

## **Development and Validation of Helicopter Parenting Scale: Experience of Pakistani Adolescents**

**Kashaf and Halima Khurshid**

University of Management and Technology

Parenting facilitates the physical, emotional, social and intellectual development of an adolescent. The current study explored the experience and manifestation of helicopter parenting in adolescents. In Phase I, key components of perceived helicopter parenting was elicited from 40 adolescents (20 boys; 20 girls) aged 13 to 18 years, using open-ended phenomenological approach. In Phase II, the Content Validity index of items and scales was established. In Phase III, Pilot study was carried out on 20 adolescents (10 girls; 10 boys). In Phase IV, a sample of 300 adolescents (50% boys; 50% girls) aged 13–18 years ( $M = 14.74$ ;  $SD = 1.15$ ) were tested to establish psychometric properties of Perceived Helicopter Parenting scale along with Early Memories of Upbringing Scale EMBU-C (Mother & Father). Exploratory Factor analysis extracted two factors: Restricting Social Activities and Dominance and Control. Moreover, findings indicated high internal consistency, split-half reliability, and construct validity. The factors of perceived helicopter parenting (mother & father) are discussed in the light of cultural context.

**Keywords.** Helicopter parenting, adolescents, exploratory factor analysis, reliability, validity

Family plays a vital role in shaping and molding a child's behavior. In collectivistic culture, the child rearing practices are more traditional and marked by child's overdependence on the family/parents (Saleem & Mahmood, 2011). Parenting is a universal practice, framed by parents' own encounters and their social qualities and convictions (Ferguson et al., 2013). Parents play a crucial role in making their children steer clear from their social and personal problems (Finkenauer et al., 2005). Baumrind (1960) introduced the elements of

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Kashaf and Halima Khurshid, Department of Clinical Psychology, School of Professional Psychology, University of Management and Technology, Lahore, Pakistan.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Kashaf, Department of Clinical Psychology, School of Professional Psychology, University of Management and Technology, Lahore Pakistan. Email: kashafuzuhha@gmail.com

parenting; authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, indulgent and neglectful parenting (Baumrind, 1967). Maccoby and Martin (1983) extended and upgraded Baumrind's Model by replacing indulgent and neglectful instead of permissive. Dissimilar to other child rearing styles, Cline and Fay (1990) devised the term *helicopter parenting* a specific parenting style that excessively shields and resolves issues for kids instead of allowing them to encounter disappointment or challenge. They hover around their child and constantly try to protect him (Schwartz, 2024).

Helicopter parenting is distinguished as overly involved and protective parents who provide substantial support (e.g., financial, emotional and physical health advice) to their children, repeatedly step in their affairs and making choices for them (Cline & Fay, 1990; LeMoyné & Buchanan, 2011; Odenweller & Weber, 2014). Such parents leave no room for the young mind to explore, experience things in their own way and learn from them (Batool, 2016). Helicopter parenting affects children's mental well-being (Segrin et al., 2013) and can significantly influence nearly every aspect of adolescents' lives (Padilla-Walker & Nelson, 2012). Adolescence is already one of the most vulnerable and transitional stages of life, characterized by rapid physical and psychological changes, increased awareness of social issues, and the emergence of self-identity (Jaworska & MacQueen, 2015). This period is often accompanied by various challenges that impact growth and development (Klimstra et al., 2012; Mwale, 2012). Helicopter parents make children less equipped to manage their day-to-day problems (Schiffman et al., 2014) impacting their functionality and independence, leading to anxiety, depression, lack of confidence, and low self-esteem (Schwartz, 2024). Moreover, always relying on parents makes them more dependent on their families (Okray, 2016). Individuality is a fundamental characteristic of adolescence; thus, overprotection that restricts their ability to explore the world independently can disrupt the core of their development and may lead to psychological and behavioural maladjustment (Ganaprakasam et al., 2018).

Although, in collectivistic cultures, overprotective parenting is usually a way of displaying affection and concern for children. Parents express their love by supporting their children during times of difficulty and by handling conflicts with care, consideration and various nurturing actions (Stewart et al., 1999). In such cultures, children often rely majorly on their primary caregivers, highlighting a strong sense of interdependence. In many Asian families, parental control is often interpreted as an expression of care rather than as strict regulations (Chao, 2001). Such cultural systems with their distinct patterns of

familial interactions and strong emphasis on interdependence necessitate the exploration of overprotective parenting styles such as helicopter parenting styles as these may differ from those found in individualistic Western societies.

The existing literature of helicopter parenting focused primarily on young adults (LeMoyne & Buchanan, 2011; Padilla-Walker & Nelson, 2012; Schiffrin et al., 2019). Although helicopter parenting and its implications for youth development are receiving increasing global attention, much of the existing literature and assessment tools have been developed within Western, individualistic cultural contexts. In such contexts, helicopter parenting is typically viewed as excessive involvement that hinders autonomy and self-regulation. However, parenting practices do not occur in a vacuum. Behavior that may be characterized as *over parenting* in the west, are frequently seen as manifestation of care, accountability and familial duty in collectivist countries like Pakistan. This cultural divergence raises important concerns about the cross-cultural validity of existing helicopter parenting measures.

The Consolidated Helicopter Parenting Scale (CHPS) developed by Schiffrin et al. (2019) was recently translated and validated into Urdu by Munawar et al. (2022). While this Urdu adaptation represents a significant contribution by localizing a western-developed scale, it was originally designed within a sociocultural context that differs from the Pakistani cultural dynamics. Consequently, it fails to cover culturally specific dimensions of parenting that are relevant to families in Pakistan. To address these gaps, the current study was undertaken to develop an indigenous Helicopter Parenting scale grounded in the lived experiences of Pakistani adolescents and shaped by local cultural values and parenting norms. Unlike the CHPS, this scale was developed from the ground up, incorporating qualitative input to capture the multidimensional nature of helicopter parenting as it is perceived and manifested by the youth of Pakistan. By creating a culturally valid and contextually sensitive measure, this study offers a more accurate and meaningful tool for assessing helicopter parenting within the Pakistani context.

## Method

### Phase I: Item Generation

The first phase was aimed at generating items of Perceived Helicopter Parenting from the sample of adolescents. Stratified Random sampling strategy was used to draw a sample from the population. Total number of participants were 40 (20 boys; 20 girls)

from 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grades. The phenomenology was explored by presenting the operational definition of Helicopter Parenting, i.e. *“You may have seen such parents in your surroundings who are overly involved in their child’s life, often intervening in their affairs and making decisions for them. What other characteristics do such parents have?”* All the participants were approached individually, and their responses were recorded for both parents separately in their verbatim. All those items that were dubious, vague or overlapping were merged or modified keeping close to their original connotations. Items with slang words were also excluded. In this way, an initial list of 29 items was generated.

### **Phase II: Content Validation**

The generated items list was validated from the experts. 10 School Psychologists with at least 3 years of experience in the field were asked to validate the generated items of perceived helicopter parenting. The experts were informed about the purpose of the research. They were asked to rate each item on a 5-point rating scale where ‘1’ represented *the Least Relevant* and ‘5’ as *the Most Relevant* to the definition of helicopter parenting. The items were retained according to the expert rating of relevancy of the items. A list of 24 items of Perceived Helicopter Parenting scale for mother and father was finalized.

### **Phase III: Try-out**

In this phase the readability, user friendliness and the layout of scale were assessed. The try-out was conducted on 20 adolescents (10 boys; 10 girls). The participants were explained the importance and purpose of the research and assured regarding the anonymity and confidentiality of their given responses. Only single item was modified because their wording was not clear to some participants. The easy to read and user friendliness layout of scale retained with final tested list of 24 items for mother and father, which was further used in next phase.

### **Phase IV: Establishing Psychometric Properties of the Scale**

#### **Sample**

The data was collected from 50 adolescents (25 boys; 25 girls) of 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade from different public schools with the age range of 13-18 years.

## Measures

Following measures were used in the current study.

### *Demographic Questionnaire*

A demographic questionnaire gathered basic information of the participants. It included gender, age, academic grades, and family system of participants (see [Table 1](#) & [2](#)).

### *Perceived Helicopter Parenting Scale (M & F)*

The indigenous Perceived Helicopter Parenting scale ([Kashaf & Khurshid, 2021](#)) that was established in earlier phases was used in this phase. It consisted of 20 items in total for both mother and father. It was based on 4-point rating scale in which 0 means “*Never*”, 1 means “*Rarely*”, 2 means “*Often*” and 3 means “*Always*”. Higher the score indicates higher perceived helicopter parenting.

### *Early Memories of Upbringing Scale (M & F)*

The Early Memories of Upbringing Scale (EMBU; [Jacobsson et al., 1980](#)) has 39 items with three factors: Emotional Warmth, Rejection and Overprotection. In the current study, factor of Overprotection from early memories of upbringing scale (mother & father) was used to established construct validity of Perceived Helicopter Parenting scale. It comprised of 10 items for mother and father overprotection and response options included *Never*, *Often*, *Frequently* and *Always*.

## Procedure

A research proposal was accepted from the department graduate committee of the school of professional psychology. Then, official permission was taken from school authorities who also contacted parents and took their informed consent for their children to participate in the study. In addition, assent was taken from the participants, and they were assured about the confidentiality and anonymity of the research. The aims and objectives of the research were explained to them, and they were given the right to withdraw from the research at any point in time. The directive and leading questions were not asked, and their participation was kept voluntary. Stratified sampling strategy was used to select the participants of the study. They were first divided among boys and girls, and then further sub-strata were made according to their academic years and they were approached following the inclusion and exclusion criteria of the study. Adolescents with the age

range 13-18 years, living with parents and studying in public schools were included in the study. Adolescents with deceased parents were excluded. In total, data was collected from 300 adolescents (150 boys; 150 girls) of 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> & 10<sup>th</sup> grade from different public schools. In the end, the participants were thanked for their cooperation and debriefed about the study. After that a code was assigned for all the forms and data was entered into Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version-22 for further analysis.

## Results

This section consisted of characteristics of participants and the psychometric properties of indigenously established Perceived Helicopter Parenting scale which covered through factor analysis, scree plot, eigen values, construct validity and internal consistency of the scale.

### Sample Description

This section gives the characteristics of the participants of the current study. Mean, standard deviations, frequencies and percentages of continuous and categorical variables are given below.

Table 1: *Mean and Standard Deviation of Age of Participants (N = 300)*

Demographics	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Age	14.74	1.15

*Note.* *M* = Mean, *SD* = Standard Deviation.

Table 1 show that most of the participants were around the age of 14 with the standard deviation of 1.15. Based on this mean value, the age of the participants was further divided into two groups which were early adolescents (13-14 years) and late adolescents (15-18 years).

Table 2: *Frequency and Percentage of the Demographic Characteristics of Participants (N = 300)*

Demographics	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Gender		
Boys	150	50
Girls	150	50

*Continued...*

Demographics	<i>n</i>	(%)
Age		
Early Adolescent (13-14)	134	44.7
Late Adolescent (15-18)	166	55.3
Grade		
8	100	33.3
9	100	33.3
10	100	33.3
Family Size		
Small	73	24.3
Medium	97	32.3
Large	130	43.3
Family System		
Nuclear	188	62.7
Joint	112	37.3

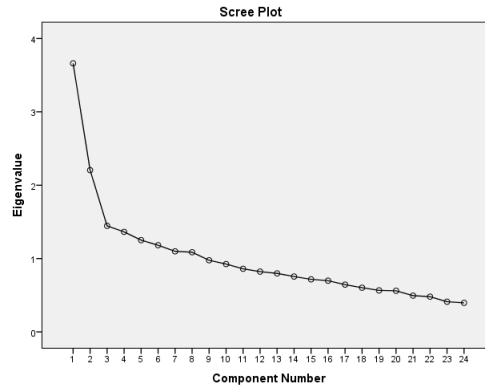
*Note.* *n* = frequency, % = Percentage.

Table 2 shows the frequencies and percentages of the demographic characteristics of the sample. Findings illustrate that the sample consists of 50% boys and 50% girls. Both were falling under the age range of 13-18 years which includes 134 early adolescents (13 - 14 years) and 166 late adolescents (15 - 18 years). There were equal numbers of participants grade 8 ( $n = 100$ ), Grade 9 ( $n = 100$ ) and grade 10 ( $n = 100$ ). The maximum number of participants had large family sizes (43%) whereas a smaller number of participants had small family sizes (24%). In addition to this, participants belonging to nuclear family were more in number than the participants belonging to joint family system.

### **Exploratory Factor Analysis of Perceived Helicopter Parenting Scale**

Exploratory Factor analysis was conducted for the purpose of factor analysis. Principle Component Matrix was used with Varimax Rotation by extracting 2 factors solution on 24 items of scale; and the factors were determined based on the criteria according to which Eigen Value was greater than 1. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sample Adequacy came out to be .72. For further clarity and specifications, the Scree Plot was used with a graphical representation of Eigen value and number of factors was determined by including only those factors which were coming under the elbow of the Scree with factor loading of above .35.

Figure 1: *Scree Plot Showing the Extraction of Perceived Helicopter Parenting Factors*



In the above-screen plot, the factor analysis was first run with 4, 3 and 2 factors solution but in 4 and 3 factor solution the items came to be dubious and there was lack of clarity. The factor solution of 2 factors came to be clearer and more specific so due to presence of more clarity, differences between the factors and the reflection of the existing themes, 2 factor solution was used for further analysis from where 20 items were retained.

Table 3: *Factor Structure of Retained Items of PHPS Through Varimax Rotation (N = 300)*

Serial No	Item No.	Factor 1	Factor 2
1	1	<b>.54</b>	-.01
2	2	<b>.50</b>	.33
3	5	<b>.41</b>	-.33
4	7	<b>.43</b>	.25
5	8	<b>.49</b>	.19
6	10	<b>.46</b>	.22
7	11	<b>.65</b>	.15
8	12	<b>.52</b>	-.13
9	14	<b>.46</b>	.05
10	18	<b>.48</b>	-.09
11	3	.09	<b>.36</b>
12	4	.13	<b>.50</b>
13	9	.32	<b>.41</b>
14	13	.08	<b>.53</b>
15	15	.14	<b>.45</b>
16	17	.19	<b>.46</b>
17	19	.11	<b>.48</b>

*Continued...*



Serial No	Item No.	<i>Factor 1</i>	<i>Factor 2</i>
18	20	-.09	<b>.53</b>
19	21	-.17	<b>.46</b>
20	22	-.21	<b>.51</b>
	Eigen Value	2.98	2.88
	% of Variance	12.43	12.02
	Cumulative %	12.43	24.44

*Note.* Items with factor loadings of .35 and above have been boldfaced.

Table 3 indicated that the factors were loaded, which were .35 or greater than .35. All such items were bold faced for specifications and clarity. There was a total of 24 items which were divided among two factors; factors I and II having 10 and 10 number of items respectively. The remaining 4 items were reduced in the process of data reduction as they were loaded less than .35.

### Factors Description of Perceived Helicopter Parenting Scale

After retaining the 2 factors the content of each factor was observed, read in detail and a label was assigned to each factor based on the common theme of the factor.

**F1: Restricting Social Activities.** This factor consisted of total 10 items that were highlighting the restriction on social activities such as ‘not allowing to go outside alone’, ‘restricting the use of mobile phone’, ‘not allowing to watch television’, stopping the child from arguing and fighting’, ‘not allowing to play at specific places’, ‘forcing to pay more focus on studies’, ‘not letting the child stay outside from home for longer time’, ‘all time staying with child’ and ‘give advices constantly’.

**F2: Dominance and Control.** The second factor also consisted of 10 items, and the theme of this factor was dominance and control such as ‘parents imposing their choice in subject selection’, keeping eye on child’s friends’, being vigilant and controlling in daily chores and use of conversion’, eating habits’, disregarding child’s opinion’, forcing to fulfil their own desires’, ignoring child’s problems’ and alike.

### Psychometric Properties of Perceived Helicopter Parenting Scale (M & F)

The psychometric properties of the PHP-MF were established to make it reliable and valid in Pakistani culture.

### Construct Validity

The construct validity of PHP-MF was assessed through correlational analysis between Perceived Helicopter Parenting Scale – Mother and Father and the factor of Overprotection from Early Memories of Upbringing Scale (Mother & Father). The results highlighted a significant positive correlation between the factors. There was found a significant positive relationship of perceived helicopter parenting (mother) with overprotection (mother) with value of .50 and perceived helicopter parenting (father) with overprotection (father) with value of .50.

### Internal Consistency

To establish the reliability of the *perceived helicopter parenting scale*, alpha coefficient was calculated through Cronbach's Alpha (Table 4).

Table 4: Summary of Inter-Correlations, Means, Standard Deviations and Cronbach's Alpha of PHP-MF (N = 300)

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6
Perceived Helicopter Parenting-Mother						
1. F1: Restricting Social Activities	-	.26*	.83*	.28*	.73*	.62*
2. F2: Dominance and Control		-	.76*	.71*	.26*	.59*
3. PHP-M – Total			-	.60*	.65*	.76*
4. F1: Dominance and Control				-	.34*	.81*
5. F2: Restricting Social Activities					-	.83*
6. PHP-F – Total						-
<i>M</i>	19.20	6.48	25.68	6.75	16.57	23.31
<i>SD</i>	5.40	4.70	8.02	5.22	5.53	8.79
<i>a</i>	.70	.65	.72	.70	.74	.77

Note. PHP-M=Perceived Helicopter Parenting (Mother); PHP-F = Perceived Helicopter Parenting (Father); *M* = Mean; *SD* = Standard Derivation; *a* = Cronbach's Alpha.

\**p* < .001.

The table illustrates there is significant positive correlation among the factors of perceived helicopter parenting scale (mother & father).

The Table 4 also indicated that perceived helicopter parenting (mother & father) was found to be reliable (PHP-M  $\alpha = .72$ , PHP-F  $\alpha = .77$ ).

### *Split-Half Reliability*

The split-half reliability of perceived helicopter parenting scale (mother & father) was determined. Results showed satisfactory reliability between two splits and was found to be  $r = .86$ .

### **Gender Difference on PHP**

The finding illustrated that boys and girls were significantly different in experiencing *perceived helicopter parenting*, which are given below.

Table 5: *Mean Differences of Gender on PHP-MF (N = 300)*

Variables	Gender				95% <i>CI</i>		Cohen's	
	Boys		Girls		<i>t</i>	<i>LL</i>	<i>UL</i>	<i>d</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>				
Perceived Helicopter Parenting-Mother								
F1: Restricting Social Activities	19.44	5.07	18.95	5.72	.78	-.74	1.72	.09
F2: Dominance & Control	8.13	4.90	4.83	3.85	6.47*	2.29	4.30	.75
Total	27.57	7.68	23.79	7.93	4.19*	2.01	5.55	.48
Perceived Helicopter Parenting-Father								
F1: Dominance & Control	8.53	5.30	4.96	4.48	6.31*	2.46	4.69	.73
F2: Restricting Social Activities	17.02	5.29	16.11	5.74	1.42	-.35	2.16	.16
Total	25.55	8.36	21.07	8.67	4.56*	2.55	6.41	.53

Note. PHP-M=Perceived Helicopter Parenting (Mother); PHP-F = Perceived Helicopter Parenting (Father); *M* = Mean; *SD* = Standard Deviation; CI = Confidence Interval; *LL* = Lower Limits; *UL* = Upper Limit.

\*  $p < .001$ .

Table 5 demonstrates the results of *t*-test for mean difference on perceived helicopter parenting (mother & father) with respect to gender. There was significant difference found in perceived helicopter parenting (mother & father) for boys and girls. The boys were found to experience more dominance and control of perceived helicopter parenting (mother & father) as compared to girls.

## Discussion

The present study was intended to explore the adolescent's manifestation and experience of the helicopter parenting in the Pakistani collectivistic culture. Also, to devise a standardized measure of helicopter parenting for adolescents. To establish a psychometrically sound PHP (Mother & Father) Scale for adolescents, the phenomenology was explored, and the Exploratory Factor Analysis was conducted for the purpose of Factor analysis. Two factors, namely 'restricting social activities' and 'dominance and control' based on 20 items each emerged. The alpha coefficients of two factors showed internal consistency of the scale (see [Table 4](#)).

The factor structure of Perceived Helicopter Parenting (Mother) and Perceived Helicopter Parenting (Father) were same but the placement of items for both mother and father were different. As the items that were extracted under the first factor (Restricting Social Activities) of Mother were the same that were extracted under the second factor (Restricting Social Activities) of Father. Similarly, the extracted items of Factor 2 (Dominance and Control) of Mother were the same that were extracted in the first factor (Dominance and Control) of Father. Studies have found gendered divisions in parenting roles firmly implanted within a complex network of interacting factors across the individual, family, and sociocultural contexts of the community ([Jeong et al., 2018](#)). Moreover, the placement of items was different, but the factor structure was similar. With regards to collectivistic culture like our own, the mother and father assume roles and have explicit obligations in the raising of their children. Mothers usually spend most of their time in homes with their children, so they tend to restrict them to social activities. Most women in Pakistan are limited to their homes to do housework for the extended family and are prohibited from fundamental dynamic (i.e., decision making) ([Rabbani et al., 2008](#)). Consistently, researchers have also identified that mothers are more knowledgeable about adolescents' peer relationships than are fathers ([Updegraff et al., 2001](#)). This is the reason why the first factor Restricting Social Activities came out to be dominating in the mother but not in father.

Likewise, socialization values have been found to vary considerably across societies reflecting distinctive broader cultural philosophies and models of bringing up children ([Greenfield et al., 2003](#); [Kagitçibaşı, 2005](#); [Keller et al., 2005](#); [Wang & Tamis-LeMonda, 2003](#)). Contrary to this, fathers spend most of their time outside home ([Jeong et al., 2018](#)). So, they are less involved in restricting adolescents to social activities as compared to mothers. Fathers are less likely to restrict social

activities which were evident through our results as well, as this factor was comparatively less dominated in fathers.

The second factor, Dominance and Control was more prominent in fathers as compared to mothers. Fathers connect with their children in to some degree unexpected routes in comparison to do mothers (Phares & Compas, 1992). The traditional model of fatherhood was centered around the father's role as the breadwinner. However, newer models recognize that fatherhood is a highly contextual phenomenon, and the ways in which men engage in parenting roles are closely linked to social expectations (Suwada, 2015). Studies indicated that fathers are as significant as mothers in their respective roles as guardians, defenders, financial supporters and in particular models for social and emotional conduct (Gross, 2014). In Asian culture, fathers lead the family and ensure discipline through force and authority (University of Sussex, 2015). His statement is unchallenged, his choice last, his influence dominant in all issues identifying with family. Fathers are often portrayed as strong, vigilant figures who take on a more dominant role as disciplinarians (Oliker, 2011). They tend to control their children by enforcing rules and setting limitations, expecting appropriate behavior while often discouraging undesirable actions without offering explanations (Yaman et al., 2010). Consistent with these findings, the current study also identified “dominance and control” as the most prominent characteristic in the perception of Helicopter Parenting – Father.

It is also interesting to note that children's own gender also influences perception of helicopter parenting. Results of current research show that boys perceive their parents as more dominating and controlled as compared to girls. On contrary to the western culture, in collectivistic culture girls learn to obey their parents (Saleem & Mahmood, 2013). Overdependence, familial concordance, parents and other power figures compliance are appreciated (Stewart et al., 1999). The youngsters who always have their lives adjusted by their parents can get acquainted with continually having their direction; hence they build up a feeling of entitlement which prevents them from mastering life skills (Schiffrin et al., 2014). They are more likely to struggle under pressure and are conditioned to suppress or sacrifice their personal desires to prioritize mutual interests (Uba, 2003).

### **Limitations and Suggestions**

The following suggestions for future research are being made to further expand the scope of this work.

1. The scale was intended for adolescents, so the items of the scale can't be applied to younger children. Further studies should develop a measure to evaluate both younger children and their own parents or parents in general.
2. This study was conducted on youth studying in public schools. Comparative research can be done in private and madrassa settings to compare the perceived helicopter parenting in adolescents.

### Conclusion

The present study has contributed significantly by discovering the culture specific experience and manifestation of perceived helicopter parenting of adolescents in Pakistani culture. It is groundbreaking work around parenting and has increased awareness on Perceived Helicopter Parenting in adolescents. This research will further help in better understanding the complex and dynamic nature of helicopter parenting and will give gateway for further research in this domain as well.

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