



## Introduction

According to the Self-Determination Theory, people need to feel competence, connection or relatedness, and autonomy in order to grow psychologically. This study focuses on autonomy for college students and the correlation between mental well-being and lower levels of self-perceived autonomy from parents. Mental well-being was measured with the variables social anxiety, depression, happiness, and life satisfaction. Helicopter parenting was correlated with higher levels of social anxiety (Kouros et al., 2016) but this was disputed in another study that claimed there was no correlation with anxiety (Schiffrrin et al., 2014). Helicopter parenting was correlated with higher levels of depression (Darlow et al., 2017). Autonomy support parenting had a positive correlation with higher levels of life satisfaction (Reed et al., 2016).

The purpose of the research was to examine if higher levels of helicopter parenting had a significant and negative relationship with the mental well-being of adult college students. Therefore, it was also to determine if autonomy support parenting is correlated with higher levels of mental-well being for adult college students.

## Hypotheses

We predicted that higher levels of helicopter parenting would correlate with higher levels of social anxiety and depression. We predicted that higher levels of helicopter parenting would also correlate with lower levels of happiness and life satisfaction.

## Method

### Participants

This research study had 150 participants (N = 150), all of which are college or university students. Participants were required to be 18 years old to 30 years old (M = 21.30 years, SD = 2.76). A majority of the participants were female, making up 72.0% of the total (n = 108). Males made up 27.3% (n = 41) and other-gendered made up 0.7% (n = 1). For the participants' racial background, 42.7% were Other (n = 64), a category that could possibly describe Hispanic or Latino since it was not in the list of options. For the other participants, 37.3% were White (n = 56), 18.0% were Asian (n = 27), 1.3% were Black or African-American (n = 2), and 0.7% were American Indian or Alaska Native (n = 1).

### Measures

For demographics, the United States Census 2020 was used (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2020) to create the questions about racial background, gender, and age. The exact age was not asked, only the years. For the Helicopter Parenting and Autonomy Supportive Parenting questionnaire, we used Helicopter Parenting and Autonomy Supportive Behaviors (Schiffrrin et al., 2014), a 27-question survey where participants rate their agreement with a statement from a scale of 1 to 6. Cronbach's alpha was  $\alpha = 0.77$ . For Social Anxiety, the questionnaire used was Social Anxiety in University Students (Bhamani & Hussain, 2012), a 15-question survey where participants rate their agreement with a statement from a scale of 1 to 4. Cronbach's alpha was  $\alpha = 0.74$ . For depression, the questionnaire used was the Brief Edinburgh Depression Scale (BEDS; Lloyd-Williams et al., 2006), a 6-question survey where participants were asked to rate their agreement with a statement and the answers were graded from 0 to 3 points. Cronbach's alpha was  $\alpha = 0.71$ . For Happiness, the questionnaire used was A measure of subjective happiness: Preliminary reliability and construct validation (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999), a 4-question survey where participants agreed with a statement from a scale of 1 to 7. Cronbach's alpha was  $\alpha = 0.86$ . For Life Satisfaction, the questionnaire used was Students' Life Satisfaction Scale (SLSS; Huebner, 1991), a 7-question survey where participants agreed with statements ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Cronbach's alpha was  $\alpha = 0.82$ .

### Procedure

Questionnaires were collected with a mix of physical paper questionnaires and online google forms. 30 of the 150 participants completed the physical paper questionnaires around the Cypress College campus. The rest of the 120 participants completed the questionnaires online using google forms after receiving a link through social media, emails through canvas from the researchers, or emails through canvas from professors willing to send out the weblink.

## Results

Table 2

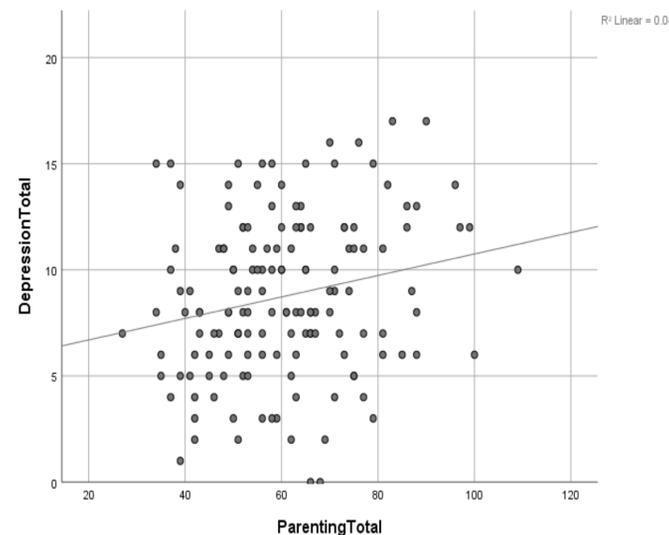
Correlation between Variables

		Parenting Total	Social Anxiety Total	Depression Total	Happiness Total	Life Satisfaction Total
Parenting	Pearson Correlation	1	-.15	.21	-.12	-.17
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.07	.01	.13	.04
	N	150	150	150	150	150

Note. There was a significant correlation between parenting and depression,  $r = 0.21$ ,  $p = 0.01$ . There was a significant correlation between parenting and life satisfaction.  $r = -0.17$ ,  $p = 0.04$ . There was no significant correlation between parenting total and social anxiety and happiness.

Figure 1

Scatterplot for level of Parenting Total and Depression Total



Note. The relationship between Parenting Total and Depression Total is significant. N = 150

## Discussion

Our research study finds that there is no significant correlation between helicopter parenting and social anxiety, contrary to our hypothesis. This finding is supported by a study conducted by Schiffrrin et al. (2014) that found no significant correlation between helicopter parenting and anxiety. This finding is not supported by the study by Kouros et al. (2016) that did find a significant, positive relationship. Our study finds that there is a significant, positive relationship between helicopter parenting and depression ( $r = 0.21$ ,  $p = 0.01$ ). This is supported by the study by Schiffrrin et al. (2014) and the study by LeMoyné & Buchanan (2011) that found higher levels of antidepressant use in those who experience helicopter parenting. These findings lead to the understanding that these findings do not support our finding that there is no significant correlation between helicopter parenting and happiness. This might be the case because it is possible that participants who experience less helicopter parenting are not more likely to show depressive symptoms nor happiness. Our study finds that there is a significant correlation between helicopter parenting and life satisfaction ( $r = -0.17$ ,  $p = 0.04$ ). This is supported by the study by Reed et al. (2016).

### Limitations

If we had the option to redo the study, some limitation we would try to avoid would be adding a requirement that all participants must be still living with their parents in order to remove the confounding variable that could be the amount of time spent with parent(s). Another aspect we would change is to add "Hispanic or Latino" as an option for racial background in order to get a more accurate description of the demographics. Future ideas for this topic is to conduct this research on both primary and secondary school minors and adult college students to compare the effect of helicopter parenting between ages groups.

### Implications

This study supports the autonomy aspect of the Self-Determination Theory by providing statistics that show that a lack of self-perceived autonomy is correlated with lower levels of life satisfaction and higher levels of depression and, therefore, hinder psychological growth. This research study is important for practical use because it could educate parents about the harmful consequences that are correlated with parental overinvolvement. The parents could then learn to adjust their parenting style towards their child in order to promote growth.

## References

Available on Request.