

Helicopter Parenting among Late Adolescents

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ABSTRACT

Background: In the contemporary context, helicopter parenting which is a common practice and in Southeast Asia region, it is a growing parenting approach. It has several components that affect adolescents and emerging adults physical, psychological and social well-being. The aim of the study is to measure the parenting style for the adolescent for which the Helicopter Parenting Scale (HPS) was used.

Material and methods: A cross-sectional study was conducted to assess the state of helicopter parenting style of parents on late adolescents of Police Lines School and College, Rangpur, Bangladesh.

Results: The mean age of the adolescent was 17.7±0.6 years. The mean of HP scores was 3.6±0.5. About three out of five participants had a perceived average level of HP (58.9%) and a few of them had a high level of HP (2.3%). A statistically significant association found within the level of HP and adolescent's family type ($p<0.05$) and the perceived level of HP was average among the adolescents who came from the nuclear family (61.8%). The HP scores were high in the nuclear family (3.62±0.413) and parents' living together (3.59±0.422). There were significant differences found in the HP scores with the adolescent's family type and their parent's relationship state ($p<0.05$).

Conclusion: The study found that nuclear families were more likely to adopt helicopter parenting than other types of families, with their perceived level of this parenting style being assessed as averagely good.

Key words: Helicopter parenting; HPS; Late adolescents.

Introduction

Parenting is the process of promoting and supporting a child's physical, emotional, social and intellectual growth from birth to adulthood.¹ Parenting style is important to creating a child's personality, which is directly related to a child's social, physical and psychological development.²

Helicopter parenting is a unique phenomenon and a form of parental control that can be described as a

hands-on, involved plan of action. It is an emerging parenting style in the current world, which is a new concept in our country.³⁻⁵ It refers to an overly controlled and invasive parenting style that is common among parents of adolescents and emerging adults. This form of parenting involves an inappropriate level of participation, directness and support to children, which impedes both their physical and psychological development.⁶

Helicopter parenting is a style of parenting in which parents never allow their children to make mistakes and keep them driven in a stress cave.⁷ Helicopter parents prefer to micromanage their child's lives at every stage and milestone, from secondary school to college applications, post-graduation and even during professional life.⁸ They were continually providing appropriate help for children to address problems without providing space for them to develop problem-solving and decision-making abilities. These over-protective parents have authority over their children's present and future actions without teaching or exhibiting the necessary skills to give them independence.⁹ This parenting approach can occur at any age, but it is most commonly associated with parents' of late adolescent or young adult children.¹⁰

Helicopter parenting is detrimental to a child's development. It affects on the child's physical and psychological well-being by making them more reliant and unable of making verdicts.⁶ It has been related to

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lower academic achievement and a decreased level of school active involvement.^{11,12} These adolescents also have lower levels of well-being, including a higher prevalence of anxiety and depression medication, as well as poor coping abilities along with increased anxiety.^{9,13} Although parents believe that over-involvement in their children's activities and planning every minute for them benefits their children's happiness, health and success, intensive parenting and participation in structured activities have few positive effects on child outcomes.¹⁴ The aim of the study is to measure the parenting style of parents of adolescent using the 'Helicopter Parenting Scale' (HPS).

Materials and methods

This cross-sectional study was commenced from January to December 2019 at purposively selected a college named Police Lines School and College situated in Rangpur, Bangladesh.

Participants were conveniently selected from 350 adolescents studying in 11th and 12th grade in the selected college, age ranging from 17-19 years and who had at least one living parent. Married adolescent was excluded from this study.

Based on the participant's convenience, the study adolescents were interviewed by a pretested semi-structured questionnaire through face-to-face interviews. The questionnaire was constructed by the 'Helicopter Parenting Scale' (HPS). The HPS consists of ten items and adolescents were questioned about their level of agreement with statements regarding their adolescence with their parents. This computation delivers scale scores to the same metric as each item, and higher scores imply participants' perceptions of higher levels of HP.

The data were checked and cleaned followed by making a template, categorizing data, coding, and recoding into IBM SPSS v 25. Descriptive statistics such as mean, standard deviation and percent were computed for continuous variables of the participants. Chi-square and Fisher's exact test were used to assess the significance of associations between two nominal variables. To compare mean of continuous variables in two groups, independent sample 't' test was done. A p-value of <0.05 at a 95% confidence interval was taken as significant.

Informed written consent and assent were obtained from each participant. Confidentiality of data were ensured and unauthorized access to data were not allowed. Ethical approval was obtained from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the National Institute of Preventive and Social Medicine (NIPSOM), Dhaka, Bangladesh. (Reference: NIPSOM/IRB/2019/111).

Results

Table I Particulars of the adolescents (n=350)

Particulars		Frequency (n)	Percent (%)
Age groups (Years)	17	136	38.9
	18	184	52.6
	19	30	8.5
	Mean±SD		17.7±0.6
Sex	Male	156	44.6
	Female	194	55.4
Religion	Muslim	315	90.0
	Hindu	35	10.0
Studying class	11 th grade	252	72.0
	12 th grade	98	28.0
Father's education	Graduation and above	233	66.6
	Below graduation	117	33.4
Mother's education	Graduation and above	159	45.4
	Below graduation	191	54.6
Father's occupation	Service holder	141	40.3
	Businessman	89	25.4
	Teacher	99	28.3
	Farmer	10	2.9
	Others	11	3.1
Mother's occupation	Homemaker	254	72.6
	Working mother	96	27.4
Family type	Nuclear	304	86.9
	Joint	46	13.1
Parent's relationship	Lives together	337	96.3
	Lives separate	13	3.7
Adolescent's residence	Home	184	52.6
	Outside home	166	47.4
Average monthly family income (Taka)	<30,000	170	48.6
	30,001-50,000	116	33.1
	>50,000	64	18.3

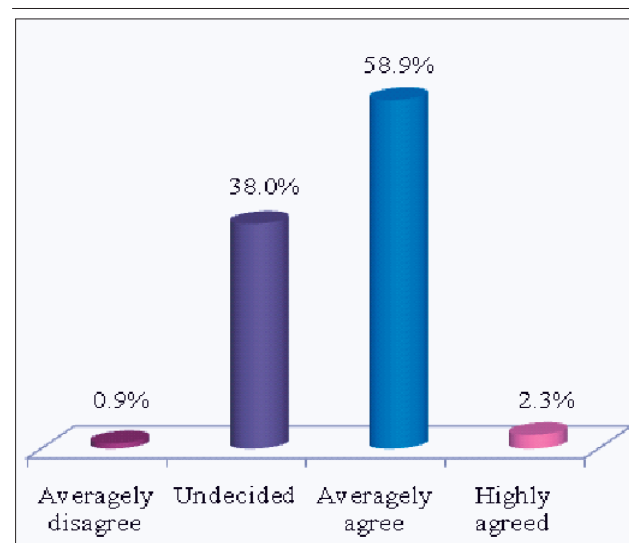


Figure 1 Level of helicopter parenting (n=350)

Table II Association of socio-demographic factors with level of HP

Factors	Level of HP				Total	χ^2 value	p-value
	Average on disagree	Undecided	Average on agree	Highly agreed			
	n(%)	n(%)	n(%)	n(%)	n(%)		
Age groups (Years)							
17	1(0.7)	48(35.3)	84(61.8)	3(2.2)	136(100)	2.092	0.910
18	2(1.1)	72(39.1)	106(57.6)	4(2.2)	184(100)		
19	0(0.0)	13(43.3)	16(53.3)	1(3.3)	30(100)		
Sex							
Male	1(0.6)	61(39.1)	89(57.1)	5(3.2)	156(100)	1.541	0.708
Female	2(1.0)	72(37.1)	117(60.3)	3(1.5)	194(100)		
Religion							
Islam	3(1.0)	119(37.8)	186(59.0)	7(2.2)	315(100)	0.610	0.871
Hindu	0(0.0)	14(40.0)	20(57.1)	1(2.9)	35(100)		
Studying class							
11 th grade	3(1.2)	90(35.7)	153(60.7)	6(2.4)	252(100)	2.462	0.484
12 th grade	0(0.0)	43(43.9)	53(54.1)	2(2.0)	98(100)		
Father's education							
Graduation & above	3(1.3)	84(36.1)	139(59.7)	7(3.0)	233(100)	3.120	0.338
Below graduation	0(0.0)	49(41.9)	67(57.3)	1(0.9)	117(100)		
Mother's education							
Graduation & above	3(1.9)	59(37.1)	94(59.1)	3(1.9)	159(100)	3.476	0.330
Below graduation	0(0.0)	74(38.7)	112(58.6)	5(2.6)	191(100)		
Father's occupation							
Service holder	1(0.7)	54(38.3)	81(57.4)	5(3.5)	141(100)	10.070	0.621
Businessman	0(0.0)	35(39.3)	53(59.6)	1(1.1)	89(100)		
Teacher	2(2.0)	36(36.4)	60(60.6)	1(1.0)	99(100)		
Farmer	0(0.0)	5(50.0)	4(40.0)	1(10.0)	10(100)		
Others	0(0.0)	3(27.3)	8(72.7)	0(0.0)	11(100)		
Mother's occupation							
Homemaker	1(0.4)	97(38.2)	151(59.4)	5(2.0)	254(100)	2.955	0.396
Working mother	2(2.1)	36(37.5)	55(57.3)	3(3.1)	96(100)		
Family type							
Nuclear	2(0.7)	107(35.2)	188(61.8)	7(2.3)	304(100)	9.914	*0.015
Joint	1(2.2)	26(56.5)	18(39.1)	1(2.2)	46(100)		
Parent's relationship							
Lives together	3(0.9)	125(37.1)	201(59.6)	8(2.4)	337(100)	3.478	0.352
Lives separate	0(0.0)	8(61.5)	5(38.5)	0(0.0)	13(100)		
Adolescent's residence							
Home	1(0.5)	72(39.1)	108(58.7)	3(1.6)	184(100)	1.397	0.703
Outside home	2(1.2)	61(36.7)	98(59.0)	5(3.0)	166(100)		
Average monthly family income (Taka)							
<30,000	1(0.6)	57(33.5)	108(63.5)	4(2.4)	170(100)	4.451	0.595
30,001-50,000	1(0.9)	50(43.1)	62(53.4)	3(2.6)	116(100)		
>50,000	1(1.6)	26(40.6)	36(56.3)	1(1.6)	64(100)		

Fisher exact test done, *Statistically significant value.

Table I outlines the socio-demographic conditions of the adolescents. The mean age of the participant was 17.7 ± 0.6 years. More than half of them were 18 years of age (52.6%) and female (55.4%). The majorities of the adolescents were Muslim (90.0%) and studied in 11th-grade classes (72.0%). Regarding educational level, two-thirds of adolescents fathers (66.6%) completed their graduation and above level, but more than half of the mothers (54.6%) were not completed their graduation. Regarding occupational state, most of the fathers were service holders (40.3%) and mothers were homemakers (72.6%). Majorities of the participants came from the nuclear family (86.9%) and their parents were staying together (96.3%). More than half of the adolescents (52.6%) were currently residing in the home and the rest of them (47.4%) resided in different places such as hostel, relative's house, mess etc. Nearly half of the adolescents' parents (48.6%) average monthly family income was less than Tk. 30,000.

Figure 1 portrays that about three out of five participants had a perceived average level of HP (58.9%) and a few of them had a high level of HP (2.3%). The mean of HP scores was 3.6 ± 0.5 .

Table II interprets the association of socio-demographic factors with the level of HP in adolescents. The level of HP was statistically significant with the adolescent's family type ($p=0.015$). The average level of HP was perceived among the adolescents who came from the nuclear family (61.8%).

Table III denotes the association of socio-demographic factors with the HP scores of adolescents. There were significant differences found with the HP scores with the adolescent's family type ($t=3.603$, $p=0.000$) and their parent's relationship state ($t=2.144$, $p=0.033$). The HP scores were high in the nuclear family (3.62 ± 0.413) and parents' living together (3.59 ± 0.422).

Table III Association Socio-demographic factors with HPscores (n=350)

Factors		Frequency (n)	HP scores Mean	SD	t-value	p-value
Gender	Male	156	3.58	0.415	-0.223	0.824
	Female	194	3.59	0.434		
Family type	Nuclear	304	3.62	0.413	3.603	*0.000
	Joint	46	3.38	0.450		
Parent's relationship	Lives together	337	3.59	0.422	2.144	*0.033
	Lives separate	13	3.34	0.444		
Adolescent's residence	Home	184	3.58	0.424	-0.344	0.731
	Outside home	166	3.59	0.427		
Father's education	Graduation & above	233	3.60	0.442	0.843	0.400
	Below graduation	117	3.56	0.390		
Mother's education	Graduation & above	159	3.57	0.448	-0.691	0.490
	Below graduation	191	3.60	0.405		
Mother's occupation	Homemaker	254	3.60	0.412	0.753	0.452
	Working mother	96	3.56	0.459		

Independent sample 't' test was done, *Statistically significant value.

Discussion

Helicopter parents are concerned about their children because they are both actively involved in striving to see their children succeed and achieve in life.⁹

In this study, the mean age of the adolescent was 17.7 ± 0.6 years. More than half of them were 18 years of age (52.6%) and female (55.4%). A study in Turkey found that female participant's perceived helicopter parenting less when compared with male participants.¹⁵ Regarding educational level, two-thirds of adolescents fathers (66.6%) completed their graduation and above level, but more than half of the mothers (54.6%) were not completed their graduation. Regarding occupational state, most of the fathers were service holders (40.3%) and mothers were homemakers (72.6%). Majorities of the participants came from the nuclear family (86.9%) and their parents were staying together (96.3%). More than half of the adolescents (52.6%) were currently residing in homes. Nearly half of the adolescents' parents (48.6%) average monthly family income was less than Tk 30,000. Socio-cultural context has an imperative impact on parenting style.¹⁶ These findings were almost similar to the studies on adolescents and young adults.^{17,18}

Regarding the level of helicopter parenting about three out of five participants had a perceived average level of HP (58.9%) and a few of them had a high level of HP (2.3%). The mean of HP scores was 3.6 ± 0.5 . A study in Malaysia found that HP was a usual practice and the prevalence of the highest level of helicopter parenting was 71.0%.¹⁹ In the study, the impact of highly involved parents on student engagement and educational outcomes level was high. They also reported that their parents frequently intervened to help them solve problems.²⁰ In another study in Turkey, they found that while the control behaviours of the parents form a part of the overprotective parenthood pattern in the Western culture, they appear as a part of the parental behaviour pattern in their own culture.²¹

Regarding the association of socio-demographic factors with the level of helicopter parenting, the level of HP was statistically significant with the adolescent's family type ($p<0.05$). There was an average perceived level of HP among the adolescents who came from the nuclear family (61.8%). Regarding the association of socio-demographic factors with the HP scores of the adolescents, the HP scores were high in the nuclear family (3.62 ± 0.413) and parents' living together (3.59 ± 0.422). There were significant differences found in the HP scores with the adolescent's family type and their parent's relationship state ($p<0.05$). Adolescents and emerging adults grow with overprotective parenting styles and found the prevalence of higher levels of helicopter parenting in nuclear families.^{18,22}

Furthermore, helicopter parenting is thought to be a developmentally unsuitable parenting approach. This parenting approach is believed to impede both physical and psychological development in children. Academics and specialists are always debating the cause and effect of helicopter parenting.

Conclusion

Parenting style greatly influences every part of adolescent development including physical and psychological wellbeing. The causes and effects of helicopter parenting have long been debated in different studies. But, in this parenting style, an adolescent becomes more self-reliant and competent in decision-making in this every stage of life. The study revealed that the perceived level of helicopter parenting was averagely good and this parenting style was more prevalent in nuclear families. Appropriate awareness, training and counseling programs will help adolescent parents in improving their parenting style.

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Disclosure

All the authors declared no competing interest.

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