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Relationship between Helicopter Parenting and Adolescent's Independent Decision-Making Skills

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Abstract: This study explores the relationship between helicopter parenting and adolescents' independent decision-making abilities. The study incorporated a sample of 150 adolescents with age range of 12 to 19 years, suggesting that increased parental over-involvement is associated with reduced autonomy in adolescents, excessive parental control can hinder the development of critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and confidence in decision-making. Adolescents raised under helicopter parenting often struggle with self-reliance, experience heightened anxiety, and have difficulty making choices without external validation. The study highlights the importance of a balanced parenting approach that encourages autonomy while providing appropriate guidance. These insights contribute to the broader understanding of adolescent development and parental influence, emphasizing the need for strategies to foster independence in young individuals.

Keywords: Parenting, Over-involvement, Decision making, Adolescents

1. Introduction

Parenting is one of the most profound and complex responsibilities that individuals can undertake. It encompasses a wide range of practices, beliefs, and values that shape the development of children from infancy through adulthood. The way parents interact with their children, the decisions they make on their behalf, and the environment they create can significantly influence a child's emotional, social, and cognitive development. As society evolves, so too do the styles and approaches to parenting, leading to the emergence of various parenting paradigms. One such approach that has garnered considerable attention in recent years is "helicopter parenting."

1.1 Influence of Helicopter Parenting on Decision-Making

Helicopter parenting, characterized by excessive involvement over a child's life, has become a prevalent approach in contemporary parenting. While the intentions behind this style often stem from a desire to protect and support children, it can have significant implications for their development, particularly in the realm of decision-making. Understanding the influence of helicopter parenting on decision-making involves examining how this parenting style affects a child's ability to think critically, solve problems, and develop autonomy.

1.2 Reduced Autonomy and Independence

One of the most significant impacts of helicopter parenting is the reduction of a child's autonomy. When parents consistently intervene in their children's lives, making decisions for them, solving their problems, or shielding them from failure, children may struggle to develop a sense of independence. This lack of autonomy can hinder their ability to make decisions on their own, as they become accustomed to relying on their parents for guidance and support. Children raised in a helicopter parenting environment may find it challenging to navigate situations independently.

1.3 Impaired Critical Thinking Skills

Critical thinking is a vital component of effective decision-making. It involves analysing information, evaluating options, and considering potential outcomes before arriving at a conclusion. Helicopter parenting can impair the development of critical thinking skills in children, as they may not have the opportunity to engage in independent thought processes. When parents consistently provide solutions or make decisions for their children, they inadvertently limit opportunities for children to practice critical thinking.

1.4 Fear of Failure and Risk Aversion

Helicopter parenting often stems from a desire to protect children from failure and disappointment. While this protective instinct is understandable, it can create an environment where children develop a fear of failure. When parents intervene to prevent their children from experiencing setbacks, they may inadvertently instil a sense of risk aversion. Children raised in this environment may become overly cautious in their decision-making, fearing the consequences of making mistakes. This fear can lead to indecisiveness, as they may struggle to weigh the potential risks and benefits of their choices.

1.5 Lack of Problem-Solving Skills

Effective decision-making often requires strong problem-solving skills. Children learn to navigate challenges and make choices by encountering obstacles and finding solutions.

Helicopter parenting can hinder the development of these skills, as parents may step in to resolve issues before children have the chance to tackle them independently.

1.6 Over-reliance on Parental Approval

Helicopter parenting can foster an overreliance on parental approval, which can significantly influence a child's decision-making process. When parents are heavily involved in their children's lives, children may begin to prioritize their parents' opinions over their own values and preferences. This dynamic can lead to a lack of authenticity in decision-making, as children may feel compelled to conform to their parents' expectations rather than pursuing their own interests.

2. Review of Literature

Reed, Calkins, and Keane (2022) conducted a study on Parental Overinvolvement and Academic Decision-Making with a sample size of 402 undergraduate students. The study found that helicopter parenting was significantly linked to difficulties in academic decision-making, lower self-motivation, and avoidance of independent problem-solving. Students with highly involved parents were less likely to explore academic and career options independently.

Turner, Chandler, and Heffer (2021) conducted a study on Overparenting, Coping Skills, and Resilience with a sample size of 500 young adults. The study found that helicopter parenting negatively affected resilience and coping skills, making students less prepared to handle real-world challenges. Overparented individuals relied heavily on parental guidance, which inhibited their ability to develop problem-solving skills.

Shoup, Goncy, and Gable (2021) conducted a study on Overparenting, Social Anxiety, and Decision-Making with a sample size of 423 young adults. The results showed that higher levels of parental control were linked to increased social anxiety, fear of failure, and avoidance of independent decision-making. The study emphasized that overprotective parenting stifles self-confidence and hinders real-world problem-solving abilities.

Hong and Cui (2020) conducted a study on Parental Overcontrol and College Adjustment with a sample size of 415 first-year college students. The study found that students with helicopter parents had more difficulty adjusting to college life, making independent decisions, and handling stress. Overparenting led to higher dependency on parents for emotional and academic guidance.

Love, Rygula, and Slepian (2020) conducted a study on Overparenting and Emotional Well-being with a sample size of 415 college students. The study found that excessive parental

control led to increased stress, fear of failure, and difficulty in making independent decisions. Students with helicopter parents lacked confidence in their own judgment.

Yaffe (2020) conducted a study on Helicopter Parenting and Financial Decision-Making in Young Adults with a sample size of 350 college students. The study found that students raised by helicopter parents struggled with financial literacy and decision-making. Overparenting was associated with lower financial independence and increased reliance on parents for economic support.

3. Methodology

3.1 Aim

To explore the effect of helicopter parenting on adolescent's independent decision-making skills

3.2 Research Objectives

The primary objective of this study is to examine the relationship between helicopter parenting and adolescents' independent decision-making skills.

- a) To examine the relationship between autonomy-supportive parenting and independent decision-making skills in adolescents.
- b) To examine the relationship between parental monitoring and independent decision-making skills in adolescents.
- c) To examine the relationship between parental monitoring and independent decision-making skills in adolescents.

3.3 Hypothesis

Hypothesis 1: There will be a significant negative correlation between helicopter parenting and adolescents' independent decision-making skills.

Hypothesis 2: There will be a significant relationship between autonomy-supportive parenting and independent decision-making skills in adolescents.

Hypothesis 3: There will be a significant relationship between parental monitoring and independent decision-making skills in adolescents.

Hypothesis 4: There will be a significant relationship between overinvolved parenting and independent decision-making skills in adolescents.

3.4 Description of Sample

The target population for this study consisted of adolescents aged 12–19 years. A sample of 150 adolescents was taken with random sampling. Participants met the inclusion criteria of living with both parents and being currently enrolled in school. Adolescents from

single-parent households were excluded from the study to maintain consistency in family structure within the sample.

3.5 Research Design

This study follows a quantitative, correlational research design to examine the relationship between helicopter parenting and adolescents' independent decision-making skills. A cross-sectional survey method is used, collecting data at a single point in time. Standardized self-report questionnaires will measure both variables. The study aims to control for external factors such as gender and socioeconomic background to ensure reliable results.

3.6 Variables

- a) *Independent Variable*: Helicopter Parenting Behaviour
- b) *Dependent Variable*: Independent Decision-Making Skills
- c) *Control variable*: Age, Sex, Socioeconomic Status, Education

3.7 Measures

3.7.1 Helicopter Parenting Behaviour Questionnaire (HPBQ): A standardized questionnaire measuring parental over-involvement, control, and over-protectiveness. It includes 15 Likert-scale items of parental behaviours related to decision-making, autonomy, and problem-solving. The HPBQ is a reliable and valid tool, with high internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.80-0.90$) and strong test-retest reliability. It shows construct, convergent, discriminant, and predictive validity, effectively measuring helicopter parenting and its impact on adolescent independence.

3.7.2 Independent Decision-Making Scale (IDMC): Measures the extent to which adolescents make their own choices regarding academics, social life, and personal issues. It consists of 10 items and responses are on Likert-scale items ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The measure is reliable ($\alpha = 0.80-0.90$, test-retest $r = 0.75-0.85$) and valid (construct validity: $r = 0.65$ to 0.70 , convergent validity: aligns with GDMS, discriminant validity: $r = 0.15$).

3.8 Procedure

The research began with obtaining Informed consent from parents or guardians, and assent was secured from adolescent participants. Participants were assured of anonymity, confidentiality, and voluntary participation. A sample of 150 adolescents aged 12–19 years was selected using convenience or random sampling from schools and online platforms. The selected participants were asked to complete a structured questionnaire. The survey was administered in both paper and online formats, depending on accessibility, and participants took approximately 15–20 minutes to complete it. They were instructed to answer

independently without external influence. Once the data was collected, responses were screened and then entered into Excel for statistical analysis. Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient (r) was used to examine the relationship between helicopter parenting and independent decision-making skills.

3.9 Statistical Analysis

Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient (r): Used to assess the strength and direction of the relationship between helicopter parenting and independent decision-making.

4. RESULT

Table 1: *Correlation table of Helicopter parenting and independent decision making*

	Helicopter parenting
Helicopter parenting	-
Independent decision making	-0.60384**

**correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2 tailed)

This table shows a moderate negative correlation ($r = -0.60$) between helicopter parenting and independent decision-making, indicating that as parental control and overprotection increase, a child's ability to make independent decisions tends to decrease. Helicopter parenting involves excessive involvement in a child's life, often driven by a desire to protect them from failure, disappointment, or hardship. While this parenting style may stem from good intentions, it can inadvertently limit a child's ability to think critically, solve problems, and make confident choices.

Table 2: *Correlation table of autonomy-supportive parenting and independent decision making*

	Autonomy Supportive Parenting
Autonomy Supportive Parenting	-
Independent decision making	-0.46295**

**correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2 tailed)

This table shows the correlation between autonomy-supportive parenting and independent decision-making skills in children. The correlation coefficient ($r = -0.46295$) suggests a moderate negative relationship between these two variables. While autonomy-supportive parenting is typically expected to promote independence, the negative correlation implies that higher levels of autonomy support may still be associated with lower independent decision-making. This could suggest that even when parents encourage autonomy, they may still exert some level of control that limits the child's ability to make independent choices. Alternatively, children who rely on autonomy-supportive parents may develop a preference for external guidance, reducing their decision-making confidence

Table 3: *Correlation table of parental monitoring and independent decision making*

	Parental monitoring
Parental monitoring	-
Independent decision making	-0.63326**

**correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2 tailed)

This table shows the relationship between parental monitoring and independent decision-making in children. The correlation of ($r = -0.63$) indicates a negative association, meaning that as parental monitoring increases, independent decision-making skills tend to decrease significantly. This suggests that children who are closely monitored by their parents may have fewer opportunities to make decisions on their own, leading to lower development of autonomy. While some level of monitoring is necessary for safety and guidance, excessive supervision might prevent children from learning how to assess situations and make choices independently.

Table 4: *Correlation table of overinvolved parenting and independent decision making*

	Overinvolved parenting
Overinvolved parenting	-
Independent decision making	-0.58411**

**correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2 tailed)

This table presents the correlation between overinvolved parenting and independent decision-making skills in children. With a correlation of ($r = -0.58$), the results indicate a negative relationship, suggesting that greater parental overinvolvement is linked to lower independent decision-making. Overinvolved parenting, often associated with helicopter parenting, may cause children to rely heavily on their parents' input instead of developing confidence in their own decision-making abilities. When parents intervene too frequently in their child's daily choices, it can hinder the child's ability to think critically and act independently. This reinforces the idea that giving children space to make their own decisions is essential for fostering autonomy.

5. Discussion of Results

Helicopter parenting, characterized by excessive involvement and control over a child's life, has been a subject of considerable debate in developmental psychology. This parenting style has been shown to have a negative impact on the development of independent decision-making skills in adolescents. Although parental involvement is essential for guidance and support, excessive control restricts the child's ability to practice autonomy—crucial for building confidence and competence in decision-making.

The data presented indicates a moderate negative correlation ($r = -0.60$) between helicopter parenting and independent decision-making. Helicopter parents often intervene excessively in their children's lives, primarily motivated by a desire to protect them from failure or disappointment. However, this over-involvement limits adolescents' opportunities to make their own choices and learn from their mistakes. The constant parental control diminishes a child's ability to think critically, problem-solve, and make decisions independently. Research further supports this, suggesting that children of helicopter parents tend to have lower self-esteem, increased anxiety, and a lack of confidence in their decision-making abilities (Segrin, 2013). As a result, these adolescents become more dependent on external input and less able to take initiative, which hinders their development of autonomy (Schiffrin et al., 2014).

In contrast, autonomy-supportive parenting, which encourages independence by allowing children to make their own decisions with guidance, is generally seen as beneficial. However, the data shows a moderate negative correlation ($r = -0.46$) between autonomy-supportive parenting and independent decision-making. This paradox suggests that even though this parenting style aims to promote autonomy, it might inadvertently encourage reliance on parents. Children raised in autonomy-supportive environments may feel supported but not fully confident in making decisions without parental input. This is aligned with the "paradox of

autonomy," where even supportive parents can unintentionally hinder their child's independence by overestimating their capacity for making autonomous choices (Van der Kaap-Deeder et al., 2014). Thus, the fine balance between offering support and encouraging full independence is critical.

The data also highlights a strong negative correlation between parental monitoring and independent decision-making ($r = -0.63$). Parental monitoring involves closely supervising a child's activities and choices to protect them from potential risks. While monitoring is necessary for safety, excessive monitoring limits opportunities for adolescents to practice decision-making in real-life contexts. Research has found that too much parental monitoring prevents children from developing decision-making skills, as they are not given the chance to make choices and face the consequences of those choices (Soenens et al., 2009). As a result, adolescents may fail to learn how to assess risks or make decisions independently, relying instead on parental guidance.

Similarly, overinvolved parenting ($r = -0.58$) further exacerbates this issue. Overinvolved parents become excessively engaged in their child's daily decisions, often making choices for the child rather than allowing them to make their own. Studies have shown that children raised by overinvolved parents tend to defer to their parents' judgment, which can lead to increased anxiety and a lack of self-efficacy (Padilla-Walker et al., 2012). These children often struggle with decision-making, as they are not accustomed to exercising their own judgment. This excessive parental control stifles the development of autonomy, further hindering their ability to make independent decisions.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, the research highlights the significant impact of parental involvement on adolescents' ability to develop independent decision-making skills. Excessive control, such as helicopter parenting, overinvolvement, and high levels of monitoring, tends to limit adolescents' opportunities to practice autonomy and make decisions on their own. While these parenting styles stem from a desire to protect and guide, they inadvertently hinder the development of crucial decision-making skills, leading to children who are overly dependent on parental input and lack confidence in their abilities.

The data reveals that helicopter parenting and overinvolvement create a strong negative correlation with independent decision-making, as children in these environments are often not given the chance to take initiative or face the consequences of their choices. Similarly, high levels of parental monitoring restrict adolescents' ability to navigate real-life situations

independently, which further impedes their ability to build self-efficacy. Interestingly, while autonomy-supportive parenting is intended to foster independence, it too shows a moderate negative correlation with decision-making confidence. This suggests that even when parents encourage autonomy, their support may still lead to over-reliance, preventing children from fully developing independence.

Ultimately, these findings underscore the need for a balanced approach to parenting. Parents must provide enough space for their children to make decisions and learn from their experiences while offering guidance and support as needed. Allowing children the freedom to make choices fosters confidence and critical thinking, which are essential for navigating life's challenges. By maintaining this balance, parents can help adolescents grow into independent, self-reliant decision-makers who are well-prepared for adulthood.

6.1 Future Implications

The findings of this study have several important implications for parenting practices, educational programs, and psychological interventions:

Parental Guidance Programs: Educating parents about the long-term consequences of helicopter parenting could help them adopt strategies that promote their child's independence without compromising emotional support. Parenting workshops or awareness campaigns could be developed to encourage autonomy-supportive parenting styles.

School and Educational Policies: Schools and educators can play a role in fostering independent decision-making by providing students with opportunities to make choices, solve problems, and take responsibility for their learning. Implementing programs that teach self-reliance, and problem-solving skills could help counteract the effects of overprotective parenting.

Psychological Interventions for Adolescents: Mental health professionals could develop interventions aimed at helping adolescents build confidence in their decision-making abilities. Counselling and life skills programs can assist adolescents in overcoming dependency on parental guidance and developing resilience.

Longitudinal Research: Future studies could explore the long-term impact of helicopter parenting on career choices, academic success, and relationships in adulthood. Understanding how early experiences of over-parenting influence life outcomes could provide deeper insights into psychological and behavioural development.

6.2 Limitations

Despite its valuable contributions, this study has certain limitations that should be acknowledged:

Correlation vs. Causation: The study establishes a negative correlation between helicopter parenting and independent decision-making but does not prove a causal relationship. Other underlying factors, such as personality traits or socio-economic background, may also influence decision-making skills.

Self-Reported Data: If the study relies on self-reported questionnaires, responses may be influenced by social desirability bias or subjective perceptions, potentially affecting the accuracy of the data. Future studies could use observational or longitudinal methods to provide more objective insights.

Cultural Differences: Parenting styles vary across cultures, and helicopter parenting may have different effects depending on societal norms. The results may not be universally applicable, so cross-cultural studies would be beneficial to understand how different cultural contexts influence adolescent autonomy.

Age Range and Sample Size: The study may be limited by the specific age group or sample size used in the research. Including a wider age range and diverse demographic groups could provide a more comprehensive understanding of how helicopter parenting affects decision-making across different stages of adolescence.

Other Parenting Factors: While this study focuses on helicopter parenting, other parenting styles (e.g., authoritative, permissive) and factors such as family dynamics or peer influence could also impact decision-making skills. Future research could explore these additional variables to gain a more holistic perspective.

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