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The Mediating Role of Inflated Sense of Self and Impulsivity in the Relationship Between Helicopter Parenting and Psychological Symptoms

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Helicopter parenting is characterised as a parenting style that take too much care and intervention to their children, take decisions instead of them, solve the problems they face and try to be overprotective. There is a growing interest in the negative aspects of helicopter parenting. This type of parenting attitude is thought to affect psychological problems. The aim of this study is to investigate the mediating effect of impulsivity and inflated self-sense of self in the relationship between helicopter parenting and psychological symptoms.

Method: The sample of the study consists of 337 university students. Perceived helicopter parenting was evaluated by Perceived Helicopter Parenting Attitude Scale, psychological symptoms by Brief Symptom Inventory, impulsivity levels by Barratt Impulsivity Scale, and inflated sense of self levels by using the Inflated Sense of Self Scale.

Results: As the helicopter parenting level perceived from the mother increased, psychological symptoms, impulsivity and inflated sense of self increased. There was no relationship between helicopter parenting perceived from the father and other variables. In the relationship between mother-perceived helicopter parenting and psychological symptoms, the inflated self-sense of self and impulsivity have a mediating effect; it was also found that impulsivity has a partial mediating effect on the relationship between inflated sense of self and psychological symptoms. In addition, inflated self-sense of self has a full mediating effect in the relationship between impulsivity and mother-perceived helicopter parenting.

Conclusion: The results of the study show that there is a difference between perceived helicopter parenting from mother and father. Perceived helicopter parenting is associated with an increase in psychological symptoms. In addition, in this relationship, helicopter parenting can affect psychological symptoms by causing an increase in impulsivity and inflated sense of self.

Keywords: Helicopter parenting, impulsivity, inflated sense of self, narcissism, psychological symptoms

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INTRODUCTION

It is known that the role of parents in the developmental process of the child has positive effects on general life satisfaction and psychological adjustment in children (1). However, there are also studies showing that too much parental involvement, which is generally not appropriate for the developmental level of the child, decreases psychological well-being (2, 3). Parents who give attention on their children too much are defined as families who make decisions instead of their children, and try to establish communication and closeness continuously (4). The popular label used today for these parents is "helicopter." In particular, there is evidence that children born between 1980 and 2000 have parents who intervene in all areas of their lives and try to protect them excessively (5).

The effects of helicopter parenting are among the most common problems nowadays. Trying to fill all of their children's free time with activities, mentioning their children a lot, and fulfilling their responsibilities on behalf of their children are among the most common behaviors of these parents (6). In this respect, parents who want to guide and help their children often do more harm than good with their overprotective behavior. Children who grow up with this pattern cannot learn to regulate their own behavior, emotions, problem-solving, and cope with stress, and they expect someone to save themselves when they encounter a problem (5). Helicopter parents have increased in every culture in the last 25 years and it is known that helicopter parents are more common in families with a high socioeconomic level (7).

In previous studies, the negative consequences of helicopter parenting, also known as psychological control, were interpreted with the "self-determination" theory. According to this theory, a child has three basic innate needs for healthy development. The first is the autonomy

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necessary for the individual to make his own choices. The second is the competence of the individual required to achieve his or her own success. The third is to have a relationship that he knows as warm and real (8). In helicopter parenting, parents' too much control makes them feel less autonomy and competence, and this negatively affects the relationship between them (9). Young people who define their parents as encouraging autonomy tend to adapt more to adulthood (10). According to the study conducted by LeMoyne and Buchanan (2011) with university students, individuals who think that they grew up under the control of their parents are less satisfied with their lives and have more negative thoughts about themselves. Therefore, they feel pressure to be accepted and loved (2). At the same time, additional parental support may cause reduced maturity and delayed identity formation (11). Current research shows that adolescents and young adults who grow up in less functional families are more likely to have depression, anxiety, alcohol problems, and psychosocial immaturity. In addition, they are more prone to receive psychological support (12). For example, children who grow up with helicopter parents more frequently experience depression and anxiety problems and have tantrums in adulthood compared to their peers (9). At the same time, over controlling parenting may cause higher anxiety levels (13). LeMoyne and Buchanan (2001) stated that children who grow up in families with high control experience more emotional problems in young adulthood. This situation was explained as parents who tried to maintain control in every area during childhood, interfered with their children's emotions and the situation caused them not to learn to regulate emotions. They also stated that university students, who mentioned that their parents had helicopter parental characteristics, felt more negative about themselves due to their low general well-being level. It was found that students in this group were more prone to taking medication for anxiety and depression (2). In this study, the relationship between helicopter parenting and psychological symptoms is investigated. Considering the findings, it is expected that the participants who reported that they had helicopter parents in this study had higher levels of psychological symptoms.

Mediating Role: Inflated Sense of Self and Impulsivity

It is thought that parent-child interactions and parental behaviors affect the child's self-concepts in transition to adulthood. Parental control behaviors can prevent the child from trusting her own abilities and prevent functional coping methods (14). For example, children of parents who show warmth but cannot set the necessary boundaries have low self-worth, and children of parents who set the necessary boundaries and at the same time create a warm and caring environment have high self-efficacy and self-worth in adulthood. However, children with parents who behave overly controlling and overprotective emerge as individuals who need approval, attention, and direction from others (6). In addition, they use dysfunctional coping styles and report higher levels of narcissism (15). Studies show that parenting styles have an impact on the development of narcissism. Generally, in the previous studies, narcissism itself has been evaluated as a general dimension (16). However, in the process leading to pathological narcissism, the situation conceptualized as "inflated sense of self" is thought to be important. Inflated sense of self is defined as trying to influence others excessively, an insatiable need for approval and a desire to be in the center of others' attention (17). As in helicopter parenting, this personality structure is likely to occur when parents praise their children too much, behave excessively tolerantly and try to create the most sheltered environment (18). It is known that grandiose and fragile narcissistic personality structures are associated with anxiety, depression and psychological violence. Grandiose narcissism is also seen to be associated with anxiety and depression. In summary, parental behaviors can affect a person's self-concepts as well as mental health. In this study, the mediating role of inflated self-sense, which is a subcomponent of narcissism, in the relationship between helicopter parenting and psychological symptoms was evaluated.

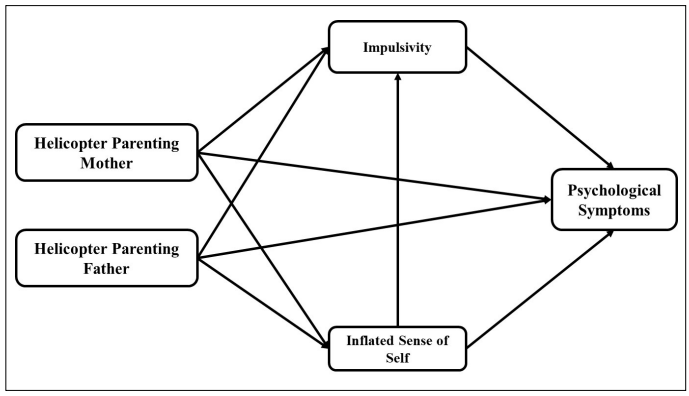
Contrary to warnings about the dangers of over-controlling parenting, the child development literature also provides evidence that increased parental involvement in children's lives facilitates healthy development. Children whose parents are supportive of life events and who act developmentally appropriate show more positive social outcomes, including better emotional states (19) and more positive peer relationships (20). Contrary to these findings, there are studies showing that too much parental involvement will have a negative impact on children's behavioral problems. There are findings indicating that when mothers adopt an attitude that is not suitable for the developmental level and needs of their children, they experience more internalization problems such as depression and anxiety disorder in young adulthood (20). High parental involvement can harm their psychosocial adaptation, especially in adolescence, and cause externalization problems such as impulsivity at school (21). Given these different results, the type rather than the amount of parental involvement is considered to be important. Although control of behaviors are associated with good outcomes in children (20), psychological control and continuous intervention can harm the child. When psychological control begins to override children's problem solving and creativity skills, children start to be unable to express themselves and this causes anger outbursts or inability to control their impulses (21). Contrary to control, there are findings that when parents support their children's autonomy, they are more socially and emotionally compatible, experience less behavioral problems, and report less anxiety and depression (22). In this study, the mediating role of impulsivity in the relationship between helicopter parenting and psychological symptoms was evaluated.

In researches, helicopter parenting is generally considered as helicopter parenting perceived from the mother, and it is observed that studies on fathers are limited and there are differences in the results. A study found that helicopter parenting perceived by the mother and father is highly correlated with each other and the data converge in a single "parent" score (23). In another study, helicopter parenting was found to have positive effect when perceived from the father. Children feel warm and close to their fathers when they show helicopter parenting behaviors. This situation shows that there may be differences in helicopter parenting behaviors perceived by children from their mothers and fathers, and they may see their fathers as good parents while the intrusive mother may be seen as stifling (24). A study conducted in Israel, on the other hand, associated fathers' being overprotective in their parenting attitudes with negative emotional and social effects on children (25). Although it is thought that the different results obtained may result from cultural differences in helicopter parenting, more findings are needed, as the research on perceived helicopter parenting from the father is limited.

METHOD

Research Model

This study was designed according to the relational screening model to reveal the relationships between perceived helicopter parental attitude, impulsivity, inflated sense of self and psychological symptoms (Figure 1). The ethical approval of the study was obtained from the Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee of Tekirdağ Namık Kemal University with the date 20.05.2019 and the approval number of T2019-6 of the university where the data will be collected.



Figune 1. Hypothetic Model

Participants

The lower limit for the sample size of the study was calculated as 129 with the G * Power 3.1.9.2 package program [$f^2 = 0.15$, $\alpha = 0.05$, number of predictor variables: 4]. The study group of the research consists of 337 university students studying at various faculties and departments in the fall semester of the 2018-2019 academic years at Namık Kemal University. 201 (59.6%) participants were female, 136 (40.4%) were male and their ages ranged from 22 to 39 ($\bar{X} = 22.12$, S = 3.31).

Measurements

Perceived Helicopter Parenting Attitude Scale

In the scale developed by Yılmaz (2019), there are 25 items in total, and it is administered in two forms as the mother and father form during the application. In the scale, each item is scored as four-point Likert type, and the higher the scores obtained from the scale, the higher the perceived helicopter parenting. The scale has four sub-areas: helicopter in ethical and moral issues, helicopter in academic / school life, helicopter in basic trust and life skills, and helicopter in emotional-personal life (26). The internal consistency coefficient of the scale for this study was calculated as 0.86 for the mother form and 0.85 for the father form.

Exaggerated Sense of Ego Scale

The scale was developed by Yılmaz (2018) (27). It has four sub-dimensions: inflation in manipulation, inflation in selfishness, inflation in social orientation, and inflation in self-exaggeration. 5th grading has been adopted. According to this; "It Doesn't Resemble Me At All: 1", "I Have Too Little Bit Of This Feature: 2", "I Have A Little Bit Of This Feature: 3", "Usually I Do It Like This: 4" and "Just Like Me: 5". The Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficient was calculated between 0.76 and 0.79 for four sub-dimensions. The internal consistency coefficient obtained for the whole scale was determined as 0.90. It was observed that the correlation and predictive power of the scale was also high in the tests conducted with four scales for the purpose of the compliance validity. Higher scores from the scale mean that the inflated sense of self increases. The internal consistency coefficient of the scale for this study was calculated as 0.87.

Barratt Impulsivity Scale

BIS-11, which is the current version of the Barratt Impulsivity Scale was developed by Patton et al. (1995) (28) and the validity and reliability studies in Turkey was done by Gulec et al. (2008) (29). The scale consists of 30 items and each item is scored as 4-point Likert type. High scores indicate a high level of impulsivity. In the adaptation study of the scale to Turkish, a different factor structure from the original form of the scale was obtained in the sub-dimensions and the internal consistency coefficient of each sub-dimension was calculated low. However, it is found that the internal consistency coefficient for the whole scale is 80. For this reason, the scale was considered as one-dimensional in this study and evaluations were made on the total score obtained from the scale. The internal consistency coefficient of the scale for this study was calculated as 0.82.

Brief Symptom Inventory

The Brief Symptom Inventory is a Likert type self-assessment inventory developed by Derogotis (1992) for a general psychopathology evaluation (30). The Brief Symptom Inventory is the short form of SCL-90-R, which emerged as a result of studies conducted with SCL-90-R. Among the 90 items distributed to nine factors of SCL-90-R, a total of 53 items with the highest load in each factor were selected, and a short scale with a similar structure that can be applied in 5-10 minutes was obtained. Its subfields are depression, anxiety, somatization, negative self-perception, and hostility. It is a multidimensional symptom screening scale developed to detect some psychological symptoms that may arise in various psychiatric and medical patients as in normal samples. The items are graded between 0 and 4, which corresponds to the statements "none" and "many are available". When the total score determined for each subscale is divided by the number of items of that subscale, a score is obtained for that dimension. An increase in each subtest score and general symptom score means that the psychological symptom level is high. The internal consistency coefficient of the scale for this study was calculated as 0.97.

Operation

It was observed that the data collection kit prepared by the researcher to collect the data of the research took between 10 and 15 minutes to answer. The hypothetical model in the study was tested with IBM SPSS Amos 24.0 program. The compatibility of the model with the data was evaluated by looking at the significance of the t values of the path coefficients to the latent variables. In preliminary analyzes, it was determined that kurtosis values of variables were within acceptable limits between 0.27 and 0.96, and skewness values between 0.02 and 0.87 (31).

Path Analysis

Path analysis, which is accepted as one of the Structural Equation Modeling techniques today, is a data analysis technique introduced by geneticist Sewall Wright as a result of a series of empirical studies in the 1920s and has been used quite frequently in social sciences in recent years. The "path diagram", which is a visual representation of the path analysis, was also defined by this researcher and introduced to the relevant literature. Path analysis, in order to explain the relationships between observed variables (32), enables the separation of direct and indirect relationships between dependent and independent variables and the control of the error variable (33). The other biggest advantage is that while only one dependent variable can be involved into regression analysis, more than one variable can be involved as dependent variable in path analysis. Also, in path analysis, a variable can be defined simultaneously as both dependent and independent variables.

In this study, the mediating effects of some potential mediator variables in the relationship between dependent and independent variables were tested. In the mediation test, the nested models strategy, which is recommended to be used in models with more than one mediator, and Bootstrapping methods were used together. The nested models strategy, in which the model obtained by fixing some parameters in a defined model to zero or another value is considered as a sub-model of the first model, has an important place in structural equation

model studies. Which of the two models is more valid is determined by evaluating whether the difference between the chi-square values of the two models is statistically significant in the difference of degrees of freedom between models. Relationships that do not contribute to the goodness of fit values of the model are excluded from the model (34). The "Bootstrap" method was used to provide supportive data on the significance of indirect effects and to evaluate the significance level of indirect effects. In this method, data sets of various amounts and sizes are created by resampling the existing data set by randomly displacing the observations. Therefore, as much information as possible can be obtained from the existing data set. With the program, 1000 bootstrap samples were created from the original data set, and the full mediated structural model was repeated with each bootstrap method to obtain 1000 estimates for each path relationship.

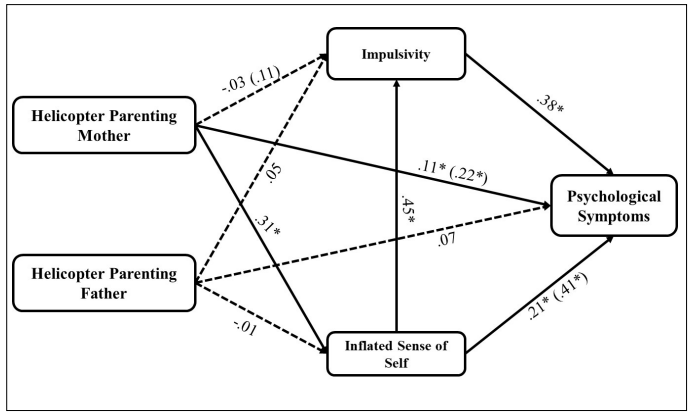


Figure 2. Standardized Path Coefficients for the Hypothetical Model, * p <.05. The value in brackets reflects the predictive relationship between Helicopter Parenting and Psychological Symptoms perceived from the mother under the influence of other variables.

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

The mean and standard deviation values for the variables included in the model determined within the scope of the research and the correlations between variables are presented in Table 1. Chi-Square / Degrees of Freedom of the model's goodness of fit values are (7,864 / 0,097): 1,97; GFI: 0.99; NFI: 0.98; CFI: 0.99 and RMSEA: 0.054 and it was observed to be at acceptable levels. According to the analysis results, it was found that there is a significant positive relationship between psychological symptoms, which are the external dependent variables of the study, and helicopter parenting (r = 0.22, p <0.05), impulsivity (r = 0.48, p <0.05) and inflated sense of self (r = 0.41, p <0.05).

Path Analysis

After testing the hypothetical model wanted to be tested within the scope of the research, standardized path coefficients related to the model are given in Figure 2.

When the standardized path coefficients in the model are examined, helicopter parenting perceived from the mother significantly predicts psychological symptoms (= 0.11, p <0.05) and inflated sense of self (= 0.31, p <0.05); inflated sense of self significantly predicts impulsivity (= 0.45, p <0.05) and psychological symptoms (= 0.21, p <0.05); it is also seen that impulsivity significantly predicts psychological symptoms (= 0.38, p <0.05).

In addition, the path coefficient from perceived helicopter parenting from mother to psychological symptoms was statistically significant (β = 0.22, p <0.05) when it had no effect on other variables, however, when the effects of other variables entered, it was observed that it remained statistically significant (β = 0.11, p> 0.05) but decreased; It can be stated that impulsivity has a partial mediating effect on the relationship between the inflated sense of self and psychological symptoms. In addition, it can be stated that the inflated sense of self has a full mediating effect on the relationship between helicopter parenting perceived from the mother and impulsivity. It was also determined that all internal and external independent variables together explain 31% of psychological symptoms.

Testing the Mediation Effect

The mediating effect of inflated sense of self and impulsivity in the relationship between psychological symptoms and helicopter parenting perceived from the mother was also tested by the Bootstarpping method. The criterion regarding the significance of the indirect effect is that the estimation intervals for the indirect effect do not contain 0. If the indirect effect range does not include 0, the indirect effects are statistically significant, if they are, they are not statistically significant (35). Therefore, as a result of the analysis (Table 2), as the helicopter parenting perceived from the mother increases, the inflated sense of self and psychological symptoms increase; as the inflated sense of

Table 1. Means, standard deviations, and correlations among variables

Variables		Sd	1	2	3	4	5
Brief Symptom Inventory Total Score	106.42	38.92	-				
Perceived Helicopter Parenting - Father	40.68	10.26	.07	-			
Perceived Helicopter Parenting - Mother	46.31	10.87	.22**	.65**	-		
Barratt Impulsivity Scale Total Score	63.23	10.49	.48**	.12*	.14**	-	
Inflated Sense of Self Scale Total Score	32.72	10.32	.41**	.19**	.30**	.45**	-

*p<.05, **p<.01.

Table 2. Bootstrap results

Path	Mediator	Path Coefficient (β)	%95 CI
Perceived Helicopter Parenting/Mother – Psychological Symptoms	Impulsivity and Inflated Sense of Self	.11* (.22*)	[.016, .205]
Perceived Helicopter Parenting/Mother – Impulsivity	Inflated Sense of Self	-.03 (.11)	[.061, .236]
Inflated Sense of Self – Psychological Symptoms	Impulsivity	.21* (.41*)	[.016, .205]

Note. Bootstrap sample: 1000 (Hayes, 2009). β =Standardized. *p<.05.

self increases, impulsivity and psychological symptoms increase; as impulsivity increases, psychological symptoms also increase. As a result of the mediation tests, it was found that the inflated sense of self and impulsivity had a partial mediating effect on the relationship between helicopter parenting perceived from the mother and psychological symptoms; It was also determined that impulsivity had a partial mediating effect on the relationship between the inflated sense of self and psychological symptoms. In the relationship between helicopter parenting perceived from the mother and impulsivity, it was revealed that the inflated sense of self had a full mediating effect.

DISCUSSION

The aim of this study is to test the relationship between helicopter parenting and psychological symptoms and to investigate the mediating role of inflated sense of self and impulsivity in this relationship. Helicopter parenting was evaluated in two different sub-dimensions: helicopter parenting behaviors perceived from the mother and perceived from the father.

According to the results of the study, psychological symptoms are positively related to helicopter parenting perceived from the mother, impulsivity and inflated sense of self. At the same time, helicopter parenting perceived from the mother has a predictive effect on psychological symptoms and inflated sense of self. Consistent with the literature, the results show that as helicopter parenting increases, psychological symptoms increase (12). A possible explanation for this situation may be that the child growing up with a mother who shows helicopter parenting behaviors does not know how to cope with stressful and challenging situations, needs others and as a result, experiences psychological symptoms such as anxiety or depressive symptoms (5). There is evidence in the literature that individuals who perceive their families as overprotective in childhood are individuals who seek approval from others and desire attention in adulthood (7). Similarly, it is known that individuals with high inflated sense of self need to try to influence others and get approval (18). Given this situation, it is not surprising that it is associated with helicopter parenting, defined as over-controlling parenting in order to protect children from dangers and avoid harm. Since the effect of parent-child interactions on the child's self-concepts in adulthood is known (15), it can be suggested that helicopter parenting also shapes the child's self-confidence and perception of others by affecting the inflated sense of self.

Another result of the study is that impulsivity has a partial mediating effect on the relationship between helicopter parenting and psychological symptoms. The results are consistent with the literature. There are findings indicating that when a healthy control system is applied to children and when the individualization of children is supported, they are compatible, experience their emotions in a more controlled manner, and consequently, psychological symptoms are less (23). Therefore, when children are raised with an attitude that is inappropriate for their development and when their living spaces are intervened, it is possible that children will have difficulty in emotion regulation and self-expression, and show more psychological symptoms.

Another finding of the study is that there is a positive relationship between inflated sense of self and impulsivity. At the same time, it was found that inflated sense of self has a mediating effect in the relationship between helicopter parenting perceived from the mother and impulsivity, and impulsivity has a mediating effect in the relationship between inflated sense of self and psychological symptoms. When parents provide poor discipline to their children and behave tolerantly to all kinds of behavior, the idea that children have more rights than others may develop, causing an inflated sense of self, also known as self inflation (19). As stated before, it is known that individuals have more aggressive behaviors and violent tendencies in this situation, which may lead to narcissism (36). When the results of the study are evaluated, it is thought that these types of behavioral problems increase due to the relationship between the inflated sense of self and impulsivity.

The results of the study showed that the helicopter parenting perceived from the mother was associated with psychological symptoms, inflated sense of self and impulsivity, while no relationship was found with the perceived helicopter parenting from the father. It is known that parenting styles for children affect adolescents' sense of self, especially in adolescence (37). However, there are conflicting results in the literature regarding which parenting, either from mother or father is more meaningful. The results of the study are similar to the findings of Litovsk and Dusek's (1985) study (38). In their study, they found that the parenting style and love perceived from the mother had a greater effect on their sense of self. Considering that women play a more active role in childcare as primary caregivers in the society we are in, it is expected that the mother's influence is more determinant on the child.

There is no study that directly examines the relationship between helicopter parenting, inflated sense of self and impulsivity in the literature. This study provides findings that inflated sense of self and impulsivity may also be important variables that should be taken into account in studies that will address helicopter parenting. It is thought that determining the variables related to helicopter parenting can be

useful in educative programs that can be done to raise awareness of parents with young children. In addition, increasing findings on variables affecting psychological distress will contribute to the development of intervention programs to reduce the development of psychological problems.

Limitations of the study should also be considered. Collecting data from a single university in the study may have created similarities in family structures. Therefore, the generalizability of the results to other populations is limited. Another limitation may be that the families of individuals with psychological problems such as depression and anxiety are willing to help their children more because of these problems. Similarly, children who experience psychological distress may blame their families for their problems, and this may cause their perceived parenting to be negative. For this reason, it is not possible to establish a cause-effect relationship between variables due to the model of the study. In addition, while interpreting the results, it should be kept in mind that the psychological symptoms were evaluated in the study and it did not indicate the presence of psychopathology. When interpreting the effect of parenting, it may be important to consider cultural characteristics. Previous studies show that perceived parenting from the mother and father may differ by gender. For example, Shek's (2005) study found that father's behaviors are more effective on boys, while mother's behaviors are more effective on girls (39). For this reason, it is thought that it may be important for future studies to compare the effects of helicopter parenting by gender.

Ethics Committee Approval: Ethical approval for the study, the university will collect data 20.05.2019 date and confirmation number T2019-6 Tekirdag Namik Kemal University, was taken from the Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee.

Informed Consent: Self-report scales were administered to those who volunteered to participate in the study in a single session, and informed consent was obtained from all participants.

Peer-review: Externally peer-reviewed.

Conflict of Interest: There is no conflict of interest among the authors.

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