

# The Psychological Impact of Chinese Helicopter Parenting on Children: Concerning Self Cognition and Emotional Regulation

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## Abstract

In China, helicopter parenting is a phenomenon where parents exhibit over-protective and controlling behaviors towards their children, which has become a notable phenomenon in Chinese modern education. The main purpose of our paper is to delve into the negative effects of Chinese helicopter parenting may cause on children's self-cognition and emotion regulation skills. To investigate these effects, we conducted a mixed-methods approach, which combined a questionnaire based on authoritative scales with in-depth case studies, which aims to quantitatively assess the prevalence and intensity of helicopter parenting practices, along with a qualitative understanding of the underlying psychological mechanisms. With reference to relevant psychological theories, we further analyzed children's psychology in combination with the above survey results, then draw the following conclusions about the psychological impact of Chinese children under helicopter parenting: Firstly, over-protection and intervention by helicopter parents may prevent children from recognizing their own instincts, which can hinder the development of their self-cognition and intrinsic motivation. Additionally, over-protection by helicopter parents may lead to children's inability to regulate their emotions, resulting in negative effects such as excessive anxiety and a lack of a sense of well-being. Therefore, we suggest that parents should balance care with growth space and respect children's autonomy to turn their child into a well-rounded and confident adult in the future.

**Keywords:** Chinese Helicopter parenting, self-cognition, emotional regulation, educational psychology

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Background of the Study

Helicopter parenting is becoming more and more prevalent in China's wider educational landscape and poses a number of challenges to children's mental health. Helicopter parenting is becoming increasingly common in the broader context of Chinese education, posing a range of problems for children's mental health. Helicopter parents, as described in academic literature, are characterized by their over-protective and intrusive behavior toward their children. (Schiffrin, Liss, Miles Mc Lean, & et al., 2014) This parenting style, akin to hovering helicopters, involves constant intervention and assistance, depriving children of the chance to develop problem-solving skills independently. (Goldberg, Masha, Gentner, et al., 1995) Consequently, the lack of self-confidence in children, stemming from over-protection, may hinder their willingness to explore new experiences, ultimately impacting their self-assurance. China's education is highly competitive and parents generally place a high value on education. Excessive parental intervention may hinder a child's ability to form his or her social connections and interact effectively with peers. Moreover, the high expectations and performance concerns exhibited by helicopter parents

can create undue stress and pressure on their children. Lastly, the absence of independence and autonomy may result in self-identity issues, causing confusion regarding the child's capabilities and sense of self.

### *1.1 The Purpose and Significance of the Study*

This research provides an insight into the impact of helicopter parenting on children's mental development, with emphasis on self-confidence, independence, and social skills. Through examining how helicopter parenting affects children's self-perception and social behavior, as well as the impact of helicopter parenting on children's attachment, interpersonal relations and emotional adjustment, it offers more effective strategies for family education and psychological health interventions.

### *1.1 Research Ideas and Methods*

#### *1.1.1 Education Countermeasures Based on Psychological Theory*

By analyzing the effects of helicopter parents on Chinese children's mental health, the authors combined attachment theory, Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory (Maslow, 1908), and Jean Piaget's cognitive development theory (Piaget, 1896) to conclude the effects of different child discipline patterns on children's mental health.

#### *1.1.2 Design Questionnaire, Collect and Analyze Data*

The questionnaire survey was conducted for Chinese students of different age groups, and a total of 105 questionnaires were collected. The main body of the questionnaire was set up with the Helicopter Parenting Styles Scale (HPS), the Basic Psychological Needs Scale (BPNS), the Subjective Well-Being Scale (SWB), the Motivation for Academic Purposes Scale (MAAT), and the Adult Attachment Scale (AAS), to expose and compare the differences in children's mental health between helicopter parents and non-helicopter parents at different levels and to explore the influencing factors.

## **2. The Definition and Characteristics of Helicopter Parenting**

### *2.1 Interpretation of Helicopter Parenting in China*

Helicopter parenting is a style of parenting where caregivers are highly involved in their child's life, often micromanaging and overseeing every aspect. The concept of helicopter parenting was first introduced by child psychotherapist Haim Ginott in 1969 in relation to the negative parent-child relationship that can form between teens and overbearing caregivers. In 1990, child development researchers Foster Cline and Jim Fay coined the specific term "helicopter parent" to describe how over-protective "hovering" behavior was becoming increasingly prevalent among parents with children of all ages.

The phenomenon of helicopter parents is widespread in contemporary Chinese society, which is closely related to the contemporary education system and social environment. In China, where competition in education is fierce, many parents believe that their children can have a better future only if they achieve good grades. This perception has prompted some parents to adopt an overprotective and controlling approach in an attempt to create the most favourable learning environment and conditions for their children. To solve the problem of helicopter parents, we need to start with both the education system and the social environment. The education sector can reduce the competitive pressure on students and parents by reforming the education evaluation system, reducing utilitarian evaluation and encouraging diversified development. At the same time, all sectors of the community should make concerted efforts to promote the updating of the concept of family education and advocate rational and balanced education concepts, so as to enable children to have a better development in their growth process.

### *2.2 Characteristics of Helicopter Parenting*

Helicopter parenting is characterized by several key traits. Firstly, these parents often overprotect their children, shielding them from failures or difficulties to prevent them from getting hurt or frustrated. Additionally, they may excessively interfere in their children's lives, including their academics, socialization, and hobbies, trying to control every aspect to ensure their children's success and safety. As a consequence of this over-involvement and control, children may lack autonomy and self-determination, potentially leaving them unprepared for future challenges.

### *2.3 The Cause of Helicopter Parenting in China*

Firstly, the increasing prevalence of intensive, excessive helicopter parenting is due to two changes: the social value of the child and the status of the family. Over the centuries, the social value of children has changed from a "negative value" (before the 18th century, children were seen as evil) to a "value of educational achievement" (21st century) (Gu, 2020), and people's perceptions of the social value of children have changed dramatically as a result of cultural and ideological changes. The cultural and ideological changes have led to a dramatic change in the

perception of the social value of the child, with a gradual increase in the importance of the child's future developmental achievements. As a result, the status of children in the family has risen, and they have been recognized as the link between the family and its members, as well as helping to reproduce the family's social status. At the same time, parents in many families have become overly concerned that their children will one day become adolescents or adults and become alienated from them, and this fear of the unknown and of loneliness has led them to reinforce their children's attachment with excessive care and interference to avoid similar situations. The second change is the change in parental responsibility. Nowadays, it is no longer enough to care for children in their physical and daily lives. Parents' parental responsibilities are increasing (Bornstein, 2019). In the past, some ways of caring for children, such as giving them more space to play and leaving them unattended while they play, are now considered a kind of parental neglect, which invariably brings more pressure on parents and increases their attention and control over their children, and in order to minimize the harm they may do to them, parents begin to pay attention to their children's behaviors and whereabouts, and the social demands on parents become increasingly high and their responsibilities become greater and greater. Society's demands on parents are getting higher and higher, and their responsibilities are becoming greater and greater.

Secondly, the contradiction between the traditional concept of reading and the increasing competition in education due to class division and rising social inequality increases parental anxiety and influences the family's approach to education, and is one of the reasons for the formation of the helicopter parenting model. Since ancient times, China has had an official-oriented view of reading, and under the influence of this concept, parents expect their children to achieve greater achievements and status through studying and learning, and this concept is particularly obvious in some middle-class families. In the past, due to the parents' cultural level, economic income university enrolment, and other factors, this desire can only stay in the oral. Appear to be unable to do so, with the post-80s generation of students' parents to improve the cultural level and economic conditions as well as the implementation of the policy of expansion of colleges and universities in 1999. This millennium wish finally changed from a possibility to become a reality (Li, 2011). However, the class differentiation gradually became obvious, the economic inequality increased while the income increased (Depouke et al., 2019), and the gap between classes gradually widened (Nelson, 2010)). When the competition for school entrance became a common phenomenon, the high level of education represented strong competitiveness, in order to ensure their children's success in school, parents must take action from kindergarten onwards to ensure that their children have as many advantages as possible to obtain a high level of education in the future. In addition, pressure from other parents can contribute to the existence of this parenting model in more families. When some parents see that other parents are over-involved in their children's development, they are motivated to act in a similar way and are forced to become helicopter parents for the sake of their children.

Thirdly, parents' narcissistic quest to make up for their own regrets is another cause of helicopter parenting, as Koepke et al. (2012) have pointed out that parents' expectations of their children are mostly motivated by their own unfulfilled wishes or missed opportunities (Koepke & Denissen, 2012). Because of their own regrets as children or not receiving enough attention when growing up, they impose these on the next generation, hoping that their children can help them realize their ideals instead, and in order not to let their children lack care, they believe that they have to give them all that they have as much as possible, which easily leads to the emergence of over-attention to, interference with, and control of their children.

In summary, in an environment where Chinese children's social value and family status are rising and competition in education is fierce, the duties of Chinese parents are being constantly reinforced, affecting their perceptions of their own parenting roles, and they begin to believe that they need to take full responsibility for their children's future development. When they feel very uncertain about the rewarding value of their children's education, they become anxious, thus continuing to increase their investment in education, the interventionist control of their lives, and eventually becoming helicopter parents, giving rise to the rise of the overparenting, or helicopter parenting model.

### **3. A Survey on the Psychology of Chinese Children under Helicopter Education**

#### *3.1 Research Tools*

Before delving into the specific research tools, it is crucial to justify the selection of these methods and underscore their necessity. These methods were chosen to provide a comprehensive understanding of parenting styles, psychological needs, happiness, learning motivation, attachment patterns, and individual cases within the Chinese cultural context. We ensured their relevance and adaptability by making cultural adjustments and validations, thus reflecting the unique psychological states and experiences of Chinese children and adolescents.

##### **3.1.1 Helicopter Parenting Scale (HPS)**

The Helicopter Parenting Scale (HPS) developed by Walker and Nelson (2012) is used to evaluate the extent to which parents make important decisions for their children who are about to reach adulthood, and the participants are required to answer according to their own actual situation. The five questions extracted from this questionnaire aim to explore the performance of parents' helicopter parenting tendencies and the total level of helicopter parenting control.

### 3.1.2 Basic Psychological Needs Scale (BPNS)

The Basic Psychological Needs Scale includes three dimensions: autonomy needs, competence needs, and belonging needs. This questionnaire refers to the Basic Psychological Needs Scales (BPNS) developed by Liu et al. (2013). According to the psychological development of Chinese children, we modified the scale to a certain extent. Each dimension contains four questions, totaling 12 questions. The 7-point scoring system is adopted, with a score ranging from completely inconsistent to very consistent. Six questions are scored in reverse. After conversion, the higher the score, the higher the satisfaction of basic psychological needs.

Autonomy needs refer to the individual's need for autonomy in behavior, decision-making, and values, including questions 3, 6, 8, and 11; Competency needs refer to the individual's needs in unleashing their potential, achieving success, and mastering skills, including questions 2, 4, 7, and 9; Belonging need refers to the individual's need to establish and maintain good interpersonal relationships, feel love and be loved, including questions 1, 5, 10, and 12. Questions 2, 3, 5, 6, 9, and 12 are reverse counting items.

### 3.1.3 Subjective Well-Being Scale (SWB)

Subjective Well-Being Scale (SWB) was proposed by Diener (1984). The SWB includes two aspects: emotional and cognitive, and is used to measure individuals' comprehensive evaluation of their quality of life. The emotional aspect refers to the emotional experiences experienced by individuals in the real world, while the cognitive aspect refers to individuals' cognition and evaluation of their own quality of life, such as life satisfaction. It is the most commonly used scale to measure happiness in China. This questionnaire involves five questions for the SWB, using a 5-point scale grading method, with the standard of "1" indicating strong disagreement; "2" indicating some disagreement; "3" indicating neutral; "4" indicating some agreement; "5" indicating strong agreement. The purpose is to evaluate the happiness index and life satisfaction of children under helicopter parenting education.

### 3.1.4 Motivation to Learn Scale (MAAT)

The Chinese version of the Learning Motivation Scale is based on the Learning Adaptability Test compiled by the Department of Learning Adaptability Test Research of the Japanese Institute of Education, edited by Professor Zhou Bucheng (1991) from the Department of Psychology of East China Normal University. It has been widely used in primary and secondary schools in China. The scale has four dimensions and a total of 24 items, which has been one of the most commonly used scales in China to assess learning motivation. It includes four dimensions: motivation for success, test anxiety, self-responsibility, and requirement level. The scale takes the subjects' feelings, reactions, and identification degrees as evaluation indicators. Items 1-72 adopt a 3-point scale grading method, with the standard being "1" for often; "2" for sometimes; and "3" for never. This questionnaire extracts five representative questions and conducts a rough qualitative statistical analysis.

### 3.1.5 Adult Attachment Scale (AAS)

Adult Attachment Scale (AAS) is a classic psychological scale used to evaluate the attachment types of adults in interpersonal emotional connections. The scale is based on the research results of John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth in the field of attachment theory and has been developed and revised for many years. We have made some modifications to the scale to better suit the psychological state of primary and secondary school students. It contains three subscales, corresponding to three different types of attachment: secure attachment, avoidant attachment, and anxious attachment. Each subscale consists of six items, totaling 18 items. This questionnaire extracts five typical questions for qualitative analysis.

### 3.1.6 A Case Study

A case study is an in-depth and comprehensive study of a person, an object or a group, which provides a better understanding of the causes of an educational problem and a further clarification of its complex relationships. This research method was first used in the diagnosis of medical cases, later extended to the investigation, and finally widely recognized and highly used in psychology and pedagogy (Zhang, 2020). This article uses a case study approach, interviewing an individual of the 105 Chinese respondents to this questionnaire, to provide a further basis for judgement on the psychological impact of helicopter parenting on children.

The subject of the interview was a sixth form student, A, who had been affected by a strong Chinese helicopter

parenting model, in line with the research theme of this paper. The interview outline was mainly written using some of the research tools mentioned in 3.1, and provided an in-depth analysis of the questions related to psychological needs, attachment psychology and subjective well-being in the questionnaire mentioned above.

### 3.2 Research Objects

This study takes students as the research objects, covering primary school, middle school, high school, and university. The main objects are primary school students and college students. College students come from majors such as education, computer science, finance, and management. The questionnaire is distributed through the online platform to collect data. A total of 105 questionnaires are collected for relevant data analysis. There are 58 boys, accounting for 55.24%, and 47 girls, accounting for 44.76%. In addition, a sixth grade child, A, as a typical case in our survey, was invited to participate in the case study in the form of an interview.

### 3.3 Research Results

#### 3.3.1 The Basic Situation of Students' Upbringing by Helicopter Parents

According to their actual situation, the high percentage of respondents (59.05%) indicating parental interference and high academic expectations suggests a widespread concern among parents to ensure their children's success. This may stem from the intense competitiveness of today's society, where parents fear their children might lag behind in academic pursuits.

However, this excessive involvement often manifests in the form of worry rather than constructive guidance. The majority of students (58.1%) believe that parents worry unduly about academic performance, possibly due to their own unresolved anxieties or a misplaced sense of control. Similarly, the focus on minutiae in children's lives (60% of parents showing excessive attention) might reflect a desire to protect them from any potential harm, but it also robs them of the opportunity to learn from their own mistakes and develop resilience.

Psychologically, this style of parenting can have profound consequences. The reported lack of independence and autonomy among 46.67% of children is indicative of a generation growing up with limited decision-making abilities. The 21.9% who feel overly restricted may suffer from a stifled sense of self and creativity. The stress and anxiety reported by 56.19% of children are symptoms of a constant state of vigilance and pressure, which can lead to long-term mental health issues.

#### 3.3.2 Basic Psychological Needs and Subjective Well-Being of Children under Helicopter Parenting

The significant portion of primary school students expressing dissatisfaction with autonomy (43.25%) suggests that they feel constrained and unable to make decisions independently. This could be due to parents' overbearing involvement in their children's lives, leaving little room for self-exploration and growth.

Similarly, the negative options in the competence demand (38.74%) indicate that children may not feel capable or confident in their abilities, possibly because parents' constant interference and high expectations erode their sense of self-efficacy. The belonging demand also shows dissatisfaction (23.45%), indicating that even within the close confines of helicopter parenting, children may not feel a sense of belonging or acceptance. The low subjective well-being scores, with 71.43% of children desiring a change in their living situation, are testament to the toll this style of parenting takes on their emotional well-being. This suggests that children are not only unhappy with their current living conditions but also lack a sense of fulfillment and satisfaction in their lives.

The potential long-term impacts of these findings are profound. Children who grow up feeling constrained, incompetent, and unfulfilled are likely to develop into adults with low self-esteem, a lack of confidence, and poor emotional resilience. This could have far-reaching consequences for their future success and happiness. Therefore, it is crucial for parents to recognize the limitations of helicopter parenting and adopt a more balanced approach that fosters children's autonomy, competence, and sense of belonging, thereby promoting their overall psychological well-being and development.

#### 3.3.3 Children's Learning Motivation under Helicopter Parenting

The results of the study on children's learning motivation under helicopter parenting reveal intriguing patterns that deserve further exploration. The elevated levels of success motivation (26.9%) and test anxiety (24.9%) among these children likely stem from parents' constant pressure and high expectations. Helicopter parents tend to micromanage their children's academic performance, which can lead to an unhealthy focus on achieving success and a fear of failure.

The relatively lower performance in self-responsibility (23.5%) suggests that children under helicopter parenting may lack a sense of autonomy and ownership over their learning. They may be reliant on parents for direction and

validation, rather than developing their own internal motivation and self-regulatory strategies.

These findings have significant implications for children's development. An overemphasis on success and a fear of failure can stifle creativity, experimentation, and risk-taking, essential skills for future success. Moreover, a lack of self-responsibility can hinder children's ability to take ownership of their learning and growth, limiting their potential for self-discovery and lifelong learning.

### 3.3.4 Children's Attachment under Helicopter Parenting

The over-education style inherent in helicopter parenting can foster insecure dependency, with 68.6% of respondents displaying traits of insecure-dependent individuals. Behind these findings lies a complex interplay of factors. Helicopter parents often micromanage their children's lives, leaving little room for autonomy or independent decision-making. This constant supervision and involvement can stifle children's ability to form secure attachments based on mutual trust and respect. Instead, they may develop a sense of dependency, constantly seeking external validation and attention to alleviate feelings of anxiety and uncertainty.

The potential impact of this insecure attachment style on children's development is significant. Such individuals may struggle with self-esteem and confidence, fearing rejection or abandonment. They may also have difficulty establishing healthy boundaries and relationships, both in childhood and adulthood. This can lead to problems in social and emotional functioning, hampering their ability to navigate the complexities of life.

### 3.3.5 Detailed Analysis of an Individual Case

In study and life, Child A said that she often felt incapable of accomplishing something; she felt a lot of pressure when doing everything and always needed others' affirmation and attention, and she would get some sense of achievement only when she accomplished difficult tasks, but most of the time she did not have the opportunity to show herself; socially, she often felt incapable of getting along with her classmates and friends when alone, but she was afraid of being abandoned or neglected by everyone, and was often upset by others' behaviour.

Socially, she was often alone and felt incapable of getting along with her classmates and friends, but she was also afraid of being left out or ignored by others, and often felt uneasy about the behaviour of others. Child A also thought that she did not have too many close people, even her parents, and in the course of growing up, the most impressive thing that she was controlled by her parents was to go to all kinds of hobby classes that she did not like and was not good at, especially dance classes, where she was often laughed at by her classmates because of her body shape, but her parents made sure that she insisted on it and thought that it was just an excuse to avoid going to class. When asked if she was satisfied with her current life, Child A said that if she could do it all over again, she would like everything to change.

The case can be analyzed to show that because of the over-controlling, Chinese helicopter parenting style of her parents from a young age, Child A's basic psychological needs could not be met, and she habitually denied her own abilities, with a low subjective sense of well-being and insecure attachment, which in the long run will have a negative impact on her future development.

## 4. The Influence of Helicopter Parents on Children'S Psychology

### 4.1 Emotional Regulation

#### 4.1.1 The Connotation and Regulation of Emotion

Emotion is a psychological phenomenon mediated by the subject's needs, desires, and other tendencies. Emotion has three distinct components: physiological arousal, subjective experience, and external expression. Conformity to the subject's needs and desires will cause positive and affirmative emotions, while the opposite will cause negative and negative emotions (Star, 2015). Emotions have adaptive, motivational, organizational, and social functions. Research on emotion regulation began in the 1980s in developmental psychology.

Emotion regulation is categorized into internal and external regulation; effective, ineffective, or poor regulation; and regulation for negative or positive emotions. According to research, there are three different regulation strategies for emotion regulation. Situation-focused strategies are used to control situations, and they work by selecting situations or changing them in some way. Cognitive attentional strategies require us to direct our attention to specific aspects of the situation or change the way we perceive the situation to change emotions. The third strategy is the reactive attention strategy, which requires us to change the effect of an emotion once it has arisen. The reactive attention strategy assumes that the individual has developed a certain emotion and wants to change some aspect of the emotion. This may include "removing the emotion from the individual's system" by talking about it (Richard & Philip, 2003). Children regulate their emotions by recognizing, managing, and expressing them, as well as responding appropriately to emotional arousal or negative emotions. Children's

emotional cognitive skills develop over time and include the ability to recognize, understand, and express different emotions. This dimension includes the learning and development of emotion recognition, emotion understanding, and emotion labeling. As children grow older, they begin to learn to manage their emotions with gradual control, such as trying to control their anger or frustration when they are frustrated. This usually requires guidance and support from adults in the home and school environment. As language and expressive skills develop, children will begin to express their emotions more clearly, communicating their inner feelings through words, actions, and facial expressions. From self-body soothing in infancy, to using play to regulate emotions at 2-3 years of age, to regulating emotions through distraction and avoidance of others' bad feelings at 4-5 years of age, to beginning to regulate emotions in a positive and constructive social way at 5-6 years of age. Generally speaking, emotion regulation is characterized by complexity and gradual enhancement (Li, 2017).

#### 4.1.2 Effect of Chinese Helicopter Parenting on Child Anxiety

Anxiety refers to the unpleasant and complex emotional state of tension, uneasiness, worry, and annoyance that an individual feels about an impending danger or threat that may be posed to him or her (Liu, 2018). Children in the process of growing up will easily be affected by various environmental, family, and other factors and produce the complex emotional psychology of anxiety. Children's anxiety disorders have the following four manifestations: anticipatory anxiety, separation anxiety, situational anxiety, and anxiety in the environment. In recent years, many scholars at home and abroad have conducted research on children's anxiety symptoms. One of the studies randomly selected 332 primary school students in grades 4-6 from two affiliated primary schools located in Jinan City, all aged 9-13 years old, with 175 boys and 154 girls. The results of the study showed that there was a significant positive correlation between the parental over-interference and protection factors and the scores of anxiety symptoms, as shown in Table 1, and the multiple stepwise regression analyses, as shown in Table 2, indicated that the factor of over-protection entered the regression equation. This reflects that parental over-protection is very closely related to children's anxiety symptoms and further argues for the effect of the helicopter parenting model on children's anxiety and psychological emotions.

Table 1. Analysis of associations between anxiety symptoms and parenting styles

	Panic disorder	Widespread anxiety	Isolated anxiety	Social phobia	scholastic phobia
<b>Father</b>					
Emotional warmth	-0.085	-0.153**	-0.082	-0.173**	-0.117*
Punishment, severity	0.220**	0.311**	0.236**	0.151**	0.233**
Excessive interference	0.211**	0.229**	0.197**	0.186**	0.168**
Favorite subjects	-0.018	-0.002	-0.017	0.020	0.041
Refuse, deny	0.245**	0.378**	0.196**	0.177**	0.170**
Over-protection	0.166**	0.275**	0.181**	0.135*	0.161**
<b>Mother</b>					
Emotional warmth	-0.092	-0.157**	-0.086	-0.182**	-0.137*
Punishment, severity	0.227*	0.315**	0.241**	0.161**	0.220**
Excessive interference	0.213**	0.254**	0.178**	0.176**	0.166**
Favorite subjects	0.018	0.002	0.017	0.020	0.041
Refuse, deny	0.203**	0.334**	0.189**	0.152**	0.192*

Note. \* $P < 0.05$ ; \*\* $P < 0.01$ .

Source: Chinese Journal of Clinical Psychology, (Cao et al., 2006).

Table 2. Multiple stepwise regression analysis of factors influencing anxiety symptoms in children

	Partial regression coefficient	Standard error of the partial regression coefficient	Standardized regression coefficient	t value	p value
Constant term	2.32	1.93		1.20	>0.05
Refuse, deny	0.49	0.25	0.15	1.98	<0.05
Over-protection	0.42	0.20	0.13	2.10	<0.05
Punishment, severity	0.40	0.18	0.17	2.26	<0.05

Source: *Chinese Journal of Clinical Psychology*, (Cao et al., 2006).

In addition to this, the effect of helicopter parenting on children's anxiety may be further deepened when it is through an insecure attachment personality. Firstly, according to attachment theory, parents are one of the most important factors in the formation of a child's attachment pattern, and helicopter parenting and strong parental interference may affect the child's ability to form a secure and healthy attachment pattern. In the "Strange Situation Experiment" designed by American psychologist Ainsworth (1978), he believed that attachment should be divided into secure and insecure. Through the experiment, he classified children's attachment into three modes with different natures: Secure; insecure-avoidant; and insecure-ambivalent. Unlike the previous two categories, such children express strong resistance to their mother's departure and seek contact with her when she returns, but at the same time show defiance, even anger, and cannot go back to playing games. In the later stages of a child's development, this type is mainly characterized by insecurity and a low level of acceptance and identification with the self. Usually overly dependent on others for their approval and acceptance, greedily seeks the approval and acceptance of others. When parents are over-protective and interfere excessively in their children's learning, life, and social activities may push children to develop characteristics of insecure attachment, which manifests itself in excessive dependence on others, worry and fear, constant worry and fear of abandonment, and neglect, desire for constant attention, aversion to facing separation, and strong negative emotions such as separation anxiety. The relevant questionnaires mentioned earlier can attest to this.

According to research, many children with insecure attachments are more likely to show symptoms of anxiety. The article used K-means clustering method to classify and combine four types of family attachment according to the secure and insecure types of mother-child and father-child attachment, respectively: mother-secure/father-secure (n=247), mother-secure/father-non-secure (n=71), mother-non-secure/father-secure (n=96), and mother-non-secure/father-non-secure (n=166). A one-way ANOVA was conducted on each of the six specific anxiety symptoms and the total anxiety score of the children, using family attachment type as the independent variable. From the results, presented in Table 3, it can be concluded that children who formed dual insecure attachments with both parents had the highest anxiety symptom scores and total anxiety scores, while children who formed secure attachments with only one parent had intermediate anxiety symptom scores and total anxiety scores. The data suggest that children with insecure attachments are more likely to develop anxiety symptoms compared to other types of children. This is another way to reflect the impact of helicopter parenting on children's anxiety, as the formation of insecure attachments in the helicopter parenting model is highly likely to lead to anxiety symptoms.

Table 3. Anxiety scores of children with different family attachment types ( $\bar{x}\pm s$ )

Separation anxiety	Separation anxiety	Somatic injury	Social fear	Panic behavior	Compulsion-impulsivity	Extensive anxiety	Anxiety total score
a <sub>1</sub>	0.52 <sup>a</sup> ±0.49	0.62 <sup>a</sup> ±0.57	0.63 <sup>a</sup> ±0.53	0.25 <sup>a</sup> ±0.30	1.09±0.58	0.46 <sup>a</sup> ±0.40	3.57 <sup>a</sup> ±2.16
a <sub>2</sub>	0.75 <sup>b</sup> ±0.46	0.83 <sup>b</sup> ±0.47	0.98 <sup>b</sup> ±0.52	0.40 <sup>ab</sup> ±0.33	1.17±0.57	0.71 <sup>bc</sup> ±0.52	4.82 <sup>b</sup> ±2.05
a <sub>3</sub>	0.63 <sup>ac</sup> ±0.48	0.70 <sup>ac</sup> ±0.55	0.94 <sup>b</sup> ±0.50	0.39 <sup>ab</sup> ±0.39	1.06±0.59	0.68 <sup>cd</sup> ±0.45	4.40 <sup>b</sup> ±2.06
a <sub>4</sub>	0.85 <sup>bd</sup> ±0.54	0.87 <sup>bd</sup> ±0.66	1.37 <sup>2</sup> ±0.71	0.54 <sup>bc</sup> ±0.39	1.25±0.56	0.85 <sup>bc</sup> ±0.46	5.74 <sup>2</sup> ±2.44
F	10.63 <sup>***</sup>	4.88 <sup>**</sup>	39.31 <sup>***</sup>	17.87 <sup>***</sup>	2.44	19.45 <sup>***</sup>	23.49 <sup>***</sup>

Note. a<sub>1</sub>-a<sub>4</sub> refers to parent-safety-parent-safe, parent-safety-parent-non-safe, parent-non-safe-parent-safe, parent-non-safe / parent-non-safe, respectively. The English Superscript records the results of multiple comparisons in the same column, if at least one of the same, the difference is not significant; if the English Superscript is different, at least at the 0.05 level.

Source: *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, (Zhao & Zhu, 2011).



#### 4.1.3 Effect of Helicopter Parenting on Children's Subjective Well-Being

The sense of well-being is a subjective assessment of an individual's overall satisfaction and feelings of joy in his or her own life, which is often closely related to positive emotions, life satisfaction, and perceptions of meaning in life.

Self-actualization theory was developed by psychologist Abraham Maslow and emphasized an individual's motivation to pursue the highest level of development of his or her potential. The process of self-actualization includes self-knowledge, self-acceptance, and self-development. Maslow divides human needs into physiological needs, safety needs, belonging and love needs, respect needs, and self-actualisation needs (Wang, 2011), and argues that it is only by satisfying lower-level needs that individuals will pursue higher-level needs and ultimately achieve self-actualisation.

According to the self-actualization theory, individuals need opportunities to autonomously pursue their goals, develop their potential, and realise themselves. Excessive intervention by helicopter parents may undermine children's autonomy and decision-making ability, thus preventing them from self-actualization. In this situation, children may feel a lack of control and achievement, and their need for self-actualization may not be met, which in turn affects their well-being.

However, not all helicopter parents' behaviors have a negative impact on a child's well-being. Some helicopter parents may provide the necessary support and guidance to help their children better develop their abilities and achieve their goals. The key, therefore, is to balance parental intervention with the child's autonomy in order to promote the child's self-actualization and well-being.

#### 4.2 Self-Cognition

The basic psychological needs scale involved in the questionnaire can be traced back to the self-determination theory proposed by Ryan and Deci (2000). The theory of basic psychological needs, as an important part of it, mentions that self-determination behavior originates from highly integrated motivation, including intrinsic motivation and highly internalized external motivation. The necessary condition of high self-integration is the satisfaction of three basic psychological needs: autonomy needs, competence needs, and belonging needs.

Autonomy means that individuals can perceive that behavior is out of their own will and determined by themselves. Competence indicates that an individual is capable to demonstrate his ability in the interaction with others. The need for self-determination is need self-determination, which means that individuals have a sense of self-choice for the activities they are engaged in rather than the need for control by others; Competence needs refer to the belief that individuals are competent for certain activities. It can be seen from the above analysis that these psychological needs embodied by children are closely related to self-cognition (Chen, 2019).

##### 4.2.1 Connotation of Self-Cognition

From this perspective, the discussion extends to children's self-cognition, including self-consciousness, self-concept, and self-esteem. Self-consciousness refers to individuals' self-knowledge, self-experience, and self-regulation, process and results of their psychological, thinking, and behavioral activities. Self-knowledge is the cognitive component of self-consciousness, including the reflection on one's own situation on the basis of self-observation, and the evaluation of one's social value in terms of ability, morality, behavior, etc. Self-experience is the emotional expression of self-consciousness, including self-esteem and self-confidence. The more important concept of self-consciousness that needs our attention is self-regulation. It is the will component of self-consciousness, which is mainly manifested in the regulation of individuals' behaviors, activities, and attitudes, including self-inspection, self-supervision, self-control, etc. Through self-inspection and self-supervision, people compare and contrast the results of their activities with the purpose of their activities in their mind, or supervise their words and deeds with their conscience or internal code of conduct. Self-control is the active mastery of the subject's own psychology and behavior. The regulating effect of self-consciousness is shown as starting or stopping behavior, transfer of psychological activities, acceleration or deceleration of psychological process, strengthening or weakening of enthusiasm, coordination of motivation, supervision, and inspection of actions according to the plan, coordination of actions, etc. Good self-control ability is conducive to the healthy growth of individual psychology and physical theory and also promotes the smooth progress of learning and work, and the establishment and maintenance of good interpersonal relationships (Chen, 2019).

Self-concept is "a mixture of individual concepts, emotions and attitudes towards oneself" (Hilgard, Atkinson, & Atkinson, 1979). Many studies (Marsh & Shafelson, 1985; Shafelson & Bolus, 1982) assume that self-concept is organized by hierarchy (Figure 1). Self-concept is established on the basis of the experience formed by the interaction between individuals and the environment and is mainly influenced by the reinforcement and evaluation

of others (Shafelson & Bolus, 1982). It will change and develop with the change of situation and age, and this development experience is a process from relatively concrete to relatively abstract. Young children can not effectively divide external things, and their self-concept appears diffuse and vague. With the growth of age and the intervention of school education, children's self-concept is gradually abstracted and complicated.

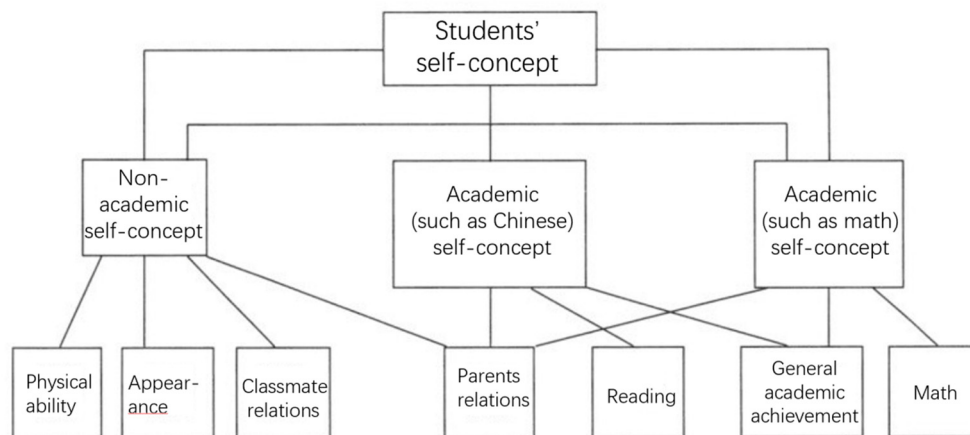


Figure 1. Structure of self-concept (Marsh & Shavelson, 1985)

Self-esteem refers to the positive evaluation and experience of self-worth obtained by individuals in the process of social comparison. It is the individual's own value or whether the individual accepts and respects his feelings. On the one hand, self-esteem will affect individuals' evaluation of themselves and their emotions, thus affecting their behavior in growth. On the other hand, the external environment also affects children's self-esteem. The self-consciousness, self-concept, and self-esteem mentioned above are all important components of self-cognition.

#### 4.2.2 The Influence of Helicopter Parenting on Children'S Self-Cognition

It needs further clarification that self-consciousness generally involves two aspects: the subject's I and the object's I. One is the awareness of one's own physical and mental activities, such as one's own character, ability, and behavior; The other is the I of the object, that is, the others' views on me. Therefore, self-consciousness is the core concept of personality and social development, which is gradually formed and developed with the physical and mental development of individuals and the continuous interaction with the surrounding environment. Helicopter parents, who are omnipresent in all aspects of their children's lives, largely affect their children's self-consciousness of social values and self-experience of emotional values. Excessive attention may lead to children's inferiority complex and lack of independence. On the contrary, it may make individuals self-centered for a long time, which will hinder the healthy growth of children's physical and mental health in the future. At the same time, excessive parenting seriously affects children's self-regulation ability.

As for self-concept, children's self-concept is not absolute due to its complex three-dimensional structure. Research shows that after entering the middle grade, students will compare according to their own standards. For example, if mathematics is considered an important subject by students, their mathematical self-concept will also be positive, even if their mathematics scores are not good. For another example, students with good math scores in ordinary schools have better math self-concept than students with the same ability in good schools. However, due to the excessive demands of helicopter parents, children's cognitive vision may be limited, and they lose their positive self-concept. In addition, Erik H. Erikson's (1902-1994) theory of social development also mentioned that there are two major contradictions between the sense of diligence and the sense of inferiority, and role identity and role confusion in the growth period of children to adolescents. In order to help children adapt to the crisis of diligence and inferiority complex, caregivers must be aware that children are always trying to maintain a positive self-concept and consider themselves capable and valuable individuals. According to the survey data on children's low autonomous and competent needs, helicopter parents may not be able to do this. With regard to the acquisition of identity, Marcia (1966) discussed adolescents' self-identity from two dimensions: one dimension is exploration, which is an attempt to role and new behavior, including meditation on morality and value; Another dimension is commitment, which refers to decisions made in the field of personal life, such as educational and professional goals, family obligations or goals, as well as political and religious beliefs. Marcia classifies four identity states of

self-identity according to the existence of these two dimensions. The first is identity achievement, only a few students are in this situation. It shows that individuals are able to make their own choices and strive for their goals after thorough consideration; The second is identity foreclosure, in which individuals defer to their parents or other authorities' decisions, fully accept the requirements, and put forward goals and lifestyle set by themselves put forward by others; The third is identity diffusion, in which individuals fail to make sensible choices or seriously consider their choices, so as to form a conclusion about their social roles and life goals, confusing; The fourth is identity moratorium, in which individuals fail to acquire identity due to inner struggle. The fourth is what Eriksson called an identity crisis. This identity crisis is more common among children. Families and schools can provide role models for children, cultivate their reasonable cognition about themselves, and help students deal with this crisis. The authoritative and commanding close attention of helicopter parents may lead to a decline in children's identity towards confusion and early closure.

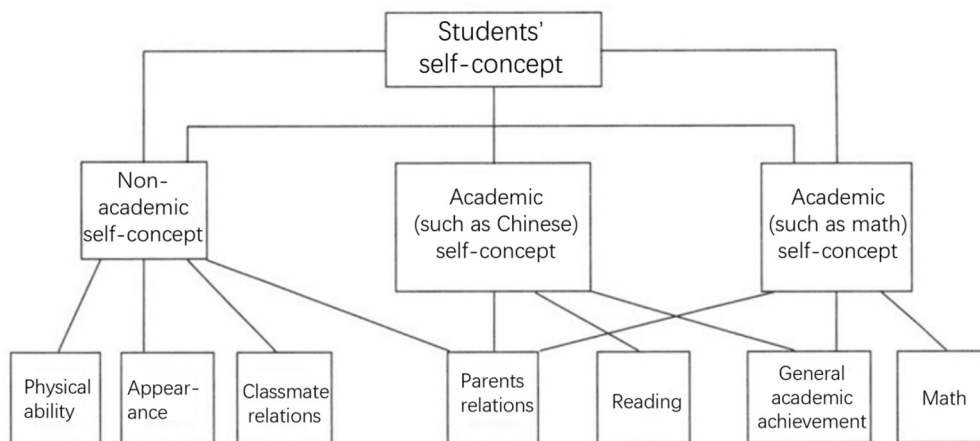


Figure 2. Identity status by Marcia

Finally, in terms of self-esteem, parents' feedback is closely related to children's self-cognition. William James (1890) proposed that only the sense of success in completing tasks and achieving goals associated with children's values will affect their self-esteem. That is to say, only by attributing success to their own behavior, rather than luck or the help of others, can children build self-esteem. This question is also reflected in the answer to the learning motivation scale through the questionnaire. The biggest challenge for helicopter parents is to help their children experience more sense of achievement in the field of learning. Competence makes individuals have self-confidence and self-worth, feel important and respected, and thus generate the internal motivation for behavior.

#### 4.2.3 Concept of Intrinsic Motivation

Psychological research often uses the term "motivation" to describe various internal states and processes in which individuals emit energy and impulse, guide behavior toward a certain purpose, and maintain this behavior for a period of time. In educational psychology, people are more concerned about learning motivation. In 1960s, Bruner (1966) emphasized the role of "internal motivation" in the process of education. Intrinsic motivation means that students' learning purpose is directed to the learning activity itself, which can give students emotional satisfaction and produce a sense of success. Intrinsic motivation provides a natural force to promote learning and development. It can stimulate behavior without external rewards and pressures. With the growth of age, children's intrinsic motivation will change. For example, even without external rewards and pressure, interest can stimulate a child's desire to read a book, and competence can make a child accept challenges.

#### 4.2.4 The Impact of Helicopter Parenting on Children'S Intrinsic Motivation

Intrinsic motivation, or more importantly for children, specifically, learning motivation has four functions initiating, orienting, maintaining, and regulating children's behavior, which can significantly strengthen learning (Gage & Berliner, 1984). In the questionnaire about the learning motivation scale we designed, we also reflected the level of children's intrinsic learning motivation under helicopter education from four aspects: success motivation, test anxiety, self-responsibility, and requirement level. Furthermore, it is found that the overall level of

intrinsic motivation of relevant children is low, and there is a significant tendency to attribute self-responsibility to others. Improving self-drive has become increasingly important since children enter school, and has become the main component of achievement motivation. Even though it does not directly point to the learning task itself, but regards achievement as the root of winning status and self-esteem. The excessive attention of helicopter parents is likely to weaken the children's intrinsic motivation and lead to children's psychological confusion.

## 5. Conclusions and Recommendations

Helicopter parents are often overly concerned about the details of their children's lives and lack respect for their autonomy, which can directly lead to a lack of self-confidence and independent thinking, and can easily lead to psychological problems such as anxiety and depression. By fostering children's ability to think and act on their own, their self-confidence and resistance to frustration can be enhanced. In addition, parents should set up clear boundaries, define their responsibilities and roles, and refrain from interfering too much in their children's lives, giving them enough space to develop their own interests and personalities.

Chinese parents generally believe that education is the key to their children's future and therefore invest more in their children's education. At the same time, the emphasis on filial piety and family responsibilities in traditional Chinese culture also influences parents' attitudes and practices towards their children's education. The phenomenon of helicopter parents in China is not only a problem of family education methods, but also a combination of educational concepts, social culture, educational resources and other factors. Instead, we should promote the balanced distribution of educational resources through policies and measures, reduce the inequality of educational opportunities, and fundamentally solve the problem of helicopter parenting.

To sum up, Chinese society is highly competitive, and an excellent educational background often leads to better employment and social status, which prompts parents to attach greater importance to their children's education and even to interfere excessively. Policies and measures should be adopted to promote a balanced distribution of educational resources and reduce inequality in educational opportunities, so as to fundamentally address the problem of helicopter education. Not just in society, but in family upbringing, parents should care for and protect their children while at the same time paying attention to letting go of their children in moderation, giving them enough space to grow up, so that they can grow up healthily and happily.

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The data that support the findings of this study are available on request.

## Competing Interests Statement

The authors declare that there are no competing or potential conflicts of interest.

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