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HELICOPTER PARENTING, EMOTIONAL PROBLEMS, AND PEER RELATIONSHIPS IN SCHOOL-GOING ADOLESCENTS: A MEDIATIONAL ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

Adolescence is a transitional period during which adolescents work to build an integrated concept of self. While exploring the root cause of emotional problems in adolescents, parenting practices emerge as one of the major causes. Helicopter parenting (HP) is a parenting practice characterized by excessive parental involvement and control over a child's life, hindering their autonomy and competence. Research revealed that this negatively affects children's identity development, social skills, and peer relationships, leading to emotional problems. This study aims to understand the mediating effect of Peer relationships on the relationship between HP and Emotional Problems in school-going adolescents. Furthermore, the study investigates the gender differences in these variables. This study used a simple random sampling method to select 405 school-going adolescents aged 13 to 18 from schools in the Thoothukudi and the Ramanathapuram districts of Tamil Nadu. The data was collected in classroom settings, using the standardised scales, the Helicopter Parenting Instrument (Odenweller et al., 2014), the Peer Relationship Scale (Aydoğdu, 2021), and the DASS-21. The results indicated that HP had a significant positive correlation with emotional problems and peer relationship, while the peer relationship had a significant negative correlation with emotional problems. The mediational analysis revealed a partial mediational effect of Peer relationship on the relationship between Helicopter parenting and the emotional problems, anxiety and depression. There was a significant gender difference present where females experienced more Helicopter Parenting and emotional problems, while males showed strong peer relationship. These findings imply the need for healthy parenting practices and strong peer relationship to foster the overall emotional well-being of school-going adolescents.

KEYWORDS: Helicopter Parenting, Peer Relationship, Emotional Problems, Adolescents, Mediational Analysis.

1. INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is one of the most sensitive periods in a person's life, where the concept of self develops. Several factors influence this process, but parenting practice is one of the most important ones. During this stage, adolescents assert autonomy, engage in independent decision-making, and develop social and independent living skills. Although some parental involvement is essential for healthy development, certain parenting practices, such as helicopter parenting, cross the line. Helicopter parenting (HP) is a parenting practice characterized by excessive parental involvement and control over a child's life, hindering their autonomy and competence. Among the various parenting styles, such as authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and uninvolved, helicopter parenting appears to be a mix of authoritarian and permissive parenting styles, expecting an outcome associated with authoritative parenting from their children (Arlinghaus et al., 2023; Lang, 2020). At first glance, the child feels so deeply loved and protected by their parents that they do not want their children to do things alone. However, as they develop, this starts to hinder their overall development. It restricts them from growing their social skills, coping and regulatory skills, and major aspects of their self-concept, which in turn affect their personality (Kouros et al., 2017; Sowislo & Orth, 2013).

Helicopter parenting is prevalent across various SES groups, but it is increasingly seen among middle to upper-middle-class families (Sood & Buchanan, 2024). Gender differences in helicopter parenting are observed in parents, such as maternal and paternal helicopter parenting, of which maternal parenting is more common and has more detrimental effects on children (Rousseau & Scharf, 2015; Schiffrin et al., 2019; Set, 2020). In addition, maternal helicopter parenting affects girl children more negatively, hindering their autonomy and competence, and is associated with lower well-being (Schiffrin et al., 2019). Research has shown that HP is negatively related to poor academic achievement, lower self-esteem, life satisfaction, and poor peer relationships. It is also linked to increased interpersonal dependency and various emotional problems, such as anxiety and depression (Odenweller et al., 2014; Schiffrin et al., 2019; Van Ingen et al., 2015). This suggests the far-reaching consequences and negative impacts of helicopter parenting on adolescents' emotional well-being as it undermines their autonomy, competence, and sense of relatedness.

Adolescence is also a period of emotional development, during which emotional regulation skills develop dramatically. Initially, adolescents rely on their parents to shape their basic emotional regulation processes through modeling and learning. Afterward, their peers also begin to play an influential role (Silvers, 2022). Despite these developmental advancements, some adolescents may face difficulties in emotional regulation, leading to various emotional problems. Emotional problems refer to difficulties managing feelings or emotions, which can disrupt the overall mental health of an individual. Emotional problems are common in adolescents. The prevalence of anxiety disorders (panic or excessive worry), is 4.4% in 10- 14-year-olds and 5.5% in 15- 19-year-olds old followed by depression, which affects 1.4% in 10- 14-year-olds and 3.5 in 15- 19-year-olds (World Health Organization, 2024). The causes of emotional problems in adolescents can be due to various reasons such as the impact of developmental changes, and various other environmental factors such as stress, family dynamics, academic pressure, peer interactions, the influence of media, etc (Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994; Deng et al., 2022; Dialektika et al., 2024; Park & Choi, 2017; Rathi et al., 2022).

Due to the strong influence of peers during adolescence, peer relationships appear to be crucial in shaping emotional and social development (Chen, 2024). During this period of identity exploration, adolescents' peer interactions increase significantly, and their peers and classmates start to powerfully influence their lives. Peer relationships play a crucial role in adolescent development, offering a platform to acquire various social skills, emotional regulation, and a sense of belongingness outside their family contexts (Nesi et al., 2018; Rohrbeck, 2003). The influences can be either positive or negative. Research has shown that peer relationships and peer acceptance can increase psychological well-being and self-esteem among adolescents, thereby reducing emotional problems such as anxiety and depression (Birkeland et al., 2014; Liu, 2023; Sarkova et al., 2014). On the other hand, peer relationships may influence adolescents to rebel against parental discipline and turn into deviant behaviors such as substance abuse (Brown B, 1990; Van Ryzin et al., 2012). The controlling and overprotective nature of helicopter parenting often hinders adolescents' ability to form healthy peer relationships and hinders their social situations with autonomy. This can be seen as poor peer communication, mistrust, and alienation from peers (Kouros et al., 2017). Additionally, problems from peer relationships, such as bullying, peer victimization, etc., can also lead to

various mental health issues in adolescents (Bagwell et al., 2005; Guzman Holst et al., 2023). Therefore, it is crucial to find the mediating role of peer relationships in the relationship between helicopter parenting and emotional problems in adolescents.

Several studies exploring the effects of parental overcontrol and adolescent mental health were prominent, but the specific construct named helicopter parenting has been mostly explored over the past decade. The studies on parental overcontrol and overprotection's effects on adolescent mental health have found to have detrimental effects. Klein and Pierce (2009), Darlow et. al. (2017), and Padilla-Walker and Nelson (2012) explored the impacts of parental overprotection on adolescents and college students. As expected, these lead to increased anxiety, depressive symptoms, poor academic performance and school engagement, poor interpersonal relationships, and autonomy (Darlow et al., 2017; Klein & Pierce, 2009; Padilla-Walker & Nelson, 2012). Studies by Costa et al. (2015), Seki et al. (2023), and Nguyen et al. (2024) added to the existing literature showing the strong association between helicopter parenting and emotional problems via other factors as mediators, such as psychological needs, resilience, and emotional dysregulation (Costa et al., 2015; Nguyen et al., 2024; Seki et al., 2023). Gao et al. (2023) show the mediating role of autonomy in the bidirectional relationship between helicopter parenting and emotional problems of adolescents (Gao et al., 2023). The meta-analytic study conducted by Vigdal and Brønnick (2022) also supports the association between helicopter parenting and emotional problems (Vigdal & Brønnick, 2022). Odenweller et. al. (2014) linked Helicopter parenting to character traits such as neurotic traits, dependency, and ineffective coping, which might lead to long-term emotional dysregulation and interpersonal relationship issues (Odenweller et al., 2014). Along with these emotional problems, helicopter parenting has also been linked to poor academic outcomes and career difficulties. Luebbe et al. (2008) found that helicopter parenting, along with problems in emotional functioning and decision making, was also negatively associated with academic success (Luebbe et al., 2018). LeBlanc and Lyons (2022) found a negative association between helicopter parenting and career adaptability and career self-doubt in university students (LeBlanc & Lyons, 2022). Van Ingen et al. (2015) linked helicopter parenting with low self-efficacy, alienation from peers, and lack of trust (Van Ingen et al., 2015). In addition, Moilanen and Lynn Manuel (2019) found that helicopter parenting is associated with lower mastery and self-regulation, which may further lead to poor social competence and emotional problems such as depression in adolescents (Moilanen & Lynn Manuel, 2019).

A major gender difference was seen in internalizing and externalizing problems. Davis and Lindsey (2004) showed that internalizing problems associated with interparental conflict were more commonly seen in girls than in boys (Davies & Lindsay, 2004). While Dias et al. (2022) found that boys showed more externalizing problems when they encountered increased academic problems. This study also points out the role of academics in the emotional and behavioral problems in adolescents (Dias et al., 2022). The studies have found many mediating factors acting between the parenting-emotional problems relationship. Cui et al. (2019) revealed helicopter parenting as a mediator between the relationship between indulgent parenting and emotional problems (Cui et al., 2019b). Set (2020) found impulsivity and inflated self-esteem in university students as mediators in the relationship between maternal helicopter parenting and psychological problems (Set, 2020).

Many researchers have also uncovered the increased parental control and corresponding increase in emotional problems among females. Mandara and Pikes (2008) found that maternal psychological control predicted increased depressive symptoms in African-American adolescent girls (Mandara & Pikes, 2008). Similarly, Kouros et al. (2017) also found that a higher level of helicopter parenting predicted lower emotional well-being for female college students than male college students (Kouros et al., 2017). Schiffrin et al. (2019) found that mothers engage in helicopter parenting more than fathers, and this severely affected daughters' well-being through reduced autonomy and competence (Schiffrin et al., 2019). Karunaharan, Ganaprakshanam, and Selvarajah (2021) found increased suicidal ideation in females experiencing high levels of helicopter parenting in Malaysian adolescents, uncovering the difference in mental health problems in different cultures (Karunaharan et al., 2021). Another major gender difference was seen in internalizing and externalizing problems.

Helicopter parenting also leads to interpersonal relationship issues in adolescents and young adults. Bagwell et al. (2005) found that positive peer relationship was associated with better self-esteem and decreased psychological symptoms. Cook et al. (2020) highlighted relationship problems along with other emotional and behavioral issues associated with helicopter parenting (Cook, 2020). Miller,

Rainbolt, and Tallents (2024) demonstrated insecure parental and peer attachment as a major result of helicopter parenting (Miller et al., 2024). The only study that contradicted the negative association between helicopter parenting and peer relationship was by Fitzpatrick et al. (2024). The study showed peer relationship as a protective factor associated with helicopter parenting and emotional problems relationship dyad (Fitzpatrick et al., 2024). This study complements the findings of Birkeland et al. (2014), revealing the protective role of peer interactions against emotional problems when parental relationships are less close (Birkeland et al., 2014). There is relatively little research on helicopter parenting in India, especially when it comes to how cultural factors affect parenting styles. Although the wider effects of helicopter parenting have been researched, little is known about how peer interactions mitigate its effects on emotional issues among teenagers enrolled in school. Furthermore, little research has been done on the gender-specific effects of peer interactions and helicopter parenting, which leaves gaps in our knowledge of how these elements vary for boys and girls. Overall, there hasn't been enough research done on how peer interactions and helicopter parenting affect teenagers' emotional challenges.

2. METHODS AND MATERIALS

2.1. Methods

The study intends to investigate the connection between peer interactions, emotional problems, and helicopter parenting among teenagers enrolled in school. Additionally, it aims to determine whether peer relationships mediate the relationship between helicopter parenting and emotional issues in teenagers. The study also aims to determine gender disparities in school-age teens' experiences of helicopter parenting, peer connections, and emotional problems.

2.2. Hypotheses

1. There is a significant positive relationship between Helicopter parenting and Emotional problems among school-going adolescents (Darlow et al., 2017; Klein & Pierce, 2009; Padilla-Walker & Nelson, 2012).
2. There is a significant relationship between Helicopter parenting and Peer relationships among school-going adolescents (Bagwell et al., 2005; Cook et al., 2020; Miller et al., 2024).
3. There is a significant relationship between Peer relationships and Emotional problems among school-going adolescents (Schwartz-Mette et al., 2020).
4. There is a mediating effect of peer relationship in the relationship between Helicopter parenting and Emotional problems among school-going adolescents (Birkeland et al., 2014; Fitzpatrick et al., 2024).
5. There is a significant gender difference in Helicopter parenting among school-going adolescents (Mandara & Pikes, 2008; Schiffrin et al., 2019).
6. There would be no significant gender difference in Peer relationships among school-going adolescents.
7. There is a significant gender difference in Emotional problems among school-going adolescents (Davies & Lindsay, 2004; Dias et al., 2022).

2.3. Participants

The data was collected from 405 students aged 13 to 18 years from different schools in Thoothukudy and Ramanathapuram districts of Tamil Nadu. The participants were chosen through stratified random sampling, ensuring an equal gender ratio. School-going adolescents within the specified age range, who provided informed consent, were included in the study. Students below the age of 13 and above 19 years, as well as those diagnosed with ADHD or specific learning disabilities, were excluded from the study.

2.4. Materials

2.4.1. Sociodemographic Details

The participant's details, such as age, date of birth, gender, class, locality of residence, previous year's academic performance, and history of ADHD and learning disability, were asked, along with their education qualification, working status, and family income.

2.4.2. Helicopter Parenting

The perceived helicopter parenting of the students was measured by the Helicopter Parenting Instrument by Odenweller, et.al., (2014). It is a self-report instrument comprising 15 items rated on a 7-point Likert scale (7 very strongly agree to 1 very strongly disagree). The scale is found to be reliable and valid. The scale has a Cronbach's alpha of 0.78 and a construct validity that had a strong positive association with authoritarian parenting style and conformity orientation, but not with conversational orientation (Odenweller et al., 2014).

2.4.3. Peer Relationship Scale

The adolescent's peer relationship was measured by the Peer Relationship Scale by Aydoğdu (2021). A self-report measure comprising 29 items on the dimensions of intimacy, popularity, trust, and insightfulness rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 strongly disagree to 5 strongly agree). The scale is found to be reliable and valid. The scale has excellent reliability with Cronbach's alpha of 0.93, a split-half reliability of 0.85, and a test-retest reliability of 0.82. Validity was checked through Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) with a Comparative Fit Index (CFI) of 0.97 and a Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) of 0.068. Also, the scale has a significant positive correlation with the Peer Support Scale (0.607) and Stirling Children's Well-being Scale (0.356), further supporting its validity (Aydoğdu, 2022).

2.4.4. Emotional Problems

The emotional problems, such as Stress, Anxiety, and Depression, were measured using DASS-21 (Depression Anxiety Stress Scale 21), a short version of DASS-42 developed by Lovibond et al. (1995) with 7 items for each dimension. It is a self-report measure comprising 21 items where each participant was asked to rate their experience over the past week on a 4-point severity/frequency scale. The scale is found to be reliable and valid with an internal consistency reliability of 0.80 in the adolescent population (Patrick et al., 2010).

2.5. Procedure

Participants were selected using stratified random sampling from schools in Thoothukudy and Ramanathapuram districts. Permission for data collection was obtained from the authorities of randomly selected schools. Students from 8th to 12th grade were included, and the number of students was selected based on the overall student strength of the school. In schools with lower strength, all available students from the respective classes were included, whereas in schools with higher strength, students were randomly selected from each grade, ensuring an equal gender ratio. In grades where the gender ratio was uneven due to school demographics, additional students from the other respective grades were included to balance the gender ratio. Informed consent was taken from the participants. Data collection was conducted in classroom settings. The participants were informed of the purpose of the study, ensuring confidentiality and anonymity. Then the participants were asked to complete the three scales along with sociodemographic details under the supervision of a member of the research team and a teacher.

2.6. Data Analysis

The data was analysed using SPSS (25th version). After eliminating the missing data and the outliers, the normality of the data was checked using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. The correlational analysis was done using Pearson's product-moment correlation, and the gender difference was assessed using the Independent samples t-test. The mediational analysis was done using Hayes's Process Macro Model No. 4.

3. RESULTS & DISCUSSION

This study aimed to explore the relationship between Helicopter parenting, Peer relationship, and emotional problems, the mediating effect of peer relationship in the relationship between Helicopter parenting and emotional problems in these variables among school-going adolescents. A total of 405 sample data were analysed using SPSS 25. The data were found to be normally distributed, and they were analysed using descriptive statistics, correlational analysis, t-test, and mediational analysis. The results obtained are discussed below.

Table 1: Gender differences in Helicopter parenting, Peer relationship, Depression, Anxiety, and Stress.

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	t value	p-value (Sig.2 tailed)
Helicopter Parenting	Male	237	50.69	10.51	5.07	< .001
	Female	168	55.91	9.77		
Peer Relationship	Male	237	78.50	15.78	6.32	< .001
	Female	168	68.87	14.11		
Depression	Male	237	8.83	3.7	3.04	.003
	Female	168	10.76	8.7		
Anxiety	Male	237	7.34	3.48	5.74	< .001
	Female	168	9.39	3.72		
Stress	Male	237	7.30	3.48	7.10	< .001
	Female	168	9.78	3.41		

Table 1 shows the number of males and females, Mean, Standard Deviation, and t values of Helicopter parenting, Peer relationship, Depression, Anxiety, and Stress based on gender. Females scored higher than males in Helicopter Parenting (M = 55.91, SD = 9.77 vs. M = 50.69, SD = 10.51), Depression (M = 10.76, SD = 8.72 vs M = 8.83, SD = 3.74), Anxiety (M = 9.39, SD = 3.62 vs. M = 7.34, SD = 3.48), and Stress (M = 9.78, SD = 3.41 vs. M = 7.30, SD = 3.48). Males scored higher in Peer Relationships (M = 78.50, SD = 15.78 vs. M = 68.87, SD = 14.11). There were gender differences found in Helicopter parenting, Peer

relationship, Depression, Anxiety, and Stress between males and females. A significant difference exists between males and females in Helicopter parenting (t = 5.07, p < .001), Peer relationship (t = 6.32, p < .001), Depression (t = 3.04, p < .001), Anxiety (t = 5.74, p < .001), and Stress (t = 7.10, p < .001). Females scored high on Helicopter parenting, Depression, Anxiety, and Stress, while males scored high on Peer relationship.

Table 2: Correlation among Peer Relationship, Depression, Anxiety, and Stress.

	Helicopter Parenting	*Peer Relationship*	*Depression*	*Anxiety*	*Stress*
Helicopter Parenting	1.00	0.259**	0.107*	0.261**	0.427**
Peer Relationship		1.00	-0.57	-0.110*	-0.101*
Depression			1.00	0.297**	0.282**
Anxiety				1.00	0.529**
Stress					1.00

Note: **p < 0.01 (2-tailed), *p < 0.05 (2 tailed)

Table 2 shows the 5×5 correlation matrix between the variables Helicopter parenting, Peer relationship, Depression, Anxiety, and Stress, including a total of 25 correlations. Out of 25, six correlations were found significant at p < .01 and three correlations at p < .05. Helicopter parenting was significantly positively correlated with Peer Relationship (r = .259, p < .01), Stress (r = .427, p < .01) and Depression (r = .107, p < .05). Peer relationship had a weak but significant negative correlation with Anxiety (r = -.110, p < .05) and Stress (r = -.101, p < .05). The variables Depression, Anxiety and Stress showed significant positive correlations (Depression and Anxiety, r = .297, p < .01, Depression and Stress, r = .282, p < .01, Anxiety and Stress, r = .529, p < .01).

Table 3: Mediational Analysis Of Peer Relationship (PR) In The Relationship Between Helicopter Parenting (HP) And Anxiety (HP → PR→ANXIETY).

Output		**b**	**R^2**	**t**	**CI**	
					LL	UL
1. Effect of IV on M (a)	HP→PR	.3891***	.0669	5.3753	.2468	.5314
2. Effect of IV on DV (C')	HP→ANXIETY IV on DV [with PR]	.1084***	.1017	6.3347	.0748	.1421
	PR→ ANXIETY M on DV (b)	-.0441***		-3.8777	-.0665	-.0218
3. Effect of IV on DV (C) Total effect (without mediator)	HP→ ANXIETY IV on DV [without PR]	.0913***	.0681	5.4258	.0582	.1243
4. Indirect effect (ab)	HP→PR→ ANXIETY	-.0172***		3.185	-.0287	-.0075

From the above Table 4, Model 1 shows that the predictor variable HP significantly predicts the mediator PR, b= .389, 95% CI [.246, .531], t=5.375, p < .001. The R2 value shows that HP explains 6.6% variance in PR and the fact that b is positive shows that HP increases PR, also increases. As, the results shown in model 2 (direct effect), the HP significantly predicts anxiety even in the presence of the mediator, i.e., PR with b= .108, 95% CI [.0748, .142], t= .6.334, p< .001; PR also significantly predicts Anxiety, b= -.044, 95% CI [-0.066, -0.021], t= -3.877, p< .001. R2 value shows that the model explains 10% variance in Anxiety. The positive b value for HP shows that as HP increases, Anxiety also increases, but the negative b value for PR indicates that as PR increases, Anxiety decreases. The Model 3 shows the total effect of HP on Anxiety, where HP significantly predicts Anxiety, b= .091, 95% CI [.058, .124], t= 5.425, p< .001, in the absence of PR. The R2 value shows that, HP explains 6.8% of variance in Anxiety and the positive b value indicates that the relationship between HP and Anxiety are in the same magnitude. Finally, the Model 4 shows that there is a significant indirect effect of HP on Anxiety through PR, b= - .017, 95% CI [-.028, -.007], t= 3.185. The fact that the CI doesn't contain zero indicates that, PR does mediate the relationship between HP and Anxiety. These results show the mediating role of PR in the relationship between HP and Anxiety. The results revealed a significant indirect effect of HP on Anxiety through PR. Furthermore, the direct effect of HP on Anxiety even in the presence of PR, b= .108, p< .001, which indicates that PR partially mediated the relationship between HP and Anxiety.

Table 4: Mediational analysis of Peer Relationships (PR) in the relationship between Helicopter parenting (HP) and Depression.

Output		b	R^2	t	CI	
					LL	UL
1. Effect of IV on M (a)	HP→PR	.3891***	.0669	5.3753	.2468	.5314
2. Effect of IV on DV (C′)	HP→DEPRESSION IV on DV [with PR]	.0788***	.0191	2.5456	.0179	.1396
	PR→ DEPRESSION M on DV (b)	-.0365		-1.7750	-.0770	.0039
3. Effect of IV on DV (C) Total effect (without mediator)	HP→ DEPRESSION IV on DV [without PR]	.0646*	.0114	2.1543	.0056	.1235
4. Indirect effect (ab)	HP→PR→DEPRESSION	-.0142***		2.0	-.0278	-.0001

From Table 4, model 1, as seen in Table 3, the predictor variable HP significantly predicts the mediator PR. In Model 2 (direct effect), the HP significantly predicts Depression even in the presence of the mediator PR with b= .0788, 95% CI [.0179, .1396], t= 2.5456, p< .001. However, PR doesn't significantly predict Depression b = -.0365, 95% CI [-0.0770, 0.0039], t = -1.775. The R2 value shows that HP explains 1.9% variance in Depression, and the positive b value indicates that if HP increases, Depression also increases.

The Model 3 shows the total effect of HP on Depression, where HP significantly predicts Depression in the absence of PR with b= .0,646 95% CI [.0056, .1235], t= 2.1543, p< .005. The R2 value shows that HP explains 1.1% variance in Depression, and the positive b value indicates that HP and Depression go in the same direction.

Finally, Model 4 shows that there is a significant indirect effect of HP on Depression through PR, b= -.0142, 95% CI [-.0278, -.0001], t= 2, p< .001. The CI doesn't contain zero, indicating that PR does mediate the relationship between HP and Depression.

These results show the mediating role of PR in the relationship between HP and Depression. The results revealed a significant indirect effect of HP on Depression through PR. However, the PR doesn't significantly predict Depression in Model 2, there is a weak mediation effect, indicating a partial mediation of PR in the relationship between HP and Depression.

Table 5: Mediational Analysis of Peer Relationships (PR) In The Relationship Between Helicopter Parenting (HP) And Stress.

Output		b	R^2	t	CI	
					LL	UL
1. Effect of IV on M (a)	HP→PR		.0009	-0.6089	-0.3168	.1669
2. Effect of IV on DV (C′)	HP→STRESS IV on DV [with PR]	.0243	.1202	1.5655	-.0062	.0548
	PR→STRESS M on DV (b)	-.0452**		-7.1914	-.0575	-.0328
3. Effect of IV on DV (C) Total effect (without mediator)	HP →STRESS IV on DV [without PR]	.0277	.0070	1.6817	-.0047	.0600
4.Indirect effect (ab)	HP→PR→STRESS	.0034		5.607	-.0085	.0161

In Table 5, Model 1 shows that the predictor variable HP, does not significantly predict the mediator Peer relationship. In Model 2 (direct effect), the effect of HP on Stress was examined in the presence of the mediator PR, and HP did not significantly predict stress (b = .0243, 95% CI: [-0.0062, 0.0548], t = 1.5655, p>.05). But PR significantly predicted Stress (b = -.0452, 95% CI [-.0575, -.0328], t

= -7.1914, p< .001). The R2 value shows that the HP explained 12.02% variance in stress, and the negative b value indicates that as PR increases, stress decreases. Model 3, which shows the total effect of HP on Stress in the absence of the mediator PR and it shows that HP did not significantly predict Stress (b = .0277, 95% CI [-.0047, .0600], t = 1.6817, p> .005). Finally, Model 4 shows the indirect effect of HP on Stress through PR, and it is also not found to be significant (b = .0034, 95% CI [-.0085, .0161], t = 5.607). Since the CI contains zero, PR does not mediate the relationship between HP and Stress. The results show that PR does not mediate the relationship between HP and Stress, and does not predict Stress directly and indirectly, leading to no mediation effect of HP on Stress. But PR is strongly associated with lower stress levels.

The first objective of the study was to find the relationship between Helicopter parenting (HP), Peer relationship (PR), and Emotional problems among school-going adolescents. The results found that HP has a significant positive relationship with Emotional problems, Stress, Depression, and Anxiety, consistent with the existing literature showing the adverse effects of parental overcontrol (Cui et al., 2019; Vigdal & Brønnick, 2022), accepting H1. These observed positive relationship uncovers the developmental deficits associated with Helicopter parenting, such as lack of autonomy, decreased self-efficacy, and lack of adaptive coping strategies in adolescents. Thus, the adolescents raised under helicopter parenting tend to show poor stress resilience because their parents solve problems for them and might use avoidance coping when alone (Kouros et al., 2017; Luebbe et al., 2018; Schiffrin et al., 2019; Vigdal & Brønnick, 2022). These collectively increase emotional problems. Interestingly, contradicting the existing literature, the results revealed a significant positive relationship between Helicopter Parenting and Peer Relationship (Miller et al., 2024; Van Ingen et al., 2015), accepting H2. This might be due to the influence of collectivistic culture and the rebellious nature of adolescents in general to go against the strict parenting and be close to their peers to show more autonomy (Brown B, 1990; Dang et al., 2025; Van Ryzin et al., 2012). The Peer Relationship has a significant negative relationship with Anxiety and Depression, but not with Stress, which partially supports the hypothesis H3 (Guzman Holst et al., 2023). Notably, we can see that the parental overcontrol paradoxically increases their peer relationships, which might act as a protective factor against emotional problems such as anxiety and depression (Fitzpatrick et al., 2024).

The second objective was to investigate the mediating role of Peer relationships in the relationship between Helicopter parenting and Emotional problems. The results revealed a significant partial mediating effect of Peer Relationship in the relationship between Helicopter parenting and Emotional problems, anxiety, and depression. However, a direct effect of Helicopter Parenting on Anxiety and Depression was found to be significant, suggesting that Helicopter parenting significantly predicts these emotional problems in the presence of the mediator, Peer relationship. Additionally, the total effect was also found to be significant. That is, Helicopter parenting directly increases Anxiety and Depression in the presence and absence of Peer Relationships. These results reveal the role of other factors, such as self-control, emotional regulation, sense of agency, etc., moderating the relationship between Helicopter parenting and Emotional Problems (Cook, 2020; Mandara & Pikes, 2008; Nguyen et al., 2024). Thus, H4 is partially accepted.

The third objective was to find the gender differences in Helicopter parenting, Peer relationship, and Emotional problems, and found significant gender differences. Females showed higher levels of perceived Helicopter parenting, Depression, Anxiety, and Stress, while males showed higher Peer relationship. The results significantly aligned with the global trends (Kouros et al., 2017; Liu, 2023; Nair et al., 2017; Yao et al., 2009), uncovering gender-specific vulnerabilities seen in society. So, hypotheses H5 and H7 are accepted, and hypothesis H6 is rejected.

5. CONCLUSION

The findings of the study revealed the adverse effects of parental overcontrolling on the emotional well-being of the adolescents. Surprisingly, the study found a positive relationship between Helicopter Parenting and Peer Relationship, revealing a complex dynamic relationship between parenting style and adolescent social support. The mediational analysis revealed the role of other potential factors influencing the helicopter parenting, emotional problems relationship other than peer relationships. Additionally, the observed gender differences revealed how the family dynamics and social relationships influence adolescent mental health.

Overall, this study highlights the detrimental effects of overprotective parenting practices on adolescent emotional well-being. It also emphasizes the pivotal role of peer relationships as a protective factor against emotional problems. These findings

have practical implications for designing school-based interventions to promote healthier parenting practices and stronger peer interactions to foster better emotional well-being in adolescents.

5.1. Limitations and Future Directions

Future research should address the study's limitations and explore additional mediators to gain a deeper understanding of these relationships. The study measured only three specific emotional problems: Depression, Anxiety, and Stress, excluding other potential emotional issues influencing school-going adolescents. Only peer relationship was examined as a mediator; other potential mediators, such as gender, working status of parents, academic performance, etc., were not considered.

Future studies can explore helicopter parenting in various cultural and socio-economic contexts to identify universal and region-specific patterns. Investigating additional mediators, such as resilience, emotional regulation, academic self-efficacy, or socio-demographic variables like parents' working status and adolescents' academic performance, could provide deeper insights into the factors influencing emotional problems among adolescents.

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