

# Helicopter Parenting, Emotional Regulation, and Mental Health among University Students

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## ABSTRACT

**Aim of the Study:** This study investigated the relationship between helicopter parenting, emotional regulation, and mental health among university students.

**Methodology:** Cross-Sectional Survey Research Design was used to gather data. University Students were the targeted population for the study. Participants were recruited through a random sampling technique. A Random Convenient sampling technique was used to collect data.

**Findings:** The findings of this study showed that there is a non-significant relationship between helicopter parenting and mental health. It shows that living areas have little bearing on a university student's ability to control their emotions or maintain good mental health. Results imply that university students are emotionally affected based on gender. Findings have also indicated that helicopter parenting, emotional regulation, and mental health do not have significant differences in urban and rural areas.

**Conclusion:** It was concluded that there is a non-significant relationship between helicopter parenting, emotional regulation, and mental health.

**Keywords:** Helicopter Parenting, Emotional Regulation, Mental Health, University Students.

## Article History

Received:  
July 14, 2024

Revised:  
September 12, 2024

Accepted:  
September 18, 2024

Published:  
September 22, 2024

## Introduction and Literature Review

The term "helicopter parent" refers to an overly protective parent, often called a "cosseter," who is excessively vigilant and anxious about their child's experiences and challenges, especially when the child is away from home, such as at school. (Seki, Haktanir et al. 2023). Other research suggests that parents who adopt an overbearing helicopter parenting style tend to be unusually devoted to their children, a characteristic not typically seen in parents who follow a more traditional authoritarian approach. Helicopter Parenting regulates emotions. Lazarus (1991) suggests that emotions are adaptive and help individuals process challenging information more efficiently. This process allows people to respond to situations in a way that best aligns with their needs and goals (Lazarus 2000). The first step in emotion

regulation involves assessing emotional signals. Various behavioral and experiential systems are subsequently activated depending on how these signals are interpreted and managed (John and Gross 2007). Researchers have consistently argued that parenting plays a crucial role in a child's development and mental health well into adulthood. Helicopter parenting, in particular, is a notable risk factor that can be modified to improve mental health outcomes (Vigdal and Brønnick 2022). Numerous studies have linked children's well-being to helicopter parenting. Reports of helicopter parenting by adolescent and adult children have been associated with increased use of medications for depression and anxiety (Schiffrin and Liss 2017).

Güçlü et al. (2022) examined how emerging adults perceive their life skills to self-regulation, emotion regulation, helicopter parenting, and autonomy-supportive behaviors. The study highlights the impact of life skills on emotional and social development, focusing on their connection to key psychological traits (Güçlü, Özdoğan et al. 2022). Research has been conducted on the effects of helicopter parenting on academic motivation. Growing concerns suggest that highly involved helicopter parenting may negatively impact undergraduate students' well-being and academic performance (Schiffrin and Liss 2017). A study explored the mediating role of resilience in the relationship between helicopter parenting and various mental health indicators among emerging adults. Over the past decade, increased attention has been given to helicopter parenting, as research shows higher rates of mental health issues in this group compared to others, highlighting the importance of understanding factors affecting mental well-being at this age (Seki, Haktanir et al. 2023).

### ***Study Objective***

This study explored the relationship between helicopter parenting, emotional regulation, and mental health among university students by determining the impact of helicopter parenting and emotional regulation based on gender and examining helicopter parenting in different residential areas.

## **Materials and Methods**

### ***Ethical Approval***

The Departmental Research Review Committee for Ethics at International Institute of Science, Arts, and Technology (IISAT) approved the study, and all participants gave written informed consent after being informed of its purpose.

### ***Tool***

Three instruments/tools are used in this particular research: (1) Helicopter Parenting Scale (HPS), (2) Emotional Regulation Scale (ERS), (3) Mental Health Inventory-38 (MHI-38). The 22-item helicopter parenting scale measured parental involvement in participants' lives (Hind, 2016), with questions rated on a 1 (never) to 5 (always) scale. It assessed four key areas: problem-solving, location concerns, taking precautions, and bodily concerns, showing strong internal consistency with reliability values ranging from  $\Omega = .84$  to  $.90$  (Hind 2016). Cosmas &

Kamarulzaman developed the Emotional Regulation Scale. The scale consists of two subscales: expressive suppression (items 1, 3, 5, 7, 8, and 10) and cognitive reappraisal (items 2, 4, 6, and 9). Sample items for cognitive reappraisal include statements like "When I want to feel more positive emotions, I change what I am thinking about" and "When I feel positive emotions, I am careful not to express them." Respondents rate each item on a seven-point Likert scale, with 1 representing "strongly disagree" and 7 representing "strongly agree." (Cosmas and Kamarulzaman 2021). The MHI-38 consists of 38 items divided into six subscales, assessing psychological distress (anxiety, depression, behavioral/emotional control) and psychological well-being (positive affect, emotional ties, life satisfaction). Higher scores on well-being subscales indicate positive mental health, while higher scores on distress subscales reflect negative mental health. The overall mental health index ranges from 38 to 226, with higher values indicating greater psychological well-being. Internal consistency for

psychological distress was  $\alpha = 0.81$  and for psychological well-being,  $\alpha = 0.75$ . Previous research reported high reliability, with  $\alpha = 0.94$  and  $\alpha = 0.92$ , respectively (Santos and Novo 2020).

### **Research Design**

A Cross-Sectional Survey Research Design was used to gather the data (Hirose and Creswell 2023).

### **Population and Sample**

Cross-Sectional Survey Research Design was used. University Students were the targeted population for the study. Participants were recruited through a random sampling technique. A sample of 150 participants was selected via a convenient sampling technique. The participants include 75 males and 75 females. The participants were included in the age range of 18-27 years having an education level of Bachelors and Masters.

### **Data Analysis**

Descriptive statistics were employed to present figures like percentages, means, and standard deviations. An initial analysis was performed to evaluate how demographic characteristics relate to these variables. Statistical methods for the analysis of data including Pearson Product Moment Correlation (Hasan, Khan et al. 2020) were used to find the relationship between personality traits and general self-efficacy. Also, Independent sample t-tests were used to find gender differences in personality traits and general self-efficacy.

### **Results**

Demographic Analysis, Correlational Analysis, Regression Analysis, and T-tests for Age, Gender, and Residential Area are included.

Descriptive statistical analysis to find out the frequency and Percentage of demographic variables.

Table 1: *Frequency and Percentage of the Demographics (n=150)*

Sr. No	Variable	Segregation	Frequency	Percentage
1	Age	18-22 years	138	92.0%
		23-27 years	12	8.0%
2	Gender	Male	75	50.0%
		Female	75	50.0%
3	Residential area	Urban	94	62.7%
		Rural	56	37.3%
4	Family system	Nuclear	102	68%
		Joint	48	32%

**Table 1** shows the data of 150 students of government and private universities were analyzed to test the hypothesis of the current study. Table shows the demographic characteristics of the respondents. The table reveals information about the age, gender, residential area, family system. The majority (92.0%) of the participants belong to age of 18-22 years and other (8.0%) belong to age group 23-27 years, the percentage of males students were (75%) and females students were (75%), most of the students (62.7%) belonged to urban life style and other students (37.3%) belonged to rural life style, majority (68%) of the students belong to a nuclear family and other (32%) of the students belonged to joint family system.

Table 2: *Correlation between Helicopter Parenting, Emotional Regulation And Mental Health.*

Sr. No	Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	HPS_T	-	.097	.066	.119	0.58	-.036	.057
2	ER_T	-	-	.888**	.748**	.040	.017	.005
3	ER_ESF_T	-	-	-	.408**	.082	.010	.086
4	ER_CRF_T	-	-	-	-	-.031	.011	-.104
5	MHI_T	-	-	-	-	-	.761**	.781**
6	MHI_PD_T	-	-	-	-	-	-	.283**
7	MHI_PW_T	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	M	66.25	48.17	24.61	15.87	130.56	55.04	40.46
	SD	13.15	11.01	6.54	4.39	15.598	7.335	7.421

Note:\*= .05, \*\*= .01, HPS= Helicopter Parenting Scale, ER= Emotional Regulation, MHI= Mental Health Inventory, M= Mean, SD= Standard Deviation

According to the table 2, the non-significant relationship between helicopter parenting and emotion regulation because correlation ( $r = .097$ ,  $p > .05$ ). According to table 2, the non-significant relationship between helicopter parenting and expressive suppression facet because correlation ( $r = .066$ ,  $p > .05$ ). According to table 2, the non-significant relationship between helicopter parenting and cognitive reappraisal because correlation ( $r = .119$ ,  $p > .05$ ). According to the table2, there is also non-significant relationship between helicopter parenting and mental health because correlation ( $r = .58$ ,  $p > .05$ ). According to the table2, there is also non-significant relationship between helicopter parenting and psychological distress because correlation ( $r = -.036$ ,  $p > .05$ ). According to the table2, there is also non-significant relationship between helicopter parenting and psychological well-being because correlation ( $r = .057$ ,  $p > .05$ ). According to the table 2, the significant relationship between emotional regulation and expressive suppression facet because correlation ( $r = .888$ ,  $p < .05$ ). According to the table 2, the significant relationship between emotional regulation and cognitive reappraisal because correlation ( $r = .748$ ,  $p < .01$ ). According to the table 2, the significant relationship between emotional regulation and mental health because correlation ( $r = .040$ ,  $p < .05$ ). According to the table 2, the significant relationship between emotional regulation and psychological distress because correlation ( $r = .017$ ,  $p < .05$ ). According to the table 2, the significant relationship between emotional regulation and psychological well-being ( $r = .005$ ,  $p < .05$ ). According to the table 2, there is also significant relationship between expressive suppression facet and cognitive reappraisal facet because correlation ( $r = .408$ ,  $p < .01$ ). According to the table 2, there is non-significant relationship between expressive suppression and mental health because correlation ( $r = .082$ ,  $p > .05$ ). According to the table 2, there is also significant relationship between expressive suppression and psychological distress because correlation ( $r = .010$ ,  $p < .05$ ). According to the table 2, there is also significant relationship between expressive suppression and psychological well-being because correlation ( $r = .086$ ,  $p > .05$ ). According to the table 2, there is non-significant relationship between cognitive reappraisal and mental health because correlation ( $r = -.031$ ,  $p > .05$ ). According to the table 2, there is non-significant relationship between cognitive reappraisal and psychological distress because correlation ( $r = .011$ ,  $p < .05$ ). According to the table 2, there is non-significant relationship between cognitive reappraisal and psychological well-being because correlation ( $r = -.104$ ,  $p > .05$ ). According to the table 2, there is significant relationship between mental health and psychological distress because correlation ( $r = .761$ ,  $p < .01$ ). According to the table 2, there is significant relationship between mental health and psychological well-being because correlation ( $r = .781$ ,  $p < .01$ ). According to the table 2, there is significant relationship between psychological distress and psychological well-being because correlation ( $r = .283$ ,  $p < .01$ ).

Table 3: *Mean Standard Deviation and t-test analysis for difference in helicopter parenting and emotional regulation and mental health according to age.*

Variables	Age group 1 (n = 138)	Age group 2 (n = 12)	95% CI				
	M (SD)	M (SD)	df	t	P	LL	UL
<b>Helicopter parenting</b>	66.97 (12.59)	58.0 (16.94)	148	2.298	.023	1.25	16.68
<b>Emotional Regulation</b>	48.30 (11.02)	46.66 (11.34)	148	.493	.623	-4.93	8.20
<b>Mental Health</b>	130.36 (15.49)	132.83 (17.28)	148	-.525	.600	-11.77	6.82

The table shows results for helicopter parenting, emotional regulation, and mental health. For helicopter parenting data was non-significant as the scores for the age group 1 (M = 66.97, SD = 12.59) and for group 2 (M = 58.0, SD = 16.94) conditions  $t = 2.298$ ,  $p = .023$  ( $p > 0.05$ ). For emotional regulation data was non-significant as the scores for group 1 (M = 48.30, SD = 11.02) and for group 2 (M = 46.66, SD = 11.34) conditions  $t = .493$ ,  $p = .623$  ( $p > 0.05$ ). For mental health data was non-significant as the scores for age group 1 (M = 130.36, SD = 15.49) and for group 2 (M = 132.83, SD = 17.28) conditions  $t = -.525$ ,  $p = .600$  ( $p > 0.05$ ). These findings have indicated that helicopter parenting, emotional regulation, and mental health do not have significant differences in age groups.

Table 4: *Mean, Standard Deviation, and t-test analysis for differences in helicopter parenting and emotional regulation and mental health according to gender.*

Variables	Male (n = 75)	Female (n = 75)	95% CI				
	M (SD)	M (SD)	Df	t	P	LL	UP
<b>Helicopter Parenting</b>	67.28 (12.33)	65.22 (13.93)	148	.955	.341	-2.19	6.30
<b>Emotional Regulation</b>	45.50 (11.99)	50.84 (9.28)	139.27	-3.046	.003	-8.79	-1.87
<b>Mental Health</b>	130.32 (15.73)	130.80 (15.55)	148	-.188	.851	-5.52	4.56

The table shows results for helicopter parenting, emotional regulation, and mental health. For helicopter parenting data was non-significant as the scores for males (M = 67.28, SD = 12.33) and for females (M = 65.22, SD = 13.93) conditions  $t = .955$ ,  $p = .341$  ( $p > 0.05$ ). Emotional regulation data was significant as the scores for males (M = 45.50, SD = 11.99) and for females (M = 50.84, SD = 9.28) conditions  $t = -3.046$ ,  $p = .003$  ( $p < 0.05$ ). For mental health data was non-significant as the scores for males (M = 130.32, SD = 15.73) and for females (M = 130.80, SD = 15.55) conditions  $t = -.188$ ,  $p = .851$  ( $p > 0.05$ ). These findings have indicated that helicopter parenting and mental health do not have significant differences in males and females. It also indicated that emotional regulation has significant differences among males and females.

Table 5: Mean, Standard Deviation and t-test analysis for difference in helicopter parenting and emotional regulation and mental health.

Variables	Urban (n = 94)	Rural (n = 56)	df	T	P	95%CI	
	M (SD)	M (SD)				LL	UP
<b>Helicopter Parenting</b>	65.28 (11.78)	67.87 (15.15)	148	-1.16	.245	-6.97	179
<b>Emotional Regulation</b>	49.55 (10.15)	45.85 (12.07)	148	2.007	.047	.057	7.33
<b>Mental Health</b>	130.21 (15.95)	131.14 (15.09)	148	-.352	.725	-6.14	4.28

The table shows results that there is no significant difference in helicopter parenting, emotional regulation, and mental health among areas. For helicopter parenting data was non-significant as the scores for urban (M = 65.28, SD = 11.78) and for rural (M = 67.87, SD = 15.15) conditions  $t = -1.16$ ,  $p = .245$  ( $p > 0.05$ ). For emotional regulation data was non-significant as the scores for urban (M = 49.55, SD = 10.15) and for rural (M = 45.85, SD = 12.07) conditions  $t = 2.007$ ,  $p = .047$  ( $p > 0.05$ ). For mental health, data was non-significant as the scores for urban (M = 130.21, SD = 15.95) and for rural (M = 131.14, SD = 15.09) conditions  $t = -.352$ ,  $p = .725$  ( $p > 0.05$ ). These findings have indicated that helicopter parenting, emotional regulation, and mental health do not have significant differences in urban and rural areas.

## Discussion

The aim of this study was to assess the relationship between emotional regulation, mental health, and helicopter parenting in university students. Examining the connection between emotional regulation, mental health, and helicopter parenting was the primary objective of the study. (Wenze, Pohoryles et al. 2019). Determining the significance of each of these factors in relation to age, gender, and residential area was the second objective. There was a non-significant relationship between helicopter parenting and emotion regulation ( $r = .097$ ,  $p > .05$ ). Statistical analysis also showed that there is also non-significant relationship between helicopter parenting and mental health ( $r = .58$ ,  $p > .05$ ). These findings suggest that living areas have little bearing on a university student's ability to control their emotions or maintain good mental health. In case of gender, helicopter parenting data was non-significant as the scores for males (M = 67.28, SD = 12.33) and for females (M = 65.22, SD = 13.93) conditions  $t = .955$ ,  $p = .341$  ( $p > 0.05$ ), for emotional regulation data was significant as the scores for males (M = 45.50, SD = 11.99) and females (M = 50.84, SD = 9.28) conditions  $t = -3.046$ ,  $p = .003$  ( $p < 0.05$ ), for mental health data was non-significant as the scores for males (M = 130.32, SD = 15.73) and for females (M = 130.80, SD = 15.55) conditions  $t = -.188$ ,  $p = .851$  ( $p > 0.05$ ). Analysis indicates that there is statistically significant difference between helicopter parenting and emotional regulation across gender. These results imply that university students are emotionally affected based on gender. Findings have also indicated that helicopter parenting, emotional regulation, and mental health do not have significant differences in urban and rural areas. Previous research suggests that helicopter parenting is associated with lower mastery, self-regulation, and social competence, and higher depression. However, the relationship with depression diminished when other parenting styles were effective. The study highlights that helicopter parenting more strongly impacts socio-emotional adjustment, primarily through self-regulation rather than mastery. (Moilanen and Lynn Manuel 2019). Research indicates that helicopter parenting significantly impacts the mental health of college students, showing an overall negative relationship with psychological well-being, particularly environmental mastery and autonomy. A study on Maldivian students found a high percentage

experiencing severe depression and stress, potentially linked to helicopter parenting, as literature strongly associates it with increased depression and anxiety (Ahmed and Mingay 2023).

## Conclusion

Results indicated a non-significant relationship between helicopter parenting, emotional regulation, and mental health. Previous research showed that a relationship occurs between these variables but in some cases, helicopter parenting affects mental health as anxiety, depression, etc. through the lowering of self-efficacy. It indicated that helicopter parenting indirectly affects mental health.

## Acknowledgements

None


## Conflict of Interest


Authors declared NO conflict of interest.


## Funding Source

The authors received NO funding to conduct this study.

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