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## The Effect of Helicopter Parenting on Self-Differentiation Among Indonesian Emerging Adults: A Cross-Sectional Study Based on Bowen Family Systems Theory

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### ABSTRACT

Emerging adulthood is a critical developmental stage marked by increasing independence and evolving family dynamics. A key challenge in family counseling in this transitional period is facilitating the balance between parental support and the development of self-sufficiency. This quantitative study examines the relationship between Helicopter Parenting (HP) and Differentiation of Self (DoS) among Indonesian emerging adults and its implications towards family counseling, using Bowen Family Systems Theory as a framework. A cross-sectional design was employed, with data collected from 215 Indonesian participants aged 18-30. Participants completed measures of perceived HP and DoS, and results were analyzed using correlation and regression analyses. Findings show a negative effect of HP on overall DoS, particularly in emotional distancing and relational sensitivity. These results support the notion that overparenting may hinder the individuation of emerging adults, reinforcing emotional reactivity and relational dependence, indicating a family projection process. The importance of understanding the effects of HP and the family projection process on the well-being of the family and future research directions are discussed.

### Kata Kunci:

Pembedaan Diri, Masa  
Dewasa Awal,  
Gaya Pengasuhan *Helicopter*

### ABSTRAK

Masa dewasa muda merupakan tahap perkembangan yang penting yang ditandai dengan meningkatnya kemandirian dan dinamika keluarga yang berkembang. Tantangan utama yang ditemukan dalam konseling keluarga dalam transisi ini adalah memfasilitasi keseimbangan antara dukungan orang tua dan pengembangan kemandirian. Penelitian kuantitatif ini meneliti hubungan antara Helicopter Parenting (HP) dan Diferensiasi Diri (DoS) di kalangan orang dewasa muda Indonesia, dengan menggunakan Teori Sistem Keluarga Bowen sebagai kerangka kerja. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain cross-sectional, dengan data yang dikumpulkan dari 215 partisipan Indonesia yang berusia 18-30 tahun. Para partisipan menyelesaikan pengukuran persepsi HP dan DoS, dan hasilnya dianalisis menggunakan analisis korelasi dan regresi. Studi menemukan bahwa terdapat efek negatif HP pada hasil akhir DoS, terutama pada *emotional distancing* dan *relational sensitivity*. Hasil ini mendukung gagasan bahwa pengasuhan yang berlebihan dapat menghambat individuasi orang dewasa yang baru tumbuh, memperkuat reaktivitas emosional dan ketergantungan relasional, mengindikasikan sebuah proses proyeksi keluarga. Pentingnya memahami dampak HP dan proses proyeksi keluarga terhadap kesejahteraan keluarga dan arah penelitian di masa depan dibahas.

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## INTRODUCTION

Emerging Adulthood marks the stage where an individual transitions from adolescence to adulthood (Arnett et al., 2014). Distinct from adolescence, emerging adulthood is a period characterized by the stress of transitioning into college or work, further exploration of personal identity and uncertainty due to a lack of clear life scripts (Settersten, 2012). Taken from a family life cycle perspective, not only is there transition in the life of the emerging adult, but also in the parent-child relationship and in the family, characterized by the gradual separation or individuation of the emerging adult from their family of origin and the renegotiation of family boundaries (McGoldrick et al., 2015).

McGoldrick et al. (2015) notes how cases of family counseling with parents of emerging adult children often focus on conflict regarding mismatched expectations and lack of clarity of planning for the adult child's self-sufficiency and emotional patterns that inhibit parents to let go of their children. This is even more pertinent as we observe the phenomena of increased parental support in the current generation of emerging adults. For instance, a 2024 report by the Pew Research Center found that less than half (45%) of adults ages 18-34 are completely financially independent from their parents (Minkin et al., 2024). Similarly, based on the 2023 Annual Youth Report by Badan Pusat Statistika (BPS) Indonesia, only 7 out of 100 emerging adults (ages 16-30 years old) were the head of their own household, while around 75% of Indonesian emerging adults reported still living with their parents (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2023). Settersten (2012) explains that nowadays parents may also be hesitant to withdraw parental support in this stage especially if they view their emerging adult children as not having enough social or financial capital to be self-reliant. This is also evident in Indonesia where many college graduates need to depend on parental support to survive due to low starting salaries and high living costs (Cahya, 2019). Therefore, navigating and maintaining the parent-child relationship with an emerging adult child may be a challenging endeavor for families.

### **Bowen Family Systems Theory**

One of the most prominent theories in the field of family counseling, especially in addressing the parent-child relationship, is Bowen Family Systems Therapy (Nichols & Davis, 2020). Bowen Family Systems Theory (BFST), developed by Murray Bowen in the 1970s, views that family relationships can be conceptualized as an emotional system and dynamics or relational patterns as ways that the family emotional system manage anxiety (Bowen, 1978). BFST holds that all human relationships being driven by two counterbalancing forces; 1) togetherness, which is the force that drives people towards closeness and intimacy in relationships, and 2) separateness, which is the force that drives people towards individuality and autonomy, leading to more distance in relationships. When families are unable to balance these two forces well, there will be increased anxiety in the family system, which may lead to dysfunctional relational patterns.

According to BFST, the ability for family members to manage these life forces and the anxiety that may occur is based on their level of self-differentiation. Differentiation of Self (DoS) is defined as an individual's ability to distinguish between their internal feelings and rational thoughts and to maintain their self identity while in connection with others in a family system, without being emotionally fused (Bowen, 1978). DoS was first conceptualized as a construct with

four dimensions namely I-Position (IP) and Emotional Reactivity (ER), Fusion with Others (FO) and Emotional Cut-Off (EC) (Skowron & Friedlander, 1998; Skowron & Schmitt, 2003). IP refers to the ability to maintain a sense of self and individuality in thinking, feeling, and behaving in the face of others who are different. ER is the tendency to react emotionally in interpersonal contexts, instead of being able to utilize both rationality and emotions in their decision-making. EC describes the extent to which a person needs to avoid close relationships to maintain autonomy from interpersonal impact. In contrast, FO describes an individual's tendency for over-involvement or self-identification when in relationships and dependency with others to regulate relational anxiety. FO is often seen through the inability to maintain healthy relational boundaries. Bowen viewed that one's level of DoS will determine their ability to adjust to life's stressors and their overall level of functioning (Brown & Errington, 2024).

There is good empirical support for BFST, especially DoS. Previous studies found that lower levels of DoS are linked to worse psychological outcomes in emerging adults, which include higher levels of anxiety and depression, lower subjective well-being and higher psychological distress (Elena Marie Piteo & MacKay, 2021; Busonera et al., 2024). Based on a scoping review, Calatrava et al. (2022) also found that DoS predicted higher levels of functioning, psychological health and relational quality and was positively associated with better intergenerational relationships. In an Indonesian context, several studies with emerging adults have also found that higher levels of DoS predicted higher life satisfaction, lower levels of anxiety and higher romantic relationship satisfaction (Aditya et al., 2022; Siregar & Aditya, 2024).

In terms of parent-child relationships, BFST asserts that one's level of DoS is primarily shaped by their parent's level of DoS, triangulation and the family projection process (Bowen, 1978). When parents have low DoS, they are prone to experiencing higher anxiety and emotional distress in their relationship, leading to triangulation, which is when they recruit another family member (typically a child) to ease the tension between the couple. A particular way parents may triangulate their child is through a family projection process, which is when the parent is fixated on a child and projects their own anxieties and fears on the child, leading to fusion with the child. This results in the child internalizing their parent's anxieties and developing a lower DoS (Nichols & Davis, 2020). Parenting practices that come out of patterns of triangulation and the family projection process will hinder their child's ability to successfully launch into adulthood through the negative impact on their child's level of DoS. Thus, a significant goal in family counseling according to BFST is to help parents develop insight into relational patterns that lead to lower levels of DoS in the family, increase their levels of DoS while decreasing anxiety-driven parenting practices, allowing their children to develop greater differentiation as well.

Previous studies also support the notion that parents have a crucial role in influencing children's level of DoS. Freeman & Almond (2009) found that parental responsiveness was a significant predictor for higher levels of DoS in adolescents. In terms of adult children, Kim et al. (2014) investigated the relationship between DoS and family functioning for South Korean contexts. They found that higher levels of DoS, especially higher levels of IP and lower levels of EC, were linked with more flexibility and more balanced cohesion in the family. Dolz-del-Castellar and Oliver (2021) also found that healthy family functioning predicted higher levels of DoS in Spanish young adults. Therefore, when evaluating the DoS of emerging adults, it is important to explore the role of parenting practices, especially those that affect family functioning.

## Helicopter Parenting

A specific type of parenting practice that has been a subject of much research in the recent years is in regards to overparenting or otherwise known as helicopter parenting (Vigdal & Brønnick, 2022). Padilla-Walker & Nelson (2012) first identified helicopter parenting (HP) as a distinct style of parenting that is characterized by low autonomy granting, but high levels of emotional support and parental involvement. It is characterized by well-intentioned parenting behaviors that is overly concerned for the well-being of their children that lead to overinvolvement in their children's lives.

Previous studies have found that HP is linked to negative psychological outcomes in emerging adults such as poorer emotional functioning and decision making, lower self-efficacy, self-esteem, and higher levels psychological distress (Darlow et al., 2017; Luebbe et al., 2018; Van Ingen et al., 2015). A meta-analysis on HP and various kinds of adjustments in emerging adulthood also revealed that there was a significant association between perceived HP and higher levels of anxiety and depressive symptoms, lower self-efficacy, and poorer regulatory skills including emotion regulation skills (McCoy et al., 2024). Additionally, several studies also reveal that HP is linked with worse family relationships, especially parent-child relationships (Rote et al., 2020; Segrin et al., 2015).

Cui et al. (2022) suggests that little is still known about the relational factors between the parent and child that may be crucial in understanding the link between HP and the negative developmental outcomes in emerging adults. Perhaps a relational explanation that may underly this relationship is the presence of the family projection process and diminished levels of DoS in emerging adults. However, there is currently a lack of research explicitly linking HP behaviors to DoS, much less research specific to an Indonesian context.

Although sparse, there are several studies that seem to support the role of HP in impacting one's level of DoS. Although not specifically helicopter parenting, Van Petegem et al. (2022) investigated overprotective parenting practices from a BSFT perspective in an adolescent population. They found that triangulation was in fact significantly related to overprotective parenting, which was then positively associated with higher levels of anxiety symptoms in adolescents. Furthermore, Dumont (2019) presented a case study that suggests HP may also be conceptualized as a function of the family projection process, where parents' overinvolvement is a manifestation of the family system's anxiety in facing a significant family transition, which then negatively impact an emerging adult's psychological outcomes through their decreased level of DoS. This is also supported by findings that links HP with higher parental anxiety and internalizing behaviors and higher levels of anxiety in emerging adults (Segrin et al., 2015).

In addition, there are several studies that highlight the negative effect of HP on psychological and relational outcomes such as a higher dependency upon others, more neurotic tendencies, poorer self-efficacy, increased mistrust towards peers, and lower prosocial tendencies (Odenweller et al., 2014; Schiffrin et al., 2021; Van Ingen et al., 2015). When viewed from a BFST standpoint, these outcomes do reflect lower levels of DoS in the emerging adult children, particularly through higher emotional reactivity, higher fusion with others, higher emotional cut-off tendencies and a lower ability to maintain an I-Position (Skowron & Schmitt, 2003).

As there has not been a study exploring HP from a BFST lens, particularly how this parenting practice affects the differentiation process of young adults, this study aims to address this gap in the emerging adult and family transition literature, as well as provide empirical support for the use of BSFT in counseling contexts. The purpose of this current study is to examine the effects of HP towards the levels of DoS among emerging adults in Indonesia. The hypothesis is that HP will be a significant predictor of lower levels of DoS, specifically a predictor of higher emotional distancing, higher relational sensitivity, and lower levels of maintaining identity (see Figure 1).

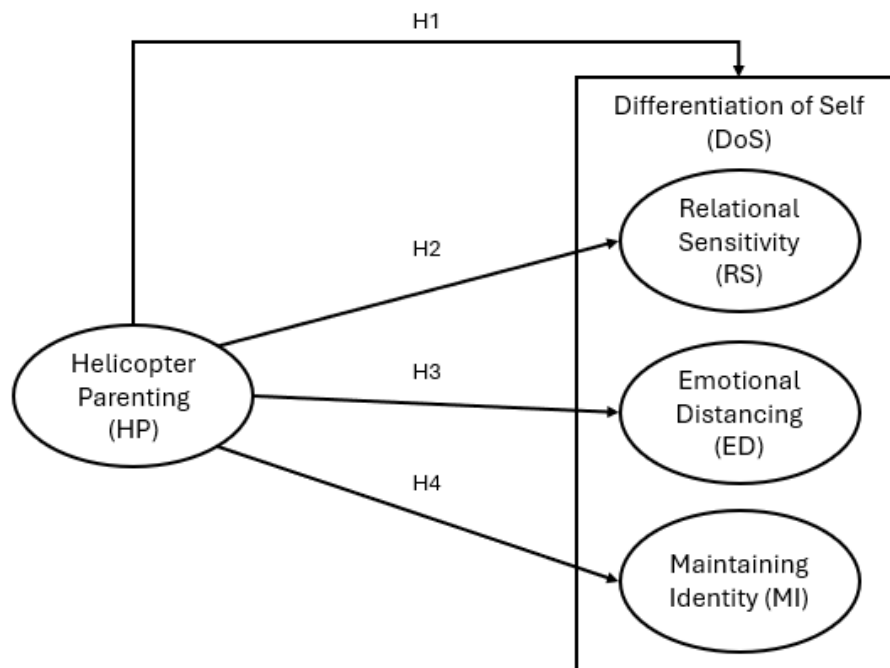


Figure 1. Research Model

## METHODS

### *Research Design*

This quantitative study employs a cross-sectional research design and a linear regression analysis to investigate the effects of Helicopter Parenting (HP) behaviors, as the independent variable, on the level of Differentiation of Self (DoS), as the dependent variable, in Indonesian emerging adults.

### *Participants*

Convenience sampling, a non-probability sampling technique that recruits participants based on availability was used for this study (Gravetter & Forzano, 2018). This method was utilized to ensure enough participants that fit the following criteria: 1) adults between 18-30 years old, 2) of Indonesian citizenship, 3) currently living in Indonesia, and 4) having two living parents. The age range reflected the relevant developmental stage of emerging adulthood which starts at 18 and ends at age 30 (Arnett et al., 2014). The fourth criterion was added to ensure that participants were

able to report both paternal and maternal helicopter parenting behaviors. Both these criteria were also utilized by Elena Marie Piteo and MacKay (2021) in their study of parenting behaviors and DoS with emerging adults. Furthermore, while the criteria for two living parents may impact on the generalizability for individuals with differing family structures, it was used to ensure consistency in measuring the impact of both parents in the lives of the participants.

### ***Operational Definitions***

In this study, the independent variable, Helicopter Parenting (HP), is defined as a parenting practice characterized by low autonomy granting and high levels of emotional support and parental involvement observed through behaviors from both mothers and fathers (Padilla-Walker & Nelson, 2012). The dependent variable, Differentiation of Self (DoS), is understood as the combination of the intrapersonal ability to distinguish between one's internal feelings and rational thoughts and the interpersonal to maintain individual autonomy while remaining emotionally connected to others (Bowen, 1978).

DoS typically comprises of four sub-scales: I-Position (IP) and Emotional Reactivity (ER) to reflect the intrapersonal dimension and Fusion with Others (FO) and Emotional Cutoff (EC) to reflect the interpersonal dimension. IP is defined as the ability to maintain personal beliefs and self-identity in the face of external social pressures. ER refers to how much a person reacts emotionally to various situations, instead of responding rationally. FO is how much a person relies on others for self-identification and has difficulty maintaining relational boundaries. Finally, EC refers to a person's tendency to resolve tension in relationships by disengaging emotionally.

Previous studies examining Asian populations found that the FO dimension is problematic because self-identification and dependence with family are forms of closeness or loyalty and are positive values in collective cultures (Kim et al., 2014; H. Lee & Johnson, 2017). Therefore, following the recommendation for Asian contexts, this study utilizes the three sub-scales designed by Lee and Johnson (2017), which are Emotional Distancing (ED), previously EC, Maintaining Identity (MI), previously IP and Relational Sensitivity (RS), a combination of FO and ER.

### ***Instruments***

This study uses the Helicopter Parenting Instrument – Short Version (HPI-S) developed by Pistella et al., (2020), which has been adapted into the Indonesian language and validated by Bolang et al., (2025). The measure assesses the participants' perceptions of their parents' helicopter parenting behaviors through 20 self-report items. The participants were asked to rate their agreement using a 7-point Likert Scale with 1 representing "strongly disagree" and 7 representing "strongly agree" on 10 statements for their mother and 10 statements for their father. Higher HPI-S scores indicate a higher perception of helicopter parenting behaviors. In this study, the instrument demonstrated good internal consistency with an Cronbach Alpha value of  $\alpha = 0.903$ , indicating strong instrument reliability.

In this study, DoS is assessed using the short-form Differentiation of Self Scale- (DoS-SF; Drake et al, 2015) that was adapted by Lee & Johnson (2017) for Asian contexts and further adapted and validated in the Indonesian language by Aditya et al. (2022). DoS-SF utilizes three

sub-scales: Emotional Distancing (ED), previously EC, Maintaining Identity (MI), previously IP and Relational Sensitivity (RS), a combination of FO and ER (see Table 1 for items per subscale). The participants were asked to rate their agreement through 20 self-report items on how representative items were using a 6-point Likert Scale with 1 representing “not at all characteristic of me ” and 6 representing “very characteristic of me”. Total scores for each subscale were obtained by averaging the responses within each subscale, while the total DoS score is calculated by averaging all item scores. Higher scores for ED indicate a higher tendency to avoid emotional distancing and higher scores for RS indicate lower relational sensitivity or an ability to withstand the external relational distress, while higher scores for MI indicate a greater ability to maintain one’s identity in the midst of other’s differing perceptions. Finally, higher DoS scores indicate a higher ability of self-differentiation. The DoS-SF demonstrated good internal consistency, with Cronbach Alpha values of  $\alpha = 0.82$  (ED),  $\alpha = 0.89$  (RS),  $\alpha = 0.79$  (MI) and  $\alpha = 0.89$  (DoS), indicating strong instrument reliability.

**Table 1. Items for DoS-SF (Drake et al., 2015; H. Lee & Johnson, 2017)**

Sub-scale	Items
Emotional Distancing	I tend to distance myself when people get too close to me. I’m often uncomfortable when people get too close to me. When one of my relationships becomes very intense, I feel the urge to run away from it.
Relational Sensitivity	I usually need a lot of encouragement from others when starting a big job or task. When my spouse/partner criticizes me, it bothers me for days. At times my feelings get the best of me and I have trouble thinking clearly. I feel a need for approval from virtually everyone in my life. At times, I feel as if I’m riding an emotional roller-coaster. I’m overly sensitive to criticism. I often agree with others just to appease them. If I have had an argument with my spouse/partner, I tend to think about it all day.
Maintaining Identity	I tend to remain pretty calm under stress. No matter what happens in my life, I know that I’ll never lose my sense of who I am. There’s no point in getting upset about things I cannot change. I’m fairly self-accepting.

## ***Procedure***

A SurveyMonkey online questionnaire was utilized and distributed to emerging adults in Indonesia using social media such as Facebook and Instagram to obtain the data. The questionnaire included questions regarding demographic data and measures for the variables of this study. As a research incentive, participants had the opportunity to enter a lottery to win Rp. 100,000 in the form of electronic cash, with 50 participants selected as recipients. Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the Internal Review Board (IRB), Center for Research & Community Development (CRCD), Universitas Pelita Harapan (no. P-053-FPsi/I/2024).

## ***Data Analysis***

A descriptive analysis, Pearson product-moment correlation analysis and linear regression analysis were conducted using version 30 of the IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive analyses were used to observe the demographic characteristics of our sample

as well as an overview of our data, a Pearson product-moment correlation analysis was used to observe the correlations between study variables, and the linear regression analysis was used to test our hypothesis.

## RESULTS

A total of 215 Indonesian participants were recruited for this study all who fulfilled the criteria set for the sample. As demonstrated in Table 2, participants ranged from 18 to 30 years old ( $M_{age} = 25.7$ ,  $SD = 3.08$ ), with a substantial portion of participants being above the age 25 (57.2%), representing the criteria set for the relevant developmental stage, particularly later emerging adulthood when issues of autonomy are more relevant. Notably, there was a higher proportion (61.4%) of older female participants ( $M_{age} = 24.3$ ,  $SD = 2.59$ ) compared to their male counterparts ( $M_{age} = 22.04$ ,  $SD = 3.16$ ). Furthermore, in terms of ethnic background, although several ethnicities were represented, a majority of our participants were Javanese (56.8%). These demographic characteristics should be considered when interpreting the data for this study, as it may represent a more female and Javanese experience of parental dynamics.

In terms of marital status, there was quite an even distribution of those who were not yet married (49.8%) and those who were married at least once (50.2%). As marriage is often viewed as a marker of adulthood (Arnett et al., 2014), this balance enhances generalizability and allows for meaningful comparisons between emerging adults who are married and those who are not. Lastly, a majority of our sample reported financial independence from their parents (59.1%) and employed (74.03%), which is important to note, as financial autonomy may be a facet of the the parent-child relationship that is not as pertinent (see Table 2 for demographic details).

A descriptive analysis was conducted for each of the research variables (see Table 3). The results indicate a moderately high average of HP scores ( $M = 93.8$ ,  $SD = 22.0$ ), indicating a higher perception of helicopter parenting amongst the participants. Additionally, in terms of DoS scores, the mean and standard deviation scores show moderate levels of ED, RS, and overall DoS, whilst participants reported higher levels of MI. Results also show that HP, ED, and MI were slightly negative skewed, while RS and DoS were slightly positive skewed. According to George & Mallery (2024) as both the skewness and kurtosis values for all study variables fit the range of -2 to +2, the results fit the criteria of data symmetry for an acceptable normal distribution.

Next, a pearson-product moment correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationships between HP and DoS. Results indicated that HP was significantly negatively correlated with overall DoS scores ( $r = -.263$ ,  $p < .001$ ), as well as subscales ED ( $r = -.240$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and RS ( $r = -.335$ ,  $p < .001$ ). This means that higher perceived helicopter parenting behaviors are linked to a lower tendency to avoid emotional distancing and a lower ability to withstand relational sensitivity with others, which both demonstrates lower levels of self-differentiation. Yet, there was a weak positive correlation between HP and MI, as the relationship was revealed to be non-significant ( $r = .061$ ,  $p = .185$ ). Therefore, only ED, RS and DoS were included for the linear regression analyses.



**Table 2. Demographic Characteristics of Participants (N=215).**

Demographic Characteristics		N	%
Age Groups	18-25	92	42.8
	26-30	123	57.2
Gender	Female	132	61.4
	Male	83	38.6
Marital Status	Not Yet Married	107	49.8
	Once Married	108	50.2
Ethnic Background	Javanese	122	56.8
	Sundanese	37	17.2
	Tionghoa	11	5.10
	Betawi	8	3.70
	Others	37	17.2
Job	University Student	36	16.7
	Employed (Private Sector)	75	34.9
	Employed (Government)	5	2.33
	Freelancer	41	19.1
	Self-Employed	38	17.7
	Unemployed	20	9.30
Financial Status	Financially Independent	127	59.1
	Partially Dependent on Parents	58	26.9
	Fully Dependent on Parents	30	14.0

**Table 3. Descriptive Statistics and Correlations between HP and Study Variables.**

Variable	Range	Mean	SD	Skew.	Kurt.	1	2	3	4
1. HP	20-140	93.8	22.0	-.204	-.348	-	-	-	-
2. ED	1-6	3.51	1.41	-.123	-.860	-.240**	-	-	-
3. MI	1-6	4.29	1.08	-.448	-.301	.061	.164*	-	-
4. RS	1-6	3.18	1.18	.254	-.693	-.335**	.462**	.406**	-
5. DoS	1-6	3.56	0.95	.106	-.522	-.263**	.598**	.659**	.931**

\*  $p < .05$  \*\*  $p < .001$ **Table 4. Linear Regression Analysis with HP as a Predictor.**

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	<i>T</i>	$R^2$	<i>F</i>
ED	-.015	.004	-.240*	-3.61	.058	13.02*
RS	-.018	.003	-.335*	-5.18	.112	26.87*
DoS	-.011	.003	-.263*	-3.98	.069	15.83*

\*  $p < .001$ 

After tests for normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity indicated that all assumptions were met, we conducted three separate linear regression analyses for HP as a predictor for subscales ED and RS, as well as for the overall DoS score (see Table 4). HP was shown to be a significant predictor for ED ( $p < .001$ ), accounting for 5.8% for the variance found in ED scores ( $R^2 = .058$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and for RS ( $p < .001$ ), accounting for 11.2% for the variance found in RS scores ( $R^2 = .112$ ,  $p < .001$ ). HP was also found as a significant predictor for overall DoS scores ( $Fp < .001$ ), accounting for 6.9% for the variance found in DoS scores ( $R^2 = .069$ ,  $p < .001$ ). As the regression coefficients for all three analyses were found to be significant, the results demonstrated that higher HP scores predicted lower ED scores, RS and overall DoS scores.

## DISCUSSION

This study aimed to investigate the effect of helicopter parenting (HP) on differentiation of self (DoS) levels of emerging adults in Indonesia. Through linear regression analyses, HP was

found as a significant predictor for overall DoS, as well as the subscales of relational sensitivity (RS) and emotional distancing (ED). Higher levels of HP predicted lower scores in overall DoS, ED and RS scores, which means that more HP behaviors meant lower self-differentiation, more relational sensitivity, and a higher tendency to emotionally distance or cut-off in emerging adults. However, when observing HP and maintaining identity (MI), there was a very slight positive relationship for HP and MI scores, but it was not significant.

Our overall study findings do align with previous research indicating that HP negatively impacts emerging adult development (Cui et al., 2022; Odenweller et al., 2014; Vigdal & Brønnick, 2022). Although there are no studies that explicitly address relational sensitivity, our findings do align with McCoy et al. (2024) who found that higher levels of HP predicted poorer regulatory skills. Similarly, Odenweller et al. (2014) also found that HP is detrimental to their children's interpersonal skills, particularly in terms of interpersonal dependency, reflecting fusion with others, and neuroticism, reflecting emotional reactivity. Furthermore, Van Ingen et al. (2015) who investigated the effects of HP on peer attachment in college students, also found that higher levels of HP was linked with poor peer communication, feeling alienated from peers, and higher mistrust towards peers. All of these factors characterize someone with lower DoS, whose tendency is to manage anxiety by emotionally cut-off from others.

Likewise, similar to our findings regarding emotional distancing, Schifffrin et al. (2021) also found that HP had an indirect effect towards prosocial tendencies such as empathic concern and perspective-taking that is mediated by a sense of relatedness, where higher HP predicted a lower fulfillment of relatedness or connection in their children, which is then linked to poorer prosocial tendencies. This corresponds with our findings as individuals who are prone to emotional distancing have trouble in maintaining empathy and connection with others (Nichols & Davis, 2020).

However, our findings diverge from previous research findings regarding HP and self-efficacy and sense of autonomy that indicate a negative relationship between the HP and MI (Odenweller et al., 2014; Van Ingen et al., 2015). As these previous studies focused on solely Western participants, a possible explanation is the role of cultural family values in shaping one's ability to maintain an I-Position. A study investigating associations between familism, psychological adjustment and DoS among Korean emerging adults similarly found that family support and subjugation of self for the family was not significantly related to an ability to maintain an I-Position (Lee & Solheim, 2018). Interestingly, when looking at overall DoS scores, there was still an overall significant negative effect of familism on DoS, which is also reflected in our findings.

Moreover, Indonesian parents often adhere to a form of familism that emphasize the importance of family unity and collective identity, transmitting these values to their children (Riany et al., 2017). In contrast to Western contexts, an important aspect of maintaining identity in Indonesian emerging adults include maintaining this family identity in relationship with others. Parental involvement in instilling these values may support the maintenance of the child's sense of self derived from their family identity. Therefore, a clear sense of family identity may be a better predictor of this dimension when compared to HP or even other parenting practices. However, more research support is needed to support this notion.

Nevertheless, our overall findings indicate a negative effect of HP on the process of differentiation. Even though benevolent in intention, helicopter parents' tendencies to intervene when their children encounter difficult situations may take away opportunities for them to practice using their own rationality to cope with their own problems, leading to patterns of avoidance or over-dependency on others for self-regulation (Odenweller et al., 2014). Therefore, these adult children have to reluctantly depend on their parents to solve their issues even when they desire more autonomy. On the other hand, parents who actually want their children to be more independent may find it difficult to not intervene when they perceive this inability to cope. As a result, a reinforcing cycle occurs to maintain this parent-child dynamic, leading to more difficulties in the adult child to practice their own problem-solving.

From a BFST lens, this effect can also be seen as a manifestation of the family projection process. When the family system undergoes significant change, such as the launching of an adult child, they need to renegotiate boundaries and support while experiencing heightened anxiety about the future (Dumont, 2019). Helicopter parents may project their anxieties about their children's readiness in dealing with their own problems and so are motivated to soothe their own anxiety by intervening and enabling further emotional fusion with their children (Nichols & Davis, 2020). Parents who project this anxiety onto their children, becoming overly involved in their adjustment, may inadvertently foster lower differentiation of self in their children. As a result, their children internalize these anxieties, develop lower levels of DoS and are limited to cope with their problems through fusion or cutoff, which ultimately hinders their development.

### ***Limitations and Future Directions***

While this study provides valuable insight regarding helicopter parenting practices and its effect on differentiation of self, there are several limitations that need to be considered. Firstly, as we used convenience sampling to ensure we had sufficient participants, there are limitations to the generalizability of our findings. As a majority of our participants were in the later years of emerging adulthood, female, and Javanese, perhaps the findings of this study may not be generalizable to younger, male emerging adults with a more diverse cultural background. Therefore, future studies may utilize more representative sampling techniques and provide a sample that is more representative of the broader emerging adult population in Indonesia.

Another limitation of our study is that our data relied solely on self-reports from the emerging adult, without incorporating parental perspectives. This was done to limit the reporting bias that could occur if we relied on parents to report their own parenting behaviors. However, we do acknowledge that dyadic data from both parents and their emerging adult children is pertinent to explore a more comprehensive understanding of this phenomenon. Therefore, future studies may utilize research techniques that allow for both parental and child perspectives to be represented.

Lastly, in terms of the demonstrating triangulation and the family projection process, due to the lack of previous research, we were limited to first explore the relationship between HP and DoS. There is more research needed to explore how DoS may serve as a mediator to other developmental and psychological outcomes such as psychological adjustment, mental health symptoms, and relational outcomes. Furthermore, we were also limited in exploring parental

factors that led to HP use. Therefore, future studies can explore the role of parental anxiety, level of DoS and/or triangulation tendencies to provide even more empirical support for understanding this phenomenon from a BFST lens.

### ***Implications for Family Counseling***

As this study demonstrated the significant impact of helicopter parenting practices on the differentiation of self levels in emerging adults, there are several implications that are pertinent to family counseling contexts. First of all, there is now more evidence for the significant impact of HP on the socioemotional challenges that Indonesian emerging adults face through their level of DoS. As counselors encounter emerging adults who experience struggles with emotional reactivity or a tendency to emotionally fuse or cut-off in relationships, it may insightful to explore the emerging adult's level of DoS and possible HP behaviors in their family of origin. In doing so, providing psychoeducation about HP and its impact on the individuation or differentiation process be beneficial for families to make informed changes in their interactions.

Moreover, this study also supports the relevance of the BFST approach in conceptualizing and addressing family issues in Indonesia. When family counselors encounter families struggling with launching an emerging adult along with adult children who have low DoS and parents who engage in HP practices, it would be good to explore whether triangulation has occurred. McGoldrick et al. (2015) highlights that in this family life stage, parents often have heightened relational anxiety due to possible marital tension that has been eased by patterns of triangulation in the past, which is now challenged as the child is inevitably has more opportunities to separate from the family. As a result, they may be driven to overly engage in their child's lives and inhibit them to fully differentiate from their family of origin.

As guided by BSFT, counselors can address this triangulation process through a training for differentiation of self. Firstly, counselors can guide the adult child to detriangulate from his/her parents by developing healthy relational boundaries and practicing better emotion regulation strategies to reduce emotional reactivity (Nichols & Davis, 2020). Next, they can facilitate the exploration of anxieties and family of origin experiences that have shaped their emotional functioning for both the young adult and the family. Lastly, they can coach the whole family in increasing their ability to maintain an I-Position in relationships through role-playing and homework (Dumont, 2019; Nichols & Davis, 2020).

### **CONCLUSION**

The role of helicopter parenting behaviors in an emerging adult's journey of independence is a notable phenomenon to study. This study demonstrated that HP does negatively affect an Indonesian emerging adults' level of differentiation of self, particularly in terms of relational sensitivity and emotional distancing. As a theoretical contribution, the findings of this study highlight the family's continual influence in the lives of emerging adults and provides empirical support for BSFT for an Indonesian context. As one of the few studies to examine this phenomenon from a family systems perspective, this research opens the door to numerous opportunities for further exploration in this area.

As a practical contribution in the field of guidance counseling, insights from this study may support counselors in guiding emerging adults and their families to work towards independence

by fostering awareness of how parental dynamics impact the emerging adults' developmental outcomes. In cases of young adults who struggle to navigate autonomy and relationships in educational settings, it may be beneficial to assess their levels of differentiation, examine the role of family dynamics in shaping these challenges, and apply BSFT in the treatment of clients and their families.

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