

Distress Tolerance Mediates the Relationship Between Maternal and Paternal Helicopter Parenting and Disordered Eating Among Female Emerging Adults

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Introduction

- Disordered eating has been well documented in emerging adults (e.g., Berg et al., 2009), who must combat new stressors as they explore independence.
- Disordered eating has shown to be associated with distress tolerance in clinical (Anestis et al., 2007) and non-clinical (Juarascio et al., 2019) samples.
- Disordered eating has also been linked with helicopter parenting (Soenens et al., 2008). In addition to this, helicopter parenting has shown to predict distress tolerance (Perez et al., 2019).

Current Study

- The current study investigated the relationship between maternal and paternal helicopter parenting, distress tolerance, and disordered eating in emerging adults.
- To the authors' knowledge, few studies have explored associations among these variables.
- The current study focuses on female participants, as globally disordered eating is more prevalent in women (Galmiche et al., 2019).

Participants

- Three hundred ninety-eight female undergraduate students ($M_{age} = 19.52$, $SD_{age} = 2.35$; White = 36.5%; Asian = 20.2%; Biracial = 12.4%; Latino = 9.9%; Black = 7.3%; Hispanic = 6%; Multiracial = 5.6%; Other = 1.7%; American Indian = 0.9%; Pacific Islander = 0.4%)

Materials

- Participants completed the Helicopter Parenting Instrument (Odenweller et al., 2014; $\alpha_M = .84$, $\alpha_P = .73$)
- Distress Tolerance Scale (Simons & Gaher, 2005; $\alpha = .92$)
- Dutch Eating Behavior Questionnaire (English version; Wardle, 1986; $\alpha = .92$)

Method

Discussion

- While previous research has found connections between similar variables separately (Berg et al., 2009; Perez et al., 2019) this study is the first the authors are aware of that found distress tolerance mediates the relationship between maternal helicopter parenting, paternal helicopter parenting, and disordered eating.
- Results suggest parental factors impact distress tolerance which in turn impacts adolescent eating habits.
- When treating emerging adults for disordered eating it may be useful to examine how helicopter parenting contributes to low distress tolerance and explore how distress tolerance in turn influences disordered eating.

Limitations & Future Directions

- The current study used self-report measures which can influence data accuracy.
- A number of data points had to be discarded due to a lack of paternal helicopter parenting data.
- Future research should explore this relationship in cultures with divergent attitudes towards independence during this phase of life.
- Future studies should explore this relationship in other phases of life (childhood, early adolescents, etc.)
- Future research should analysis this relationship in non-female populations.

Fig. 1. Structural Models of the Mediation Analysis

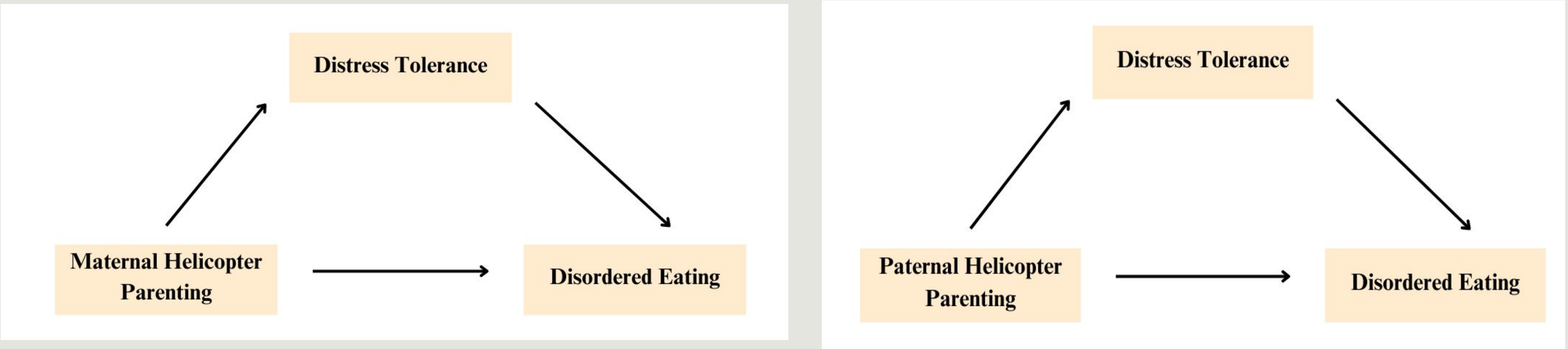


Table 1. Descriptive Statistics and Correlations for Study Variables

Correlations and Descriptives for the Study Variables							
	1	2	3	4	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	α
1. Helicopter Parenting (mothers)	-				3.76	1.04	.84
2. Helicopter Parenting (fathers)	0.39***	-			2.89	0.78	.73
3. Distress Tolerance	-0.20***	-0.17**	-		3.08	0.78	.92
4. Disordered Eating	0.20***	0.12*	-0.21***	-	2.81	0.60	.92

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Results

- Correlations were significant among all key study variables (Table 1).
- PROCESS (Hayes, 2013) was used to examine the potential mediating effect of distress tolerance on the relationship between disordered eating and both maternal and paternal helicopter parenting.
- Results indicated distress tolerance mediated the relationships between both maternal helicopter parenting and disordered eating, $\beta = 0.02$, 95% CI [0.01, 0.05], and paternal helicopter parenting and disordered eating $\beta = 0.03$, 95% CI [0.01, 0.06].

