to adulthood (Ballash et al., 2006; Schiffirin et al., 2014; Spokas & Heimberg, 2009). For instance, self-regulation, self-confidence and autonomy develop from personal experiences and decisions, which teaches emerging adults to face the consequences when they make mistakes, such as when handling new responsibilities (Schiffirin et al., 2014). Neuroticism and interpersonal dependency were noted in helicopter parented offspring (Odenweller et al., 2014).

Socialization of children also influences how well they adjust to adult life and communicate their feelings (LeMoyne & Buchanan, 2011), and different parenting styles can impact the socialization and integration of the child

into society's norms. Hence, the type of helicopter parenting practised can significantly affect how well-equipped a child or adult is for age-appropriate responsibilities (Schiffrin et al., 2014). The failure to acquire necessary skills during their childhood would make the transition to adulthood difficult for the children as they may not be able to handle age-appropriate responsibilities such as managing finances and self-regulation. (Park et al., 2010). Research by Padilla-Walker, Son, and Nelson (2021) identified that controlling helicopter parents and highly controlling helicopter fathers had children with higher levels of depressive symptoms and delinquency.

The socio-cultural nuances of parenting styles

In order to expand the current understanding of helicopter parenting, it is necessary to understand the cultural nuances and effects of the phenomenon, as the majority of studies do not account for populations and cultures outside of the socio-economically affluent societies of the West. Parent-child relationships in the Maldives, are based on principles of interdependence and respect for relatedness to elders, similar to many other Asian cultures. Hence, children are brought up to expect high levels of involvement by parents in the lives of adult offspring. Islam guides Muslims to comply with parental authority unless that authority is detrimental to the formation of a healthy Muslim identity and the wellbeing of the offspring and others. Obedience and respect for parents' desires for their offspring are prevalent in Muslim parents' socialization practices.

Parenting approaches differ across cultures, and Asian cultures have a more authoritarian approach involving "filial piety" (unquestioned obedience to parents) and the importance of the family unit (Inman et al., 2007; Park et al., 2010). A Study in Korea showed that while college students had positive attitudes towards parental support in academic preparation and career orientation, they had negative attitudes towards parental control, which hindered their autonomy (Lee & Kang, 2018; Kwon et al., 2017). Lee and Kang's study (2018) showed that Korean emerging adult perceptions of helicopter parenting were similar to those of European-American populations.

Studies on helicopter parenting in South Asian populations are limited and do not represent the Maldivian population; hence this research aimed to explore helicopter parenting practices to see if there is any impact on Maldivian college students' psychological wellbeing.

Research suggests that low levels of helicopter parenting, when paired with parental warmth and low levels of control, in some cases, may be helpful. However, it can be harmful when paired with high levels of parental control (Padilla-Walker, Son, & Nelson, 2019).

Method

Participants

71 students enrolled at Villa College, consisting of 21 male (30%) and 50 female (70%) students aged 18 to 25, participated in the study. Participation was voluntary, and the participants were informed they could withdraw anytime during the data collection phase. The participants were informed of possible negative effects of participating in the research, such as distress caused by some of the questions if they have had negative experiences. The participants were provided with the details of the questionnaires' content before obtaining consent and the number of Maldivian Red Crescent (MRC) Psychosocial Support Helpline was given to the participants. Data was collected between September and December of 2022.

Measures

Helicopter parenting of mothers and fathers was jointly measured using the 10-item Helicopter Parenting Scale (HPS) by LeMoyne and Buchanan (2011). The questionnaire contains items such as "My parents supervised my every move growing up" and "I trust my parents' judgment over my own." Items were graded on a 5-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = undecided, 4 = agree and 5=strongly agree). Higher scores on the Scale indicate a higher level of HP.

Psychological wellbeing was measured using the 42-item Psychological Wellbeing Scale (PWS) by Ryff (2014). It has six 7-item subscales which measure autonomy, personal growth, purpose in life, environmental mastery, self-acceptance and positive relations with others. Examples of items in this questionnaire are "I have confidence in my opinions, even if they are contrary to the general consensus" for Autonomy, and "In many ways, I feel disappointed about my achievements in life" for Self-Acceptance. The grading system is a 7-point Likert scale (1=strongly agree, 4= neutral, 7=strongly disagree). Higher scores on PWS indicate higher psychological wellbeing.

The Cronbach's Alpha for HPS in the original sample by creators LeMoyné and Buchanan, (2011) was 0.7, and the PWS had the Cronbach's Alpha of 0.8 in a study by Bayani et al. (2008). A pilot test conducted on a sample of 15 college students in the Maldives for cultural variability and reliability showed a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.75 (>0.7) for HPS and 0.91 (>0.7) for PWS.

The two survey questionnaires were sent to participants online as a Google Form. Pearson's Correlation Coefficient was calculated between the two scales on Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22. A median-split technique was used to divide respondents into two groups: high and low scorers on the HPS; the responses of these two groups were compared in terms of supervision, decision-making, independence, autonomy, and academic and career expectations.

Results

Descriptive statistics on Helicopter Parenting Scale

On the helicopter parenting scale measures, the mean was noted to be 3.17 while the standard deviation was 0.72. The recorded minimum and maximum were 1.40 and 5.00, respectively. The median for the data collected for the variable HPS is 3.10. A right skew (0.18) was noted as the skewness of the data and the kurtosis (-0.006) indicates that the tails in the distribution are flat and thin. This indicates that helicopter parenting behaviours are common in the Maldivian cultural context. However, there are differences in practice compared to the original LeMoyné and Buchanan's study in 2011 with American university students, as shown in Table 1. Maldivian young adults' ratings are higher for seven out of the ten items on the scale. However, the scoring significantly indicates higher parental supervision, and higher perception of parents wanting their offspring to succeed, and willingness to support the offspring, but lesser involvement in their daily activities and decision making, when compared to the American parents.

Table 1: Descriptive Results of Helicopter Parenting

Items in Helicopter Parenting Scale	Mean (SD)	
	This study	LeMoyné and Buchanan (2011)
1. My parents supervised my every move growing up.	3.70 (1.2)	3.0 (1.2)
2. I sometimes felt that my parents did not feel I could make my own decisions.	3.3 (1.3)	2.9 (1.3)
3. My parents let me figure things out independently. *	2.6 (1.3)	2.5 (1.1)

4. It was very important to my parents that I never fail in life.	3.9 (1.3)	3.7 (1.1)
5. My parents were not afraid to let me stumble in life. *	2.8 (1.3)	2.6 (1.1)
6. My parents often stepped in to solve life problems for me.	3.2 (1.2)	2.8 (1.0)
7. Growing up, I sometimes felt like I was my parents' project.	2.4 (1.5)	1.9 (0.9)
8. My parents have always been very involved in my activities.	3.5 (1.2)	3.7 (1.1)
9. I trust my parents' judgment over my own.	2.9 (1.2)	3.1 (1.1)
10. I rarely talk to my parents before I make decisions. *	3.1 (1.2)	3.4 (1.3)

Note. M = mean, SD = standard deviation, * = reverse-coded questions

Descriptive Statics on Psychological Wellbeing Scale (PWS)

In the data for PWS, the mean calculated was 176.20 with a standard deviation of 37.30, and the maximum and minimum are estimated to be 272 and 100, respectively. The median is 175 and the data has a right skew (0.85) with a kurtosis (-0.15) which indicates that the tails are thin in the distribution, similar to the kurtosis and skewness of the variable of HP. Table 2 to Table 7 shows the descriptive results for the six subscales of this measure. The scoring was 1=strongly agree, 2 = somewhat agree, 3 = little agree, 4 = neither agree or disagree, 5 = little disagree, 6 = somewhat disagree, 7 = strongly disagree.

Autonomy scale results shown in Table 2 below indicates a low mean value for all of the items with none of the items scoring a strong measure of independence, self-determination, ability to resist social pressure, and to self-regulate from within, and to evaluate oneself based on own standards rather than what others think.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics on PWS subscale: Autonomy (AU)

Items on Autonomy	M (SD)	SD
1. "I am not afraid to voice my opinions, even when they are in opposition to the opinions of most people." *	4.3	1.90
10. "I tend to worry about what other people think of me."	2.8	1.90
13. "My decisions are not usually influenced by what everyone else is doing." *	3.9	1.69
21. "I judge myself by what I think is important, not by the values of what others think is important." *	4.4	1.80
24. "I tend to be influenced by people with strong opinions."	3.5	1.76
35. "I have confidence in my opinions, even if they are contrary to the general consensus." *	4.5	1.65
41. "It's difficult for me to voice my own opinions on controversial matters."	3.8	2.08

Note. M = mean, SD = standard deviation, * = reverse-coded questions

The results on Environmental Mastery subscale in Table 3 shows very low scores, with strong agreement on feelings of low capacity to effectively manage own life and the surrounding environment or ability to choose and control the personal situation, which are significant psychological wellbeing components for emerging adulthood and academic success.

Table 3: Descriptive Results of Items on PWS Subscale: Environmental Mastery (EM)

Items on Environmental Mastery	M	SD
3. "In general, I feel I am in charge of the situation in which I live." *	4.18	1.92
12. "I have difficulty arranging my life in a way that is satisfying to me."	3.54	1.86
15. "The demands of everyday life often get me down."	3.52	1.99
23. "I have been able to build a living environment and a lifestyle for myself that is much to my liking" *	3.78	1.85
26. "I do not fit very well with the people and the community around me."	3.83	1.90
36. "I am quite good at managing the many responsibilities of my daily life." *	4.32	1.65
42. "I often feel overwhelmed by my responsibilities."	2.97	1.91

Note. M = mean, SD = standard deviation, * = reverse-coded questions

The results on the Personal Growth subscale in Table 4 show a desire to develop and extend their horizons, willingness and desire for goal achievement, but conformity to cultural expectations about self and lack of confidence to try new things. College students need to explore new ways of doing things for academic and career success.

Table 4: Descriptive Results of Items on PWS Subscale: Personal Growth (PG)

Items on Personal Growth	M	SD
2. "For me, life has been a continuous process of learning, changing, and growth." *	5.09	2.12
5. "I am not interested in activities that will expand my horizons."	4.87	1.83
14. "I gave up trying to make big improvements or changes in my life a long time ago."	4.99	1.95
17. "I think it is important to have new experiences that challenge how you think about yourself and the world." *	5.27	1.89

25. "I do not enjoy being in new situations that require me to change my old familiar ways of doing things."	3.11	1.79
28. "When I think about it, I haven't really improved much as a person over the years."	4.90	2.03
37. "I have the sense that I have developed a lot as a person over time." *	5.14	1.82

Note. M = mean, SD = standard deviation, * = reverse-coded questions

The results in Table 5 for Purpose in Life subscale show incapacity to plan for the concerning future, but maybe realistic in the socio-economic context of Male', and not very clear agreement on having a sense of purpose in life. However, there is a desire for goal achievement and appreciation of own life.

Table 5: Descriptive Results of Items on PWS Subscale: Purpose in Life (PL)

Items on Purpose in Life	M	SD
6. "I enjoy making plans for the future and working to make them a reality." *	5.25	1.73
9. "I live life one day at a time and don't really think about the future."	4.76	2.09
20. "I have a sense of direction and purpose in life." *	4.44	1.81
29. "Some people wander aimlessly through life, but I am not one of them." *	4.66	2.02
33. "I sometimes feel as if I've done all there is to do in life."	5.24	1.91
32. "I don't have a good sense of what it is I'm trying to accomplish in life."	4.21	2.10
39. "My daily activities often seem trivial and unimportant to me."	4.68	1.75

Note. M = mean, SD = standard deviation, * = reverse-coded questions

The results in Table 6 for the Self-Acceptance Subscale show disappointment with their achievements not meeting their expectations, a negative attitude towards self, and a desire to be different from what they are. Self-Acceptance is the most significant measure of psychological wellbeing and optimal functioning (Ryff, 2014). Positive feedback from parents, teachers and peers can help improve self-acceptance.

Table 6: Descriptive Results of Items on PWS Subscale: Self-Acceptance (SA)

Items on Self-Acceptance	M	SD
8. "In many ways I feel disappointed about my achievements in life."	3.99	2.26
11. "When I look at the story of my life, I am pleased with how things have turned out." *	4.14	1.97
19. "My attitude about myself is probably not as positive as most people feel about themselves."	3.41	2.05
22. "In general, I feel confident and positive about myself." *	3.87	1.98
31. "When I compare myself to friends and acquaintances, it makes me feel good about who I am." *	3.41	2.05
34. "I feel like many of the people I know have gotten more out of life than I have."	3.69	1.98
40. "I like most parts of my personality." *	4.47	2.06

Note. M = mean, SD = standard deviation, * = reverse-coded questions

Results in Table 7 on Positive Relations with Others subscale show warm, trusting relationships with others but unwillingness to compromise to maintain ties, and to give and take, making maintaining relationships difficult. The inability to enjoy personal and mutual conversations with family and friends needs to be addressed through teaching conversation skills, even at the college level.

Table 7: Descriptive Results of Items on PWS Subscale: Positive Relations with Others (PR)

Items on Positive Relations with Others	M	SD
4. "People would describe me as a giving person, willing to share my time with others." *	5.20	1.56
7. "Most people see me as loving and affectionate." *	5.10	1.74
16. "I have not experienced many warm and trusting relationships with others."	4.14	2.03
18. "Maintaining close relationships has been difficult and frustrating for me."	4.17	2.04
27. "I know that I can trust my friends, and they know they can trust me." *	5.07	1.76
30. "I often feel lonely because I have few close friends with whom to share my concerns."	3.66	2.15
38. "I enjoy personal and mutual conversations with family members and friends." *	5.09	1.82

Note. M = mean, SD = standard deviation, * = reverse-coded questions

Data screening: Normality test

Normality tests were conducted on HPS and PWS to determine which correlational test to use. Table 8 shows the results of the Normality test.

Table 8: Normality tests for HPS and PWS

Normality tests	HPS	PWS
Kolmogorov-Smirnov	p= 0.20	p= 0.20
Shapiro-Wilk	p= 0.92	p= 0.77

This allowed the use of the parametric Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient to calculate the correlation.

Results of Correlation

All statistical analyses were performed on SPSS version 22. A p -threshold of $\alpha = .05$ was used to determine statistical significance. Pearson's correlation test was used to assess the strength and direction of the linear relationship between the scores on HPS and PWS and each subscale of PWS. There was a medium negative, statistically significant relationship between HPS and PWS ($r(df) = -.38, p = .001$, two-tailed), suggesting that lower scores on the HPS were associated with higher scores on the overall PWS which supports the alternative hypothesis- that there is a significant negative correlation between Helicopter Parenting and Psychological Wellbeing in Maldivian College students. The low p value indicates the results can be generalized to the population of young people in Maldives. According to Cohen (1992), this indicates a medium effect size.

The subscales were observed to have weak to medium negative relationships with HPS, with the order of the strength of significant correlations (all p values $<.05$) in descending order as Autonomy (-.43), Environmental Mastery (-.40), Self-Acceptance (-.26), Positive Relations with Others (-.25), and Purpose in Life (-.25). Personal Growth was statistically non-significant ($p = .18, r = -.16$). Table 9 shows the correlations between the variables.

Table 9: Pearson's Correlation Between HPS and PWS, and PWS Subscales

Instruments (subscales)	Correlation with HPS
PWS	-.38***
Self-Acceptance	-.26*
Positive Relations with Others	-.25*
Purpose in Life	-.25*
Personal Growth	-.16
Autonomy	-.43***
Environmental Mastery	-.40***

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$, no *, $p > .05$

Discussion

Helicopter parenting, defined by certain characteristics such as constant and unrelenting supervision, making decisions for emerging adult offspring, and encouraging dependence rather than independence of the child, was negatively correlated with psychological wellbeing.

The PWS subscale Self-Acceptance (SA), which covered one's perception of self when compared with that of others, had a negative correlation with HPS scores by participants ($P = -0.26, < 0.05$). Poor self-perception, if linked to competence and adjustment or inability to adjust to adulthood, may be due to autonomy development problems (Cullaty, 2011). Taking pride in their achievements and confidence in their personality and choices are crucial to college students' self-esteem and can affect their academic performance. While low academic performance could lead to low self-esteem, the latter has been observed to affect academic performance more than contributing factors such as stress and body-image (Rosli et al., 2012) and is inversely correlated with self-efficacy (Lane et al., 2004). Stunted development of problem-solving skills and independence due to the increased dependence on parents in problem solving and decision making can affect self-efficacy as an adult (LeMoyné & Buchnan, 2011).

Helicopter parenting was negatively correlated with Positive Relations with Others (PR); hence it can be inferred that helicopter parenting may be detrimental to interpersonal relationships. This was also observed by Segrin et al. (2015) when young adults were assessed for their social problem-solving skills, interpersonal relationships and relationship problems, and it

was linked to HP. Alternatively, a study by Shoup et al. (2009) revealed that children of highly involved parents had better personal competence and better social and personal development. Perceived emotional warmth in parenting was a protective factor in the development of social anxiety disorder which is linked with dependency and higher self-criticism thus affecting their social relationships as well as self-image (Bögels et al., 2001; Kouros et al., 2017). When cultural differences are considered, Maldivian parents having collectivistic socialization goals for their children, as many Asian parents are observed to do, may result in interdependence (Triandis, 1995).

Purpose in Life (PL) decreased as helicopter parenting increased. The sense of direction in life of those experiencing helicopter parenting and planning for the future was affected due to highly involved parenting styles resulting in certain amounts of neuroticism and interpersonal dependency (Odenweller et al., 2014). Due to the factors mentioned earlier, the goals they strive towards may not be their own but rather the ideals of their parents. A lack of confidence in their own decision-making would lead to not having a clear sense of purpose or direction in life (Segrin et al., 2015). This can affect their career choices as well as life-satisfaction.

Lee and Kang (2018) found that helicopter parenting was positively correlated with depression with the indication that with greater HP, the symptoms were also more intense, which agrees with the conclusion reached by other studies (Barber et al., 2002; Vigdal & Brønnick, 2022). In the same study, the offspring with helicopter parents who reported greater affection from their parents demonstrated lower depression symptoms. Parental career expectations were linked with the perception of HP and depression, with high expectations for the child to succeed as a trait observed in HP.

Personal Growth (PG) — the perception of life as an ongoing process requiring deviation from maladaptive habits — was lower in those who scored higher in the HPS, indicating a negative correlation. The idea of change and new responsibilities or self-efficacy may be daunting for a population with fewer experiences managing responsibilities or making decisions, and they may struggle with change (Arnett, 2007).

The results of this study showed that there is an inverse correlation between autonomy and psychological health. Independence and developing autonomy are a necessary part of normal development into adulthood. However, expectations put on offspring to succeed is a feature of HP which involves reduced independence and autonomy (Schiffrin et al., 2014). The expectations

and push to succeed academically and in careers from helicopter parents could be linked to their financial worries and wanting a stable, prosperous future for their child. This is especially apparent for parents who have experienced inequality and financial struggles (Lindley & Machin, 2011). However, these worries can lead to decreased psychological wellbeing in the offspring of Maldivian helicopter parents.

The subscale Environmental Mastery (EM) measuring self-sufficiency and the ability to handle responsibilities and adjust to new situations was observed to decrease as Helicopter parenting increased. The areas of life affected by a deficit in environmental mastery are academic and professional responsibilities, as individuals raised with overparenting were observed to have lesser self-efficacy and maladaptive responses to workplace scenarios (Bradley-Geist & Olson-Buchanan, 2014). During emerging adulthood, with all its new expectations and responsibilities, individuals are observed taking some satisfaction in the growth towards self-sufficiency. However, for those with helicopter parents who have taken over problem-solving and decision-making for them as children, it is more difficult to adjust to adult responsibilities, which over time would feel overwhelming (Arnett, 2007). Children raised by helicopter parents may struggle to relate to their peers and others around them because helicopter parenting negatively affects their social skills (Segrin et al., 2015). This could lead to them being socially isolated unless steps are taken to prevent it. Again, this appears to be as true for Maldivians as it is for others.

Another observation from participants' responses was that a significant portion (59.7%) of the sample acknowledged that they experienced intrusive supervision in their parenting, which is a signifier of helicopter parenting (HP) and is referred to as "hovering." (Padilla-Walker and Nelson, 2012). Although the invasive, highly involved nature of supervision of the child's activities is due to concern for their safety and wellbeing (Willoughby et al., 2013), the parental control and structuring of activities previously thought to be beneficial to the child's success, happiness and health by the parents, has been less beneficial than assumed (Schiffrin et al., 2014). It may be that Maldivian emerging adults are disadvantaged by such parenting. The reason for the highly involved parenting style and the rigorous supervision may be due to the fear of the offspring experimenting with dangerous substances such as drugs or befriending peers with delinquent behaviours that may harm the child. A survey conducted by the government of Maldives in collaboration with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in 2013 noted that the onset of drug abuse and addiction was between the ages of 15 and 19. Although the dangers of drug addiction may affect adolescents and emerging adults regardless of their

bond with their parents, intrusive supervision may be to prevent harm. The impact of such supervision on the prevention of substance misuse needs to be investigated since delinquency is associated with highly controlling helicopter parenting (Padilla-Walker, Son, & Nelson, 2021).

While HP is linked with negative psychological outcomes, the individual's perception of their parent as a helicopter parent may also worsen psychological conditions such as depression (LeMoyné and Buchanan, 2011). LeMoyné & Buchanan found that depression increases with an increasing perception of helicopter parenting, and autonomy and self-esteem decrease. In the context of gender with reference to the Gender Intensification Hypothesis, the effect of low autonomy support poses more of a threat to women's mental health than men (Kouros et al., 2017). While hovering is understandable in terms of the safety of children, it can harm to over-supervise their activities as they grow to adulthood. The current study results show that this is true for college students in the Maldives.

According to Kwon et al. (2017), culture plays a role in the perception of helicopter parenting: its negative effects (psychological outcomes: depression, anxiety) and positive effects (on academics and career), and the intent behind helicopter parent's actions. In the context of predominantly individualistic cultures and collectivistic cultures, the occurrence and perception of HP differ (Rousseau & Scharf, 2018). HP can be observed in many cultures, races, and regions. However, there is an academic divide on whether these variables affect the occurrence as much as others such as finances and class (Vinson, 2013). The prevalence of helicopter parenting in countries of differing cultures and ethnicities was noted by Anderson (2019). Recent literature on helicopter parenting based in Southeast Asia, Europe, and the United States suggests that parents, especially mothers, should be attentive to the type and extent of assistance they provide to their offspring in transitioning to the adult development phase. Firm helicopter parenting with psychological control harms emerging adults' psychological and sociological wellbeing (Hwang et al., 2022). The present study adds further evidence to the argument that overparenting poses a problem to the mental wellbeing of emerging Maldivian adults. A recent study conducted on a sample of Maldivian students showed a significant percentage that experienced severe levels of depression and stress (Shanoora and Nawaza, 2018) which can be due to many reasons, with the possibility of HP being a factor, as literature suggests a strong link between HP and depression and anxiety.

HP is one style of parenting that consists of the elements of control, warmth, and lack of autonomy (LeMoyne & Buchanan, 2011). Other over parenting styles are similar in nature, and the questions used in the HPS might not be specific to HP. However, they may be measuring various other high involvement parenting styles that may align with the questions in the HPS. It may be the case that the results of PWS cannot be attributed solely to HP, and other factors may have affected the different subscales of PWS.

Limitations

The present study had limitations regarding the measures and sample used to investigate helicopter parenting and psychological wellbeing. The total number of students at Villa College is approximately 3000 (Villa College, 2022). Thus, this study accounts for 2.37% of the total student population of the college. This study did not analyze outcomes by gender since the proportion of male participants to females was too low to make a comparison. The analysis did not include whether a mother or a father did the overparenting. Hence future research needs to find how dyads of mother-daughter, mother-son, father-daughter, and father-son influence levels of helicopter parenting on emerging adults. The population selected for the sample was of adequate size (test power = 0.884). However, it was limited to 18–25-year-old students studying in a private college in the capital of the Maldives. It cannot be reliably generalized to college students in other higher education contexts.

Recommendations

There are several recommendations for public policy that arise from this study. It is recommended that the parenting behaviours that affect mental health — overstepping healthy boundaries between adolescent and emerging adult offspring and their parents in the manner of making decisions and constant supervision, lack of emotional warmth in the parenting and the setting of non-negotiable rules by the parent — are discouraged through targeted parenting education for parents of children and adolescents aged 7 to 21. Care should be taken by the relevant social bodies to discourage these behaviours and to make the social environment outside of their homes safe and supportive of wellbeing of youth, so that parents can allow their children to develop autonomy and independence through engagement in socio-cultural and sports activities.

Often, overparenting is due to the perceived low quality and narrow width of higher education opportunities in the Maldives. Parental poverty fuels the need to obtain high scores to win scholarships to study abroad. Efforts to widen higher education curriculum provision in the Maldives and publicise assessments of quality measures, as well as graduates' employment rates scores, can help develop parents' confidence, allowing children to choose their career paths (Shareef, 2021).

Prepubescent and adolescent children's individuation and separation should be negotiated with age-appropriate boundaries per the family systems framework (Bowen, 1976) to ensure the development of autonomy and self-efficacy. College students would need autonomy and self-efficacy promoting parenting to grow into independent adults.

Psychological wellbeing scale indicators on all subscales showed areas for significant improvement to be happy, healthy, autonomous young people, who believe in their capacity to improve their and others' wellbeing, and to bring about positive social change where they live. Therefore, more research on parenting styles of mothers and fathers and their effect on emerging adults is needed in the Maldivian context.

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