



SAPIENZA  
UNIVERSITÀ EDITRICE

Work published in open access mode  
and licensed under Creative Commons  
Attribution – NonCommercial  
NoDerivatives 3.0 Italy (CC BY-NC-ND 3.0 IT)

Psychology Hub (2020)  
XXXVII, 1, 37-46

## Helicopter Mothers and Helicopter Fathers: Italian Adaptation and Validation of the Helicopter Parenting Instrument

Jessica Pistella<sup>a</sup>, Flavia Izzo<sup>a</sup>, Stefano Isolani<sup>a</sup>, Salvatore Ioverno<sup>b</sup>, Roberto Baiocco<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>*Department of Developmental and Social Psychology, Sapienza University of Rome, Rome, Italy*

<sup>b</sup>*Department of Sociology, Ghent University, Ghent, Belgium*

### Article info

Submitted: 12 February 2020  
Accepted: 05 June 2020  
DOI: 10.13133/2724-2943/16900

### Abstract

The aim of this study is to validate the Italian version of the *Helicopter Parenting Instrument* (HPI), a self-report instrument that evaluate adolescents' and young adults' perception of parenting behaviors. The term *helicopter parenting* describes a style of child-rearing characterized by parents who are over-involved in every aspect of their children's lives in inappropriate ways, compromising their autonomy. The HPI (maternal and paternal version) was administered to 602 adolescents (356 females), between 14 and 18 years of age ( $M_{females} = 16.56$ ;  $SD = 1.43$ ;  $M_{males} = 16.63$ ;  $SD = 1.41$ ). The factorial analysis confirmed the original one-factor structure for both versions. The two versions of the instrument demonstrated good concurrent and divergent validity and the reliability was high. In general, our participants perceived mothers with higher levels of *helicopter parenting* than fathers, regardless of gender and age of the participants. In conclusion, the instrument demonstrated good psychometric properties, indicating that it may be a valid measure for evaluating parental overparenting in the Italian context.

**Keywords:** helicopter parenting; adolescence; overparenting; family functioning; well-being.

\*Corresponding author.

Roberto Baiocco  
Department of Developmental  
and Social Psychology,  
Sapienza University of Rome  
Via dei Marsi, 78, 00180, Rome, Italy.  
Phone: +39 06.4991.7671  
E-mail: roberto.baiocco@uniroma1.it.  
(R. Baiocco)

## Introduction

*Helicopter parenting* was first introduced by Cline and Fay (1990) to describe parents who are overprotective and excessively involved in their children's life. This construct is generally conceptualized as a form of *overparenting* in which parents apply developmentally inadequate practices to their children and limit their ability to assume autonomy and responsibility (Segrin et al., 2012). *Helicopter parenting* has been operationalized as a constellation of parenting behaviors characterized by high levels of control, over-protection, high involvement, emotional support, and resistance to fostering children's autonomy (Padilla-Walker and Nelson, 2012). Typical helicopter parents tend to constantly communicate with their children, make decisions for them and handle the obstacles that their children may face to protect and prevent them to fail (LeMoyné and Buchanan, 2011; Odenweller et al., 2014; Padilla-Walker and Nelson, 2012; Segrin et al., 2012).

The paradox of *helicoptering parents* is that, despite the parents' genuine intentions to protect and promote their children's development, this parenting style has negative implications on their well-being and socio-emotional adaptation (Odenweller et al., 2014; Segrin et al., 2012). The majority of the research has focused on the effects of *helicopter parenting* on adolescents and young adults (LeMoyné and Buchanan, 2011; Leung and Busiol, 2016). Some studies showed that young adults with *helicopter parents* are more likely to report several negative mental health and behavioral outcomes: anxiety and depression symptoms (LeMoyné and Buchanan, 2011; Luebbe et al., 2018; Padilla-Walker and Nelson, 2012; Perez, 2017; Reed et al., 2016; Schiffrin et al., 2014, 2019; Segrin et al., 2013), ineffective coping strategies to deal with stress (Odenweller et al., 2014; Segrin et al., 2013), decision making styles based on directions from others or avoidance of the responsibility (Luebbe et al., 2018), poor attachment to peers (van Ingen et al., 2015), low academic determination and success (Howard et al., 2019), and use of painkillers, anti-anxiety medications and antidepressants (LeMoyné and Buchanan, 2011).

The self-determination theory (Ryan and Deci, 2000) may provide a theoretical framework for understanding the negative implications of *helicopter parenting* on children's well-being. One of the central assumptions of this theory is that all human beings have innate needs, including (1) need for *autonomy*, that is the need for acting with volition; (2) need for *competence*, that is the need to feel effective in one's abilities; and (3) *relatedness*, that is the need to feel connected with other people. Parents who are excessively involved in the life of their children could reduce their autonomy, their sense of competence, and, consequently, undermine their interpersonal relationships (Deci and Ryan, 2000).

Currently, several measures exist in research for the assessment of *helicopter parenting* in adolescents and young adults. Some scholars conceptualize *helicopter parenting* as a unidimensional construct (LeMoyné and Buchanan, 2011; Odenweller et al., 2014; Padilla-Walker and Nelson, 2012), whereas others suggest a measuring approach based on a multidimensional construct (Schiffrin et al., 2014). Despite the variety of approaches, some theoretical and methodological

limitations need to be acknowledged when interpreting the findings from the *helicopter parenting* research. First, research has mainly focused on *Millennials'* generation (LeMoyné and Buchanan, 2011), i.e. young people born between 1980 and 2000. Little is known about the most recent generations. Second, most studies have investigated *helicopter parenting* in European or North American university students (Ertuna, 2016; Odenweller et al., 2014). This may obscure the cultural variation in *helicopter parenting* across different countries. For example, *helicopter parenting* in Asia is qualitatively different when compared to Western societies. In this cultural context, *helicopter parenting* is considered a usual practice: As an example, it is very common for parents in Asia to take leave on their child examination day or to wait at school until the examination is over (Ganaprakasam et al., 2018). Also, in Turkey where parental authority is considered natural *helicopter parenting* is highly valued (Ertuna, 2016). Third, studies have focused on helicopter mothers neglecting the role of helicopter fathers and related similarities or differences (Ertuna, 2016; Odenweller et al., 2014; Perez, 2019). There is a gap in the research literature on the differential perceptions about both parental figures (Bornstein and Venuti, 2013; Pleck, 2012) and the role of helicopter fathers (Boeddu, 2008; Procentese, 2005; 2008).

The present study was designed to expand the literature on *helicopter parenting* by contributing to the Italian validation of the *Helicopter Parenting Instrument* (HPI, Odenweller, et al., 2014). Moreover, in analyzing the concurrent and divergent validity of the scale, we sought to overcome some crucial limitations in the *helicopter parenting* research by using a sample of a recent generation of adolescents (born after 2000) and assessing both mother and father *helicopter parenting*.

## Method

### *Procedure and Participants*

The original HPI was translated into Italian using *back-translation* procedures: First, an Italian-speaking psychologist with expertise on parenting and adolescent well-being translated the survey into Italian. Then, a native English-speaking psychologist back-translated the survey into English. Finally, a group of experts in developmental psychology compared the back-translation with the original questionnaire to identify potential inconsistencies or substantial differences. This phase did not suggest that rewording was needed for any item.

Participants were recruited using snowball sampling by students of the Faculty of Medicine and Psychology, Sapienza University of Rome, for a laboratory activity on parenting and adolescent well-being. Respondents were directed to a 15-20 minute online survey hosted by Unipark. The survey was administered individually after obtaining informed consent from parents and children to protect participants' anonymity. Participation was voluntary and adolescents were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any point and that the decision to stop would be respected. The study was approved by the Ethics Commission of the Department

of Developmental and Social Psychology of the Faculty of Medicine and Psychology, Sapienza University of Rome.

The inclusion criteria included having both a mother and a father, age range between 14 and 18 years old, and Italian nationality. Thirty-three participants were excluded for not meeting the inclusion criteria: three participants had same-sex parents, fifteen had only one parent, eight were older than 18, and seven were not Italian. The resulting sample consisted of 602 Italian adolescents (356 females, 59%), between 14 and 18 years of age ( $M_{females} = 16.56$ ;  $SD = 1.43$ ;  $M_{males} = 16.63$ ;  $SD = 1.41$ ) from South ( $n = 148$ ; 24.6%), Centre ( $n = 435$ ; 72.3%) and North of Italy ( $n = 19$ ; 3.2%). All participants had completed primary and middle school. Finally, regarding socioeconomic status, 248 (41%) adolescents reported a high family income, 332 (55%) a middle family income, and the remaining 22 (4%) a low family income.

To reduce the administration time and to have more accurate data on *helicopter parenting*, two versions of the survey were used. Both versions included socio-demographic questionnaires and the HPI. However, participants assigned to the first version ( $n = 284$ ; 44%) were evaluated on family functioning, perceived social support, and well-being, whereas, in the second version, participants ( $n = 318$ ; 56%) reported on *parental involvement* e *overparenting* in their family.

### Measures

**Socio-demographic variables.** An information questionnaire was administered to collect data about gender, age, geographical location (1 = *northern Italy*; 2 = *central Italy*; 3 = *southern Italy*; 4 = *other*), education, and socioeconomic status (from 1 unstable to 4 *very wealthy*). Finally, participants were asked to identify a parent 1 and a parent 2 and corresponding age. For each of these two categories, possible response options were *mother*, *father*, and *other*. If participants associated *other* to one or both parents, they were asked to write in more information to identify this parental figure.

**Helicopter Parenting Instrument (HPI;** Odenweller et al., 2014). The HPI is a self-report measure used to investigate adolescents' perceptions of their parents' *helicopter parenting* behaviors (e.g. "My parent tries to make all of my major decisions"). Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with 15 statements on a 7-point Likert scale with 1 representing "strongly disagree" and 7 representing "strongly agree." In the present study, we used two versions of this instrument (see Appendix A and B for more details). One evaluating mother helicopter behaviors and one evaluating father helicopter behaviors. For each version, an average score was calculated with high scores indicating high levels of helicopter parenting behaviors. Reliability and validity information on both versions are reported in the results section.

**Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scale (FACES-IV;** Baiocco et al., 2013; Olson and Gorall, 2006). The FACES-IV is a 42-item self-report measure of family functioning composed of six scales: *cohesion* (e.g. "Family members feel very close to each other"), *flexibility* (e.g. "Our family tries new ways of dealing with problems"), *disengaged* (e.g. "Our family seldom does things together"), *enmeshed* (e.g. "We spend too much time

together"), *rigid* (e.g. "Our family has a rule for almost every possible situation") and *chaotic* (e.g. "Our family feels hectic and disorganized"). Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with each statement on a 5-point Likert scale from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. Cronbach's alpha coefficients were 0.83 for *cohesion*, 0.73 for *flexibility*, 0.72 for *disengagement*, 0.70 for *enmeshed*, 0.69 for *rigid*, and 0.68 for *chaotic*.

**Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS;** Zimet et al., 1988). The MSPSS is an 8-item self-report measure assessing social support from *friends* (e.g. "My friends really try to help me") and *significant others* (e.g. "There is a special person who is around when I am in need"). Response options were on a 7-point Likert scale from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. Higher scores indicate high levels of social support. Cronbach's alpha coefficients in the present study were 0.93 for support from friends, and .0.90 for support from significant others.

**Well-being Questionnaire – short form (W-BQ12;** Pouwer et al., 2000). The W-BQ12 is a 12 item self-report measure investigating general well-being (e.g. "I have lived the kind of life I wanted to"). Respondents rated on a 4-point Likert scale (ranging from 0 = *never* to 3 = *always*) how often in the past few weeks a series of statements could apply to them. Scores were then summed with higher scores indicating a greater level of general well-being (Petrocchi et al., 2020; Riazi et al., 2006; Rochlen et al., 2008). Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the present study was 0.77.

**Parental Involvement Scale (PSI;** Bradley-Geist and Olson-Buchanan, 2014). The PSI is a 9 item self-report measure used by participants to inquire about the frequency with which their parents initiated involvement with their school (e.g. "How often do your parents/guardians ask you about your grades?") and social life (e.g. "How often do your parents/guardians ask you about your social life?"). In the present study, the youth were asked to separately assess the mother and father's behaviors. Response options were on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from *never* to *all the time*. Cronbach's alpha coefficients in the present study were 0.84 for the mother version and 0.83 for the father version.

**Overparenting Scale (OPS;** Bradley-Geist and Olson-Buchanan, 2014). The OPS is a 5-item self-report measure assessing whether participants felt that their parents were too involved in their lives and thus engaging in over-parenting (e.g. "I think my parents/guardians are too overly involved in my life"). In the present study, the youth were asked to separately assess maternal and paternal involvement. Items were rated on a 5-points Likers scale ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. Cronbach's alpha coefficients in the present study were 0.87 for the mother version and 0.82 for the father version.

### Statistical Analysis

We used the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS; 25.0) and Mplus (version 7.3) to conduct all analyses. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted to examine the underlying factor structure of the mother and father forms of the HPI. Further, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed to determine whether the underlying structure of the HPI, as hypothesized by Odenweller et al. (2104), fit the

data well. To avoid problems of non-convergence, we used item parceling based on item skewness to reduce the number of observed variables. Specifically, parcels were created by averaging the scores of pairs of items that were skewed in different directions. For example, we formed the first parcel by averaging the score of the most negatively skewed with the most positively skewed item, then the next most negatively skewed with the next most positively skewed item, and so on. The use of item parcels is a recommended practice in preparing for CFA (Baiocco et al., 2018; Hau and Marsh, 2004; Little et al., 2002). Given that the mother and father forms of the HPI comprised the same items, in the CFA we allowed the residuals of the identical parcels to covary (e.g., the residuals of parcel 1 in the mother form covaried with the residuals of parcel 1 in the father version).

The following indexes and cut-off criteria were used to evaluate the goodness-of-fit of the different models: Standardized chi-square ( $\chi^2/df$ ) < 3, standardized root mean residual (SRMR) < 0.06, root mean square of approximation (RMSEA) < 0.08, comparative fit index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) > .95, and the values of the chi-square/degree of freedom (CMIN/df; Tabachnick and Fidell, 1996) ranging from 2 to 5. We used Cronbach's alpha to evaluate internal consistency and Pearson correlations to assess the concurrent and divergent validity of the HPI. Finally, a multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) was used to test gender differences on the mother and father forms of the HPI using participants' age as a covariate.

## Results

### Exploratory Factor Analysis

EFA was conducted on the original 15 items of both the mother and father forms of the HPI using principal-axis factor analysis. Item retention was determined by the magnitude of factor loadings and commonality. Specifically, we eliminated any item with a factor loading lower than 0.4 or with commonality lower than 0.30. The initial scree plots suggested that a one-factor model solution would be viable explaining 25% of the variance in the mother form and 26% in the father form. In each form, 5 items showing factor loading lower than 0.40 were eliminated. Thus, the EFA analyses were replicated on the remaining 10 items confirming a one-factor model accounting for 34% of the variance in the mother form and 35% in the father form (see Table 1).

### Confirmatory Factor Analysis

We conducted a CFA to confirm the one-factor structure of the HPI on the remaining 10 items of the father and mother forms. We used parcels because they produce relatively more reliable estimates of latent variables than observed indicators. For both the mother and father forms, we used the following parcels: Parcel 1 (item 1 and 9); parcel 2 (item 3 and 8); parcel 3 (item 5 and 10); parcel 4 (item 4 and 7); and parcel 5 (item 2 and 6). Given that the parcels were identical for

Tab. 1. Exploratory factor analysis of the mother and father HPI ( $n = 602$ )

|   | HPI mother | <i>M</i> (SD) | Correlation Item-Total | HPI father | <i>M</i> (SD) | Correlation Item-Total |
|---|------------|---------------|------------------------|------------|---------------|------------------------|
| 4. My parent considers oneself a bad parent when he or she does not step in and "save" me from difficulty | 0.65       | 3.73 (1.87)   | 0.64**                 | 0.67       | 3.47 (1.78)   | 0.65**                 |
| 7. My parent considers himself or herself a good parent when he or she solves problems for me             | 0.63       | 4.37 (1.67)   | 0.61**                 | 0.63       | 4.22 (1.67)   | 0.62**                 |
| 6. My parent voices his or her opinion about my personal relationships                                    | 0.61       | 4.65 (1.77)   | 0.60**                 | 0.56       | 3.93 (1.74)   | 0.56**                 |
| 8. My parent insists that I keep him or her informed of my daily activities                               | 0.61       | 4.94 (1.71)   | 0.59**                 | 0.56       | 4.22 (1.75)   | 0.56**                 |
| 5. My parent feels like a bad parent when I make poor choices   | 0.60       | 3.69 (1.79)   | 0.60**                 | 0.61       | 3.51 (1.74)   | 0.60**                 |
| 1. My parent tries to make all of my major decisions  | 0.59       | 3.30 (1.88)   | 0.59**                 | 0.56       | 2.86 (1.69)   | 0.57**                 |
| 3. Sometimes my parent invests more time and energy into my projects than I do                            | 0.57       | 3.57 (1.89)   | 0.59**                 | 0.57       | 3.17 (1.81)   | 0.57**                 |
| 10. My parent thinks it is his or her job to shield me from adversity                                     | 0.56       | 4.58 (1.82)   | 0.57**                 | 0.64       | 4.38 (1.85)   | 0.63**                 |
| 2. My parent overreacts when I encounter a negative experience  | 0.56       | 4.04 (1.95)   | 0.57**                 | 0.49       | 3.68 (1.84)   | 0.52**                 |
| 9. When I am going through a difficult situation, my parent always tries to fix it                        | 0.42       | 5.45 (1.49)   | 0.43**                 | 0.59       | 4.93 (1.68)   | 0.58**                 |
| % explained variance  | 34         |               |                        | 35         |               |                        |
| Cronbach's alpha  | 0.78       |               |                        | 0.79       |               |                        |

Note. For parsimonious reasons, the items were reported based on maternal factor loadings.



the two forms, the residuals of each parcel in one form were allowed to covary with the residuals of the corresponding parcel in the other form. The analysis showed that the one-factor model presented reasonably high goodness of fit. Although the  $\chi^2$  was significant,  $\chi^2(29) = 118, p < 0.001$ , all the goodness-of-fit indices reached acceptable values,  $\chi^2/df = 4.06$ ; CFI = 0.98; TLI = 0.96; SRMR = 0.05; RMSEA = 0.07; (90% CI: 0.05; 0.08). Standardized factor loadings were all significant ( $p < 0.001$ ) and ranged from 0.62 to 0.69 in the mother form and from 0.60 to 0.72 in the father form. Results are shown in Figure 1.

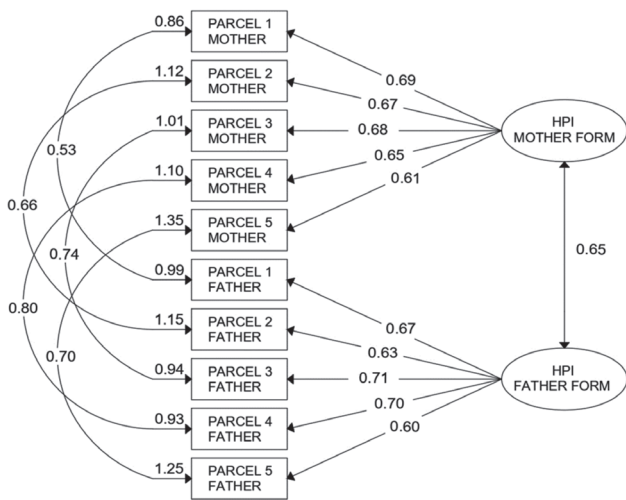


Fig. 1. Confirmatory factor analysis for the mother and father forms of the HPI

*Internal Consistency, Concurrent and Divergent Validity of the HPI*

The scale reliability estimates were high: The composite reliability was 0.78 for the mother form and 0.79 for the father form. The result of Welch's  $t$ -tests indicated that, in the present study, the HPI means on the father,  $t(641) = 6.47, p < 0.001$ , and mother forms,  $t(647) = 12.43, p < 0.001$ , were significantly higher when compared to the normative sample used in Odenweller and colleagues' (2014) study.

To examine the concurrent and divergent validity, Pearson correlations coefficients were computed. As shown in Table 2, bivariate correlations showed a positive and significant correlation between the two HPI scores of the mother and father forms ( $r = 0.65; p < 0.001$ ). Overall, the convergent validity of the instrument was supported by significant correlations between HPI scores and theoretically related measure scores. In particular, HPI scores displayed a strong association with the rigid ( $r_{mother} = 0.20, p < 0.001; r_{father} = 0.17, p < 0.001$ ), enmeshed ( $r_{mother} = 0.17, p < 0.001$ ), and disengaged subscales of the family functioning ( $r_{father} = -0.12, p < 0.05$ ). In addition, both forms were positively related to *parental involvement* ( $r_{mother} = 0.30, p < 0.001; r_{father} = 0.43, p < 0.001$ ), and *overparenting* ( $r_{mother} = 0.38, p < 0.001; r_{father} = 0.29, p < 0.001$ ). Finally, the divergent validity was also supported by the lack of significant associations of the HPI scores of the mother and father forms with well-being and perceived social support.

*Gender Differences in Mother and Father Forms of the HPI*

A paired  $t$ -test revealed a statistically significant difference between the HPI scores of the mother and father forms (see

Tab. 2. Correlations among HPI, family functioning, well-being, and perceived social support

|                                     | 1      | 2      | 3       | 4      | 5       | 6       | 7      | 8      | 9      | 10     | 11 | 12 | 13 | M(SD)           |
|-------------------------------------|--------|--------|---------|--------|---------|---------|--------|--------|--------|--------|----|----|----|-----------------|
| 1. HPI mother                       | 1      |        |         |        |         |         |        |        |        |        |    |    |    | 4.23<br>(1.04)  |
| 2. HPI father                       | 0.65** | 1      |         |        |         |         |        |        |        |        |    |    |    | 3.84<br>(1.03)  |
| 3. Rigid                            | 0.20** | 0.17** | 1       |        |         |         |        |        |        |        |    |    |    | 20.55<br>(4.69) |
| 4. Enmeshed                         | 0.17** | 0.09   | 0.35**  | 1      |         |         |        |        |        |        |    |    |    | 16.45<br>(4.58) |
| 5. Disengaged                       | -0.04  | -0.12* | -0.09   | 0.03   | 1       |         |        |        |        |        |    |    |    | 17.46<br>(4.82) |
| 6. Chaotic                          | -0.01  | -0.04  | -0.22** | 0.06   | 0.41**  | 1       |        |        |        |        |    |    |    | 18.35<br>(4.69) |
| 7. Cohesion                         | 0.02   | 0.09   | 0.26**  | 0.13*  | -0.64** | -0.32** | 1      |        |        |        |    |    |    | 27.70<br>(4.84) |
| 8. Flexibility                      | -0.05  | 0.09   | 0.34**  | 0.16** | -0.48** | -0.31** | 0.74** | 1      |        |        |    |    |    | 25.57<br>(4.66) |
| 9. Support from friends             | 0.05   | 0.03   | -0.06   | -0.13* | -0.03   | -0.09   | 0.09   | 0.09   | 1      |        |    |    |    | 5.66<br>(1.23)  |
| 10. Support from significant others | 0.02   | 0.04   | 0.05    | -0.04  | -0.20** | -0.19** | 0.28** | 0.29** | 0.51** | 1      |    |    |    | 5.84<br>(1.20)  |
| 11. Well-being                      | 0.05   | 0.06   | 0.06    | -0.02  | -0.36** | -0.27** | 0.37** | 0.33** | 0.12*  | 0.19** | 1  |    |    | 26.63<br>(5.42) |
| 12. Parental involvement            | 0.30** | 0.43** | /       | /      | /       | /       | /      | /      | /      | /      | /  | 1  |    | 3.33<br>(0.07)  |
| 13. Overparenting                   | 0.38** | 0.29** | /       | /      | /       | /       | /      | /      | /      | /      | /  | /  | 1  | 2.33<br>(0.81)  |

Note. \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*  $p < .05$ . The measures of family functioning, well-being and perceived social support were administered to 284 participants (first version of the survey), while the measures of parental involvement and overparenting to 318 participants (second version of the survey)

Table 2 for mean and standard deviations). In particular, mothers were perceived with higher levels of helicopter parenting than fathers,  $t(601) = -11.22, p < 0.001$ . Then, we conducted a MANCOVA to investigate participants' gender differences on the HPI scores of the mother and father forms adjusting for participants' age. The analysis revealed no significant effects of gender,  $Wilks' \Lambda = 0.99; F(2,598) = 1.53; p = 0.22, \eta^2 < 0.01$  and age,  $Wilks' \Lambda = 0.99; F(2,598) = 2.30; p = 0.10, \eta^2 < 0.01$ , suggesting that mothers were perceived with higher levels of helicopter parenting than fathers regardless of gender and age of the participants. Mean and standard deviations are shown in Table 3.

## Discussion and conclusion

In attempting to address the lack of validated helicopter parenting measures in Italy, the present research evaluated the HPI psychometric properties in a sample of Italian adolescents. EFA results supported unidimensional factor structures of both the mother and father forms of the HPI. Consistently with the original version of the HPI (Odenweller et al., 2014), CFA results confirmed a good fit for the unidimensional factor structures of the two HPI forms.

Our results show that Italian adolescents perceive higher levels of helicopter behaviors from their parents compared to the normative sample used for the development of the HPI (Odenweller et al., 2014). One explanation for this difference may be that Italy is known for being a traditional country bound by conservative family values (Mencarini and Solera, 2015). As in other family-oriented cultural contexts, Italian adolescents may be particularly exposed to the negative impact of *helicopter parenting* behaviors (Schiffrin et al., 2014, 2019; Segrin et al., 2012, 2013). Moreover, the original validation study used a sample of young adults (Odenweller et al., 2014). It is conceivable that adolescents tend to be more perceptive of helicopter behaviors given that they are more likely to live with their families and to have very limited autonomy from their parents. Future studies should deepen our understanding of generational and cultural characteristics that could explain this difference.

Similarly to prior evidence (Schiffrin et al., 2019), correlational analyses showed a positive between the two HPI scores of the mother and father forms, suggesting that when one parent is a "helicopter parent", the other parent is likely to act helicopter behaviors as well. However, this result could

also be due to a common method variance bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003) given that mothers and fathers were evaluated by the same informational source, their children.

Taken together, our analyses suggest that HPI scores significantly tap into concerning aspects of helicopter parenting. This is confirmed by the hypothesized associations of helicopter parenting with rigid (for both mother and father forms), enmeshed (for mother form) and disengaged (for father form) family functioning. Essentially, data suggest that excessive parental involvement in their child lives is more likely to be present in a rigid family system, which hinders children's developmental processes of individualization and autonomy (Givertz and Segrin, 2014). In fact, both rigid and helicopter parent styles reflect a deficit in parents' ability to refrain from intervening every time their children face a challenge, even when they are able to autonomously overcome it (Segrin et al., 2012). Similarly, our findings on concurrent validity with *parental involvement* and *overparenting* support the definition of *helicopter parenting* as a form of *overparenting* (Segrin, et al., 2012) or as an excessive and inappropriate parental involvement in the different stages of the child development (LeMoyné and Buchanan, 2011; Padilla-Walker and Nelson, 2012). Also, HPI appears to tap into the two constructs of intrusive or maladaptive parental involvement in the children's social and school life and excessive parental intrusiveness as defined by Bradley-Geist and Olson-Buchanan (2014). Moreover, the HPI forms have yielded scores with divergent validity showing that helicopter parenting is distinct from perceived support by significant figures and general well-being (Table 2).

In line with previous studies (Schiffrin et al., 2019), our results showed that children perceive that mothers display higher levels of *helicopter parenting* behaviors than fathers. However, there was no interaction between parents' and children's gender, even if we considered the age as a covariate. These results suggest that mothers are perceived with higher levels of *helicopter parenting* regardless of gender and age of our participants.

This research had some limitations. First, all of the information concerning participants' experiences and parents' behaviors were obtained through self-report measures administered to youth. Future studies may benefit by integrating the perspectives of children and parents. Second, the study used a sample composed of youth who have a mother and a father which may limit the generalizability of the results to other typologies of families such as single-parent or same-sex parent families. Third, this study was cross-sectional. Longitudinal studies could enrich our understanding of the

Tab. 3. Mean and standard deviations mother and father forms of the HPI based on participants' gender ( $n = 602$ )

|                      | HPI mother |      | HPI father |      | Gender differences |                 |
|----------------------|------------|------|------------|------|--------------------|-----------------|
|                      | <i>M</i>   | SD   | <i>M</i>   | SD   | <i>F</i> mother    | <i>F</i> father |
| Gender               |            |      |            |      |                    |                 |
| Female ( $n = 356$ ) | 4.19       | 1.10 | 3.77       | 1.09 |                    |                 |
| Male ( $n = 246$ )   | 4.29       | 0.94 | 3.93       | 0.94 | 1.24               | 3.07            |

Note. Gender differences were not significant. The effect of the age as covariate was not significant

effect of *helicopter parenting* behaviors at the different children's developmental stages.

In term of practical implications, the use of a *helicopter parenting* measure could be beneficial for developing more comprehensive and effective programs and interventions aimed at promoting family well-being (LeMoyné and Buchanan, 2011; Luebbe et al., 2018; Padilla-Walker and Nelson, 2012; Perez, 2017; Reed et al., 2016; Schiffrin et al., 2019; Segrin et al., 2013). Moreover, we believe that in settings of family therapy or clinical interventions, the HPI could be valuable for assessing and developing training interventions to enhance helicopter parents' abilities to identify the dysfunctional aspects of their parenting style.

### Acknowledgments

The authors express their sincere gratitude to the adolescents who participated in this study. All authors who contributed significantly to the work have been identified.

### Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

### Funding

For Salvatore Ioverno, part of the administrative support for this research was provided by the Research Foundation – Flanders (Fonds voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek; FWO), [grant number 12V8120N]

### Ethical Approval

All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki Declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards. This article does not contain any studies with animals performed by any of the authors.

### Informed Consent

Informed consent was obtained from all participants included in the study.

### References

- Baiocco, R., Cacioppo, M., Laghi, F., & Tafà, M. (2013). Factorial and construct validity of FACES IV among Italian adolescents. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, *22*, 962-970. doi: 10.1007/s10826-012-9658-1
- Baiocco, R., Pistella, J., Salvati, M., Ioverno, S., & Lucidi, F. (2018). Sexual prejudice in sport scale: A new measure. *Journal of Homosexuality*, *67*, 489-512. doi:10.1080/00918369.2018.1547560
- Bentler, P. M. (1990). Comparative fit indexes in structural models. *Psychological Bulletin*, *107*, 238-246. doi: 10.1037/0033-2909.107.2.238
- Boeddu, E. (2008). Padri assenti, mammi o padri padroni? La costruzione di una nuova paternità. In A. Taurino, P. Bastianoni, S. De Donatis (a cura di). *Scenari familiari in trasformazione. Teorie, strumenti e metodi per la ricerca clinico-dinamica e psicosociale sulle famiglie e le genitorialità* (pp. 197-208). Roma: Aracne editrice.
- Bornstein, M. H., & Venuti, P. (2013). *Genitorialità: fattori biologici e culturali dell'essere genitori*. Bologna: Il Mulino.
- Bradley-Geist, J. C., & Olson-Buchanan, J. B. (2014). Helicopter parents: An examination of the correlates of over-parenting of college students. *Education + Training*, *56*, 314-328. doi: 10.1108/ET-10-2012-0096
- Cline, F., & Fay, J. (1990). *Parenting with love and logic: Teaching children responsibility*. Colorado Springs, CO: Pinion Press.
- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2008). Facilitating optimal motivation and psychological well-being across life's domains. *Canadian Psychology*, *49*, 14-23. doi:10.1037/0708-5591.49.1.14
- Ertuna, E. (2016). *The Turkish translation, and reliability, validity study of helicopter parenting instrument* (Master's Thesis). Near East University.
- Ganaprakasam, C., Davaidass, K. S., & Muniandy, S. C. (2018). Helicopter Parenting and psychological consequences among adolescent. *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications*, *8*, 378-382. doi: 10.29322/IJSRP.8.6.2018.p7849
- Givertz, M., & Segrin, C. (2014). The association between overinvolved parenting and young adults' self-efficacy, psychological entitlement, and family communication. *Communication Research*, *41*, 1111-1136. doi: 10.1177/0093650212456392
- Hau, K. T., & Marsh, H. W. (2004). The use of item parcels in structural equation modelling: Non-normal data and small sample sizes. *British Journal of Mathematical and Statistical Psychology*, *57*, 327-351. doi: 10.1111/j.2044-8317.2004.tb00142.x
- Howard, J. M., Nicholson, B. C., & Chesnut, S. R. (2019). Relationships between positive parenting, overparenting, grit, and academic success. *Journal of College Student Development*, *60*, 189-202. doi: 10.1353/csd.2019.0018
- Kouros, C. D., Pruitt, M. M., Ekas, N. V., Kiriaki, R., & Sunderland, M. (2017). Helicopter parenting, autonomy support, and college students' mental health and well-being: The moderating role of sex and ethnicity. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, *26*, 939-949. doi: 10.1007/s10826-016-0614-3
- LeMoyné, T., & Buchanan, T. (2011). Does "hovering" matter? Helicopter parenting and its effect on well-being. *Sociological Spectrum*, *31*, 399-418. doi: 10.1080/02732173.2011.574038
- Leung, J. T. Y., & Busiol, D. (2016). Adolescents growing up in a "Greenhouse." A literature review. *International Journal of Child and Adolescent Health*, *9*, 413-422.
- Little, T. D., Cunningham W. A., Shahar G., Widaman K. F. (2002). To parcel or not to parcel: Exploring the question, weighing the merits. *Structural Equation Modelling*, *9*, 151-173. doi: 10.1207/S15328007SEM0902\_1
- Locke, J. Y., Campbell, M. A., & Kavanagh, D. (2012). Can a parent do too much for their child? An examination by parenting professionals of the concept of overparenting. *Journal of Psychologists and Counsellors in Schools*, *22*, 249-265. doi: 10.1017/jgc.2012.29
- Luebbe, A. M., Mancini, K. J., Kiel, E. J., Spangler, B. R., Sendlak, J. L., & Fussner, L. M. (2018). Dimensionality of helicopter parenting and relations to emotional, decision-making, and academic functioning in emerging adults. *Assessment*, *25*, 841-857. doi: 10.1177/1073191116665907

- Mencarini, L., & Solera, C. (2015). *Diventare e fare i genitori oggi: l'Italia in prospettiva comparata*. Torino: Il Mulino.
- Montgomery, N. (2010). *The negative impact of helicopter parenting on personality*. Poster session presented at the annual meeting of the Association of Psychological Science. Boston, MA.
- Odenweller, K. G., Booth-Butterfield, M., & Weber, K. (2014). Investigating helicopter parenting, family environments, and relational outcomes for millennials. *Communication Studies*, 65, 407-425. doi: 10.1080/10510974.2013.811434
- Olson, D. H., & Gorall, D. M. (2006). *Faces IV and the Circumplex model*. Minneapolis, MN: Life Innovations.
- Olson, D. H., Sprenkle, D. H., & Russell, C. (1979). Circumplex model of marital and family systems: I. Cohesion and adaptability dimensions, family types, and clinical applications. *Family Process*, 18, 3-28. doi: 10.1111/j.1545-5300.1979.00003.x
- Padilla-Walker, L. M., & Nelson, L. J. (2012). Black hawk down?: Establishing helicopter parenting as a distinct construct from other forms of parental control during emerging adulthood. *Journal of Adolescence*, 35, 1177-1190. doi: 10.1016/j.adolescence.2012.03.007
- Perez, C. M. (2017). *Overparenting and Emerging Adults' Mental Health: The Mediating Role of Emotional Distress Tolerance* (Master's Thesis). University of Southern Mississippi.
- Perez, C. M. (2019). *Overparenting, Emotional Distress, and Subjective Well-Being: Facets of Emotional Distress Tolerance as Mediators* (Doctoral dissertations). Retrieved from: <https://aquila.usm.edu/dissertations/1608>
- Petrocchi, N., Pistella, J., Salvati, M., Carone, N., Laghi, F., & Baiocco, R. (2020). I embrace my LGB identity: Self-reassurance, social safeness, and the distinctive relevance of authenticity to well-being in Italian lesbians, gay men, and bisexual people. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy*, 17, 75-86. doi: 10.1007/s13178-018-0373-6
- Pleck, J. H. (2012). Integrating father involvement in parenting research. *Parenting*, 12, 243-253. doi: 10.1080/15295192.2012.683365
- Podsakoff, N. P. (2003). Common method biases in behavioral research: A critical review of the literature and recommended remedies. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 88(5), 10-1037. doi:10.1037/0021-9010.88.5.879
- Pouwer, F., Snoek, F. J., Van Der Ploeg, H. M., Adér, H. J., & Heine, R. J. (2000). The well-being questionnaire: evidence for a three-factor structure with 12 items (W-BQ12). *Psychological Medicine*, 30, 455-462. doi: 10.1017/S0033291700001719
- Procentese, F. (2005). *Padri in divenire: nuove sfide per i legami familiari*. Milano: Franco Angeli.
- Procentese, F. (2008). Percorsi di ridefinizione del ruolo paterno. In A. Taurino, P. Bastianoni, S. De Donatis (a cura di). *Scenari familiari in trasformazione. Teorie, strumenti e metodi per la ricerca clinico-dinamica e psicosociale sulle famiglie e le genitorialità* (pp. 315-329). Roma: Aracne editrice.
- Reed, K., Duncan, J. M., Lucier-Greer, M., Fixelle, C., & Ferraro, A. J. (2016). Helicopter parenting and emerging adult self-efficacy: Implications for mental and physical health. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 25, 3136-3149. doi: 10.1007/s10826-016-0466-x
- Riazi, A., Bradley, C., Barendse, S., & Ishii, H. (2006). Development of the Well-being questionnaire short-form in Japanese: The W-BQ12. *Health and quality of life outcomes*, 4, 1-10. doi: 10.1186/1477-7525-4-40
- Rochlen, A. B., McKelley, R. A., Suizzo, M.-A., & Scaringi, V. (2008). Predictors of relationship satisfaction, psychological well-being, and life satisfaction among stay-at-home fathers. *Psychology of Men & Masculinity*, 9, 17-28. doi: 10.1037/1524-9220.9.1.17
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *American Psychologist*, 55, 68-78. doi:10.1037/110003-066X.55.1.68
- Scharf, M., Rousseau, S., & Bsoul, S. (2017). Overparenting and young adults' interpersonal sensitivity: Cultural and parental gender-related diversity. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 26, 1356-1364. doi: 10.1007/s10826-016-0652-x
- Schiffirin, H. H., Erchull, M. J., Sendrick, E., Yost, J. C., Power, V., & Saldanha, E. R. (2019). The effects of maternal and paternal helicopter parenting on the self-determination and well-being of emerging adults. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 28, 3346-3359. doi: 10.1007/s10826-019-01513-6
- Schiffirin, H. H., Liss, M., Miles-McLean, H., Geary, K. A., Erchull, M. J., & Tashner, T. (2014). Helping or hovering? The effects of helicopter parenting on college students' well-being. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 23, 548-557. doi: 10.1007/s10826-013-9716-3
- Segrin, C., Woszidlo, A., Givertz, M., Bauer, A., & Taylor Murphy, M. (2012). The association between overparenting, parent-child communication, and entitlement and adaptive traits in adult children. *Family Relations*, 61, 237-252. doi: 10.1111/j.1741-3729.2011.00689.x
- Segrin, C., Woszidlo, A., Givertz, M., & Montgomery, N. (2013). Parent and child traits associated with overparenting. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 32, 569-595. doi: 10.1521/jscp.2013.32.6.569
- Shaw, K. (2017). *Hovering or Supporting: Do Parenting Behaviors Affect Their College-Offspring's Perseverance?* (Master's Thesis). Miami University.
- Tabachnick, B. G., & Fidell, L. S. (1996). *Using multivariate statistics* (3rd ed.). New York: Harper Collins.
- van Ingen, D. J., Freiheit, S. R., Steinfeldt, J. A., Moore, L. L., Wimer, D. J., Knutt, A. D., ... & Roberts, A. (2015). Helicopter parenting: The effect of an overbearing caregiving style on peer attachment and self-efficacy. *Journal of College Counseling*, 18, 7-20. doi: 10.1002/j.2161-1882.2015.00065.x
- Zimet, G. D., Dahlem, N. W., Zimet, S. G., & Farley, G. K. (1988). The multidimensional scale of perceived social support. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 52, 30-41. doi: 10.1207/s15327752jpa5201\_



## Appendix A

### Helicopter Parenting Instrument – Short Version (HPI-S) – English version (Pistella et al., 2020)

Read each of the following statements thinking about your parents (PARENT 1 and PARENT 2).  
Please, specify who you will refer to when you answer questions about parent 1 and parent 2.  
If you have only one parent, please respond on the parent 1 column specifying who you will refer to.

PARENT 1            mother                            father                            other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_  
PARENT 2            mother                            father                            other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

|                   |          |                   |                            |                |       |                |
|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|----------------|-------|----------------|
| 1                 | 2        | 3                 | 4                          | 5              | 6     | 7              |
| Strongly disagree | Disagree | Slightly disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Slightly agree | Agree | Strongly agree |

**My parent . . .**

|   | Parent 1 |   |   |   |   |   |   | Parent 2 |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|----------|---|---|---|---|---|---|----------|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. ... tries to make all of my major decisions  | 1        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 1        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 2. ... overreacts when I encounter a negative experience  | 1        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 1        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 3. ... sometimes invests more time and energy into my projects than I do                            | 1        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 1        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 4. ... considers oneself a bad parent when he or she does not step in and “save” me from difficulty | 1        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 1        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 5. ... feels like a bad parent when I make poor choices   | 1        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 1        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 6. ... voices his or her opinion about my personal relationships                                    | 1        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 1        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 7. ... considers himself or herself a good parent when he or she solves problems for me             | 1        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 1        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 8. ... insists that I keep him or her informed of my daily activities                               | 1        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 1        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 9. ...always tries to fix it, when I am going through a difficult situation                         | 1        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 1        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 10. ... thinks it is his or her job to shield me from adversity                                     | 1        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 1        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

*Note.* Items should be randomized for presentation in a survey. Total score is computed by averaging item ratings

## Appendix B

### Helicopter Parenting Instrument – Short version (HPI-S) – Italian version (Pistella et al., 2020)

Leggi ognuna delle seguenti affermazioni pensando ai tuoi genitori (GENITORE 1 e GENITORE 2).  
Prima di rispondere, specifica a chi farai riferimento quando risponderai alle domande sul genitore 1 e sul genitore 2.  
Se hai un solo genitore, utilizza solo la colonna genitore 1 specificando a chi farai riferimento.

GENITORE 1      mamma                      papà                      altro (specifica) \_\_\_\_\_  
GENITORE 2      mamma                      papà                      altro (specifica) \_\_\_\_\_

| 1                        | 2             | 3                      | 4                              | 5                   | 6          | 7                     |
|--------------------------|---------------|------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------|------------|-----------------------|
| Fortemente in disaccordo | In disaccordo | In parte in disaccordo | Né in accordo né in disaccordo | In parte in accordo | In accordo | Fortemente in accordo |

#### Il mio genitore . . .

|   | Genitore 1 |   |   |   |   |   |   | Genitore 2 |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. ...cerca di prendere tutte le decisioni importanti al posto mio                            | 1          | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 1          | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 2. ... ha delle reazioni eccessive quando mi imbatto in un'esperienza negativa                | 1          | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 1          | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 3. ... a volte investe più tempo ed energia di me nei miei progetti                           | 1          | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 1          | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 4. ... si considera un genitore cattivo quando non interviene e mi salva dalle difficoltà     | 1          | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 1          | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 5. ... si sente un genitore cattivo quando faccio scelte inadeguate                           | 1          | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 1          | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 6. ...esprime sempre il suo giudizio sui miei rapporti personali                              | 1          | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 1          | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 7. ...considera se stesso un buon genitore quando risolve i problemi per me                   | 1          | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 1          | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 8. ... insiste affinché io lo tenga informato delle mie attività quotidiane.                  | 1          | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 1          | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 9. ... prova sempre a risolvere il problema quando sto attraversando una situazione difficile | 1          | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 1          | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 10. ... pensa che il suo lavoro sia proteggermi dalle difficoltà                              | 1          | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 1          | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

*Nota.* Gli item dovrebbero essere randomizzati prima della somministrazione. Il punteggio di ciascuna dimensione viene calcolato mediante la media degli item