

Hovering Over Achievement: The Impact of Perception of Helicopter Parenting on Academic Achievement in Young Adults

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ABSTRACT

Aim: Helicopter Parenting can be understood as a type of parenting where parents are overly involved in the life of their child, from taking decisions of which sports to play to which company their child should apply. **Objective:** The aim of the present investigation was to study Perception of Helicopter Parenting and Academic Achievement of College Students. The secondary aim was to study the gender differences in the perception of Helicopter Parenting. The tertiary aim was to study the relationship between Helicopter Parenting and the educational level of parents. **Methods and Material:** The sample comprised of 300 students (in the age range of 18-21 years). To measure the perception of Helicopter Parenting, Helicopter Parenting Scale (LeMoyné et al., 2011) was used and to assess the Academic Achievement, results of last 2 semesters were taken. Data was analysed using correlation and regression analysis. Descriptive statistics consisting of mean, standard deviation and t test was also used. **Results:** Negative relationship was observed between perception of Helicopter Parenting (Both Mother and Father) and Academic Achievement ($p < .01$). No gender differences were found. As the Educational level of the parents increases, the hovering of the parents also increases.

Keywords: *Helicopter Parenting, Academic Achievement, Overinvolvement, Educational Level*

Technological advancements have made it convenient and accessible for parents to communicate with their college going young adults at any time (even when they are away from home, attending classes, or when they are with their friends) (Lipika, 2005). In the survey conducted by the College Parents of America (2006), results revealed that 74% of parents contacted their college going adult in a week at least 2-3 times, and on the other hand some parents interacted with their child on a daily basis, while they are away from home. Similarly, researchers have found that mobile phone was used by 90% of parents to communicate with their children, 26% of parents used landline phones and 7% of the parents chose mail and messages to communicate with them (Shoup et al., 2009).

Such support and involvement provided by the parents in their children's lives are majorly regarded as positive by the parents. However, in recent times many children perceive this as

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Hovering Over Achievement: The Impact of Perception of Helicopter Parenting on Academic Achievement in Young Adults

over-involvement since they feel they can manage certain aspects of their life on their own and perceive this over-involvement of their parents as intrusive. Thus, the constant hovering by the parents instead of being supportive of the child becomes counterproductive as it could hamper the learning process and the overall development of the child (Colavecchio-Van Sickler, 2006; Lipka, 2005; Taylor, 2007). Similarly, Karl et al. (2019) attempted to investigate the impact of Helicopter Parenting on their children and the results posit that these children perceive their parents as abusive parents due to their continuous monitoring and control.

The term ‘Helicopter Parenting’ was initially used as a metaphor by Ginott (1969) in his book *‘Between parents and teenager’*, by a teenage who is stating how his mother is always above his head hovering like a helicopter. After this, Cline and Fay (1990) in their book series of *‘Parenting with love and logic’* coined the term ‘Helicopter Parenting’ for the parents who try to micromanage all the activities of their child even after they are grown up. Later the same vocabulary was used for the over-involved parents as the *‘Buzzword’s* in the article of Newsweek, which stated that these parents were overly involved in the lives of their young adults. In the updated book series Cline and Fay stated that that level of hovering has now moved to an extent where they can be termed as ‘jet-powered, turbo attack mode of helicopter parents’. They further revealed that “These parents are obsessed with the desire to create a perfect world for the kids one in which they never have to face struggle, inconvenience, discomfort or disappointment.”

The over-involvement of the parents can be seen in different ways, such as, physical supervision in which these parents would not let their toddler run in the park freely. During exam time, it is these parents who are more stressed and get anxiety symptoms more than the child. These parents are continuously stressed and take tension as they are always worried about the safety of their child and due to this, they try to control their lives. They do not encourage any sort of secrets of their child; they keep a tap on their child’s academic performance, and their friends’ names, even they go to the extent of having the passwords of all the devices their child uses.

Hirsch and Goldberger (2010) stated that “Over-involved parenting is a type of parenting where these parents never let their child make any mistake or get stuck in any stressful situation.” This style of parenting includes behaviours in which parents are nurturing their child continuously; providing assistance for everything and very little space or independence to the child that may delay the skills of problem-solving and making decisions. Parents who are overly involved in the life of their child, takes all the decisions of present and future for them without teaching or making them understand the skills required for being independent. In this type of parenting, everything is laid out in such a manner that a child never gets any chance to dwell deeper and understand his/her emotions and how to manage them.

Signs of a Helicopter Parent (Eveley & Ganim, 2011):

- Try to micromanage all the activities of their child which they are capable of doing themselves, without any assistance.
- Regular and continuous visits to the school/university authorities to keep a check on whether their child is getting maximum attention or not.
- Blaming other children, teachers, parents, and other authorities for their child’s unruly actions against them.
- Want a quick and immediate solution for all the issues their child faces.

Hovering Over Achievement: The Impact of Perception of Helicopter Parenting on Academic Achievement in Young Adults

- Motivating other parents to join their group (Over-involvement) for providing support and monitoring to their child.

Types of Helicopter Parenting

Several researchers have proposed different types of Helicopter Parenting depending on the level of control. For instance, **Shellenbarger (2007)** suggested that there are five types of Helicopter Parenting which are as follows

- **Blackhawk parenting style:** These parents cross all the boundaries of ethics and rules and regulations while supporting their child to get the desired outcome.
- **Toxic parenting style:** These parents are overly involved in the lives of their child and try to intervene for all the activities to the extent that now the child is not capable enough to work independently.
- **Consumer advocate parenting style:** This set of parents invest a huge amount for the education of their child and assumes their role as a co-buyer of the educational institutions. These parents write emails to the University asking for a special grant for their child in terms of scholarships, student fees, and so on.
- **Safety Expert Parents:** These parents are overly involved with the thought of the safety of their child to the extent that now the student feels stressed and anxious. These parents continuously ask the college administration regarding the evacuation plans, security checks and safety of the child.
- **Traffic and Rescue Helicopters:** These parents are compassionate towards their child and are known as a Rescue Helicopter as they come in the picture when the child needs them, especially during emergencies.

Numerous typologies of helicopter parenting have been discovered by various research, highlighting the different techniques that parents can apply. Randall (2007), for instance, cited five different types of helicopter parenting: the Helopater, the Consumer Advocate Parents, the Entitlement Advocates, and the Vicarious College Student. Randall's classification corresponds with the five forms of helicopter parenting put forth by Somers and Settle (2010). The Vicarious College Student, Consumer Advocate Parents, Fairness or Equity Advocates, Toxic Parents, and Safety Patrol Parents are a few examples of these.

Positive impact of Helicopter Parenting

Helicopter Parenting is often depicted by parents being over-involved in their children's lives and has garnered mixed reviews. While it is often linked with potential disadvantages like stifling independence, there are also some positive impacts:

- **The feeling of being secured**

The children of Helicopter Parents feel that they are under complete supervision and this sense of being under vigilant care can lead to a strong feeling of safety and reassurance, as the children perceive their environment as being carefully controlled and managed by their parents.

- **The child feels acknowledged and seen**

Most of parents are getting involved in child-centric parenting wherein importance is given to the child's needs and demands first. In this situation, the child gets a feeling of being acknowledged and seen by the parents.

Hovering Over Achievement: The Impact of Perception of Helicopter Parenting on Academic Achievement in Young Adults

- **Open to opportunities**

These children are exposed to a variety of options in terms of hobby classes or different activities, as parents want them to participate in every field. The goal is often to ensure that their children have the chance to discover their passions and talents, allowing them to develop a well-rounded skill set. This approach reflects a belief that participation in multiple areas will better prepare children for future success.

- **The rate of success is generally high**

The chances are high that your child will excel in their life if you are a Helicopter Parenting. Helicopter Parents are highly engaging parents, who want to over-involve in the life of their child and make it a perfect one. Therefore, the chances are usually high that these children will have more success rates in their lives.

- **Variety of career options**

As these kids are exposed to a variety of options in their life, they also have ample options for the choice of career they want to make. As a result, they are better equipped to make informed decisions about their future, selecting a career path that aligns with their passions and strengths.

- **Avoidance from empty nest syndrome**

Parents with Helicopter parenting style believe that because they have invested so much time and effort in the life of their child, their child will also do the same once these parents grow old as a return and would also carry the same set of value systems with them from one generation to another.

Negative impact of Helicopter Parenting

Helicopter parenting, while well-intentioned can have several negative impacts on children:

- Unable to manage daily hassles of their life on their own as parents are always protecting and guarding these children, this further leads to the mental and emotional dependency of these children on their parents.
- These children are unable to understand the effects of their decisions on their life. As most of the decisions are taken by parents, these children are not able to understand the consequences of a wrong decision.
- Lacks responsibility- Since the parents are always present as a guard for these children, they are unable to develop a sense of responsibility in their life and are always dependent on others.
- Moving away- The over-involvement of these parents at times move to an extent that these children start perceiving their parents as intruders, who continuously wants to monitor or control the life of the child. This further leads to these children.
- Lack of being assertive- The children with Helicopter parents lack the skill of being assertive in their life as they are never given a chance to speak about their likes or what they want.
- These children can be rebellious in nature as they get everything right in front of them even before they ask for it.

In Asia, over-involved or hovering parents are very common and day-to-day practice by parents. It is seen that it starts quiet early, from picking and dropping their child to school, to taking leave from their office on the exam day of their child and even waiting at school gate

Hovering Over Achievement: The Impact of Perception of Helicopter Parenting on Academic Achievement in Young Adults

till the exam gets over. This practice generally continues even after the child transitioned from childhood to adolescence and later adulthood.

Researchers for years have been trying to understand the impact of parenting on the child. Some researches revealed positive effects such as, helicopter parenting leads to increase in the life satisfaction of the college going young adults (**Fingerman et al., 2012**), further the hovering of parents' leads to increase in the pro-social behaviour of the child as stated by **Day and Padilla-Walker (2009)**. While others posit that Helicopter parenting leads to negative effects such as, helicopter parenting leads to increase in the stress level of the child (**Sideridis & Kafetsios, 2008**).

Similarly, the review of literature regarding the relationship between Helicopter Parenting and Academic Achievement of the children have yielded contradictory findings, wherein some findings reflect that Helicopter Parenting results in the improvement of Academics and on the other hand, some findings states that it deteriorate the Academic scores.

Schiffrin and Liss (2017) examined the effects of over-involvement of parents on the academics of the college going students in a sample of one hundred and ninety one students. The results revealed that those students who reported high level of intrusion by parents scored low in their academics. Similarly, **Ginsburg and Bronstein (1993)** also reported a negative relationship between over-involvement of parents and Academic Achievement of their child.

Additionally, **Shoup et al. (2009)** investigated the impact of Helicopter parenting on the academics of the students with a sample of four thousand five hundred and thirty two college going students. Results posit that those students who reported the perception of helicopter parenting were low on academics.

On the other hand, **Ratelle et al. (2005)** attempted to investigate the impact of Helicopter parenting on the academics of the young adults in a sample of two hundred and sixty two. The results of the study found that students who reported their parents to be highly involved were performing good in school in terms of their Academic scores and adjustment in the school. Similarly, **Paulson (1994)** revealed that the Helicopter parenting leads to improvement in the academic scores of the adolescents.

This is in consonant with research of **United States Department of Education (2005)**, wherein they stated that students with the perception of Helicopter parenting reported better academic results as their parents continuously monitors them and there is a constant supervision being provided to these students.

There is a difference seen Over-involvement of Parents in terms of gender of the child and the educational level of parents (Mother and Father). Where, **Hasumi et al. (2012)** revealed that female participants reported their parents as Helicopter Parenting in comparison to male participants. Similarly, **Lee et al. (2007)** posit that as compared to males it was more of females who perceived their parents as over-involved. **Wolf et al. (2009)**, examined the gender differences in the perception of Helicopter Parenting. The results of the study revealed that female participants reported high on perception of Helicopter Parenting. Whereas, **Domenech Rodriguez et al. (2009)** stated that male participants perceived their parents as Helicopter Parents in comparison to female participants. Similarly, **Okroy (2016)**

Hovering Over Achievement: The Impact of Perception of Helicopter Parenting on Academic Achievement in Young Adults

attempted to examine the role of gender in the perception of Helicopter Parenting and the results revealed that male participants reported high on perception of Helicopter Parenting as compared to female participants.

Some researches revealed that there was a positive relationship between Helicopter Parenting and the Educational level of parents, whereas, others researches revealed that there was no relationship between the two. For instance, **Elstad and Stefansen (2014)** revealed that there was positive relationship between the Helicopter Parenting and the Educational level of parents. This is in consonant with **Padavick (2009)**, where results revealed that there was a positive relationship between the Over-involvement of the parents and the Educational level of parents. On the other hand, **Dwairy and Achoui (2009)** conducted a study and the results revealed that there was no relationship between Helicopter Parenting and the Educational level of the parents.

Helicopter Parenting can lead to positive and negative effects on the child. For instance, hovering of parents can increase the success rate of the child in some cases, these children have sense of security and they always feel acknowledged by their parents. On the other hand, negative effects of hovering of parents are also there, for instance, these are not able to take decisions on their own, are always dependent on others, they are not assertive. **Aunola et al. (2013); Perez (2017)** conducted a study and results posits that hovering of parents increases the child's stress level in daily life. Therefore, there is a need to study the relationship between the Perception of Over-involvement of parents and the Academic Achievement of these children.

METHODOLOGY

Aim & Objective

The aim of the present investigation was to study Perception of Helicopter Parenting and Academic Achievement of College Students. The secondary aim was to study the gender differences in the perception of Helicopter Parenting. The tertiary aim was to study the relationship between Helicopter Parenting and the educational level of parents.

Hypotheses

Based on the review of literature, following hypothesis was proposed:

- **H1.** Perception of helicopter parenting was expected to be negatively related with Academic Achievement among college students.
- **H2.** Female students were expected to score higher on perception of Helicopter Parenting in comparison to male students.
- **H3.** Perception of Helicopter Parenting was expected to be positively related with the Educational Qualification of parents.

Procedure

Sample:

The sample comprised of 300 students (150 males and 150 females) in the age range of 18-21 years. For this purpose, sample was selected from co-educational colleges of Delhi University, wherein 10 colleges were randomly selected out of 91 colleges affiliated to Delhi University. The sample was stratified further on the basis of parental educational level (i.e., Senior Secondary, Graduate and Postgraduate).

Hovering Over Achievement: The Impact of Perception of Helicopter Parenting on Academic Achievement in Young Adults

Tests and tools:

The following standardized tests and tools were used:

- Helicopter Parenting Scale (LeMoyne and Buchanan, 2011)

Academic Achievement was measured by taking the average result of last two semesters.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF TESTS

- **Helicopter Parenting Scale (LeMoyne and Buchanan, 2011)**

It is an 8-item self-report measure that assesses the perception of a college going student regarding the hovering their parents are doing with them. To each item, there is a graded score from 1 (totally disagree) to 6 (totally agree). The scale can be scored by adding each respondent's item scores and dividing it by 8 (total number of items in the scale). The higher score represents a higher level of perception of Helicopter Parenting by the respondent. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for reliability was calculated as 0.71 (LeMoyne and Buchanan, 2011).

Statistical Analysis:

Keeping in view the objectives and the hypothesis of the study, correlation and linear regression analysis was used. Descriptive statistics consisting of mean, standard deviation and t test was also used.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Inter correlation matrix for perception of Helicopter Parenting (Mother and Father) and Academic Achievement of Total number of Students.

S.No	Variables	1	2	3
1	Perception of Helicopter Parenting (Mother)	1	.737**	-.128**
2	Perception of Helicopter Parenting (Father)		1	-.188**
3	Academic Achievement			1

*. Correlation significant at 0.05 level.

**.. Correlation significant at 0.01 level.

Table 2: Showing Mean, S.D and t-ratios of perception of Helicopter parenting (Mother and Father) and Academic Achievement. (N=300)

Variables	Gender				t-ratios
	Male (n=150)		Female (n=150)		
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Perception of Helicopter parenting (Mother)	3.30	.64	3.25	.70	.697
Perception of Helicopter parenting (Father)	3.25	.65	3.26	.68	.206
Academic Achievement	6.83	1.08	6.98	1.02	1.263

Table 3.1: Linear Regression Model for perception of Helicopter Parenting (Mother) and Academic Achievement of Total number of Students.

Model Summary			
R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
.128	.016	.013	1.048

Hovering Over Achievement: The Impact of Perception of Helicopter Parenting on Academic Achievement in Young Adults

ANOVA					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-value	p-value
Regression	5.466	1	5.466	4.972	.027*
Residual	327.578	298	1.099		
Total	333.043	299			

Coefficients					
	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t-value	p-value
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Perception of Helicopter parenting (Mother)	-.202	.091	-.128	-2.230	.027*
(Constant)	7.568	.303		25.011	.0001**

*. Correlation significant at 0.05 level.

**. Correlation significant at 0.01 level.

Table 3.2: Linear Regression Model for perception of Helicopter Parenting (Father) and Academic Achievement of Total number of Students.

Model Summary			
R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
.188	.035	.032	1.038

ANOVA					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-value	p-value
Regression	11.814	1	11.814	10.960	.001**
Residual	321.229	298	1.078		
Total	333.043	299			

Coefficients					
	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t-value	p-value
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Perception of Helicopter Parenting (Father)	-.300	.091	-.188	-3.311	.001**
(Constant)	7.883	.301		26.198	.0001**

*. Correlation significant at 0.05 level.

**. Correlation significant at 0.01 level.

Hovering Over Achievement: The Impact of Perception of Helicopter Parenting on Academic Achievement in Young Adults

Table 4.1 Analysis of Variance of Perception of Helicopter Parenting (Mother)

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-value	p-value
Gender	.218	1	.218	.487	.486
Educational_Mother	.744	2	.372	.831	.437
Gender * Educational_Mother	1.513	2	.756	1.688	.187
Error	131.730	294	.448		
Total	134.205	299			

*. Correlation significant at 0.05 level.

**. Correlation significant at 0.01 level.

Table 4.2 Analysis of Variance of Academic Achievement of College Students with Perception of Mother's Helicopter Parenting

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-value	p-value
Gender	1.774	1	1.774	1.616	.205
Educational_Mother	1.136	2	.568	.518	.597
Gender * Educational_Mother	7.429	2	3.715	3.384	.035*
Error	322.704	294	1.098		
Total	333.043	299			

*. Correlation significant at 0.05 level.

**. Correlation significant at 0.01 level.

Table 4.3 Analysis of Variance of Perception of Helicopter Parenting (Father)

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-value	p-value
Gender	.019	1	.019	.042	.838
Education_Father	.060	2	.030	.067	.935
Gender * Education_Father	.167	2	.084	.187	.829
Error	131.264	294	.446		
Total	131.510	299			

*. Correlation significant at 0.05 level.

**. Correlation significant at 0.01 level.

Hovering Over Achievement: The Impact of Perception of Helicopter Parenting on Academic Achievement in Young Adults

Table 4.4 Analysis of Variance of Academic Achievement of College Students with Perception of Father's Helicopter Parenting

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-value	p-value
Gender	1.774	1	1.774	1.608	.206
Education_Father	.320	2	.160	.145	.865
Gender * Education_Father	6.657	2	3.328	3.018	.050*
Error	324.292	294	1.103		
Total	333.043	299			

*. Correlation significant at 0.05 level.

**. Correlation significant at 0.01 level.

The current investigation attempted to evaluate the perception of Helicopter Parenting (Mother and Father) in relation to Academic Achievement of the college students. The secondary aim was to investigate the gender difference in the Perception of Helicopter Parenting. The tertiary aim was to investigate the Perception of Helicopter Parenting among college students in relation to the Educational Qualification of their parents.

Table 1 shows the intercorrelational matrices for the total sample and results revealed that the perception of Helicopter Parenting by their mother was negatively and significantly related to their Academic Achievement ($p < .01$). Similarly, their perception of Helicopter Parenting by father was negatively and significantly related with their Academic Achievement ($p < .01$).

Table 3.1 shows the linear regression for the total sample for the Perception of Helicopter Parenting (Mother) and Academic Achievement. The β value for this was obtained as ($\beta = -.128$) which is significant at $p < .05$ level. **Table 3.2** shows the linear regression for the total sample for the Perception of Helicopter Parenting (Father) and Academic Achievement. The β value for this was obtained as ($\beta = -.188$) which is significant at $p < .00$ level. These results indicate that Helicopter Parenting by the parents has a negative impact on the Academic performance of their children.

The findings of the present investigation are also consonant with some of the previous findings, wherein, studies of **Cutrona et al. (1994)** revealed that children with Helicopter Parents reported low grades in Academics as compared to other students. **Jung et. al. (2019)** also examined the linkage between the Helicopter Parenting of Mother and Father with the academic results of the students and their results revealed that Father's hovering resulted in poor performance of the student in academics. The findings of **Shaw (2017)** were also similar to the above studies, wherein the results revealed a negative relationship between over-involvement of parents and Academic Performance of the child.

Table 2 shows the means, standard deviations and t-ratios of each variable and results revealed that there are no significant gender differences on Perception of Helicopter Parenting (Mother), Perception of Helicopter Parenting (Father) and Academic Achievement among the college students. Some of the previous researches also posit that there are no

Hovering Over Achievement: The Impact of Perception of Helicopter Parenting on Academic Achievement in Young Adults

gender differences in the perception of Helicopter Parenting by the students, wherein, **Gagnon and Garst (2019)** examined one hundred and sixty nine adolescents (11-16 years) and the results revealed that there was no relationship between Helicopter Parenting and the gender of the adolescents. Similarly, **Sirohi (2021)** conducted a study on Indian Sample and the results revealed that there was no relationship between the over-involvement of parents and the gender of the young adults.

Analysis of Variance for the variable **Perception of Helicopter Parenting of Mother (Table 4.1)** revealed no significant relationship was found between F-ratios for Gender and Educational Qualification of Mother. Moreover, the interaction effect of Gender and Educational Qualification of Mother were also not significant.

Analysis of Variance for the variable **Academic Achievement of College Students with the Perception of Mother's Helicopter Parenting (Table 4.2)** posits the significant interaction effect of Gender and Educational Qualification of Mother ($F=3.384, p<0.05$). However, the F-ratios for Gender and Educational Qualification of Mother were not significant.

Analysis of Variance for the variable **Perception of Helicopter Parenting of Father (Table 4.3)** posits no significant relationship between F-ratios for Gender and Educational Qualification of Father. Moreover, the interaction effect of Gender and Educational Qualification of Father were also not significant.

Analysis of Variance for the variable **Academic Achievement of College Students with the Perception of Father's Helicopter Parenting (Table 4.4)** posits the significant interaction effect of Gender and Educational Qualification of Father ($F=3.018, p<0.05$). However, the F-ratios for Gender and Educational Qualification of Father were not significant.

Some of the researchers also posit that there is a positive relationship between perception of Helicopter Parenting and the Educational level of the parents. For instance, **Domina and Roksa (2012)** revealed that as the educational level of the mothers increase, their level of involvement also increases in the life of their child. Additionally, **Bradley-Geist and Olson-Buchanan (2014)** examined the over-involvement of the parents and the results revealed that there was a positive relation between Helicopter Parenting and the Education level of the parents. Similarly, **Naite (2021)** conducted a study and the results posit the positive relationship between the perception of Helicopter Parenting and the Educational level of parents.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The present investigation supports the previous research by depicting a significant negative relationship between Perception of Helicopter Parenting and Academic Achievement of the college going students. Helicopter parenting refers to a style of parenting in which parents excessively hover over their children, constantly monitoring their activities and intervening in every aspect of their lives. This approach is marked by an overprotective attitude that seeks to shield children from any potential risks or challenges. While the intentions behind helicopter parenting may be well-meaning, it can have detrimental effects on children's development and their ability to become independent individuals. Hovering of parents not only impacts the Academic performance of the student but it also impacts the overall

Hovering Over Achievement: The Impact of Perception of Helicopter Parenting on Academic Achievement in Young Adults

personality and development process. In many cases the children become so dependent on their parents that they are not able to make even minor decisions of their life on their own; they are always dependent on others even in their professional lives and they are not at all assertive. Parents need to understand that they need to have a balance of demandingness and responsiveness while dealing with their children so that they are not over-involved or under-involved in their child's life.

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Hovering Over Achievement: The Impact of Perception of Helicopter Parenting on Academic Achievement in Young Adults

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