Associations between Helicopter Parenting and Emerging Adult Well-Being: The Mediating Role of Self Efficacy

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Introduction

Helicopter parenting is described as parenting behaviors that include high involvement and control in the lives of their children, while limiting the amount of autonomy granted to their children. This style of parenting has been shown to negatively impact college age students through higher rates of depression and anxiety (Lubbe, 2018; Padilla-Walker & Nelson, 2012). Helicopter parenting may inhibit college students' academic performance (Love, 2019) and feelings of success (Deci & Ryan, 2012). Love and colleagues (2019) suggested helicopter parenting was associated with poor academic performance, as helicopter parenting decreased students' sense of self-control which is needed to learn self-regulatory skills necessary to meet the demands of higher education. Parents may find themselves helping their child in developmentally inappropriate ways during the college years which may negatively impact their child. Overparenting has also been associated with maladaptive traits in adult children, including a sense of entitlement (Segrin, 2012). A mechanism that may explain the relationship between helicopter parenting and students' outcomes is self-efficacy. A college student's level of self-efficacy may be at risk of decreasing due to overparenting and lack of student autonomy.

The goal of the current study is to explore the mediating role of self-efficacy in relationship between helicopter parenting and college student outcomes. It is hypothesized that helicopter parenting will increase depressive symptoms, decrease well-being, and increase students' sense of entitlement.

Results

We did a confirmatory factor analysis created the helicopter parenting latent variable using the factor analysis described by Lubbe et al. (2018). Adequate model fit will be determined using the criteria set by Hu and Bentler (1999): χ²/df ≤ 5.0, RMSEA ≤ .05, CFI ≥ .90, SRMR ≤ .05. A structural regression model exploring the relationship from helicopter parenting to college student outcomes mediated by self-efficacy was performed using 10,000 bootstraps.

Discussion

Results of the current study support previous findings which suggest helicopter parenting has been associated with lower levels of mental health and well-being and higher rates of entitlement. The results also indicate that the relationship between helicopter parenting and student outcomes is mediated by self-efficacy. Higher rates of helicopter parenting was associated with college students' sense of psychological and academic entitlement. Thus, as parents control and intervene with their students' lives, they demonstrating to their child they deserve more than others around them (Segrin et al., 2012). Helicopter parenting has been associated with higher rates of entitlement in adult children as their parents taught them that adults expected to do everything for them.

The relationship between helicopter parenting and depressive symptoms was mediated by self-efficacy, which supports the self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2012). Self-determination theory proposes that students need to feel a sense of competency in order to be motivated and successful, may be a possible explanation as to why helicopter parenting may negatively impact students' mental health and well-being.

The study however has some limitations. Since the data was collected at one time point, it is not possible to make causal claims about the relationship between helicopter parenting and college students' outcomes. Further research should explore helicopter parenting over the years in order to determine if helicopter parenting, student outcomes, and self-efficacy are indeed related or change over time.

References


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