

Helicopter parents take extreme approach to homework

2 February 2016, by Amanda Weaver



A QUT study has questioned the approach some helicopter parents take to their children's homework

Parents who take the overparenting approach, known as helicopter parenting, are possibly hindering their child's development by becoming too heavily involved in homework.

A QUT study involving 866 parents from three Brisbane Catholic/independent schools found those who endorse overparenting beliefs tend to take more responsibility for their child doing their [homework](#) and also expect their child's teachers to take more responsibility for it.

"There is concern this greater [parental involvement](#) in ensuring homework is completed, particularly in high school, may be impacting the child's ability to take responsibility for their homework or understand the consequences of their actions," said QUT Clinical Psychologist Dr Judith Locke.

"The irony is a [helicopter parenting](#) style with the goal of fostering academic achievement could be undermining the development of independent and resilient performance in their children.

"Parental involvement in a child's school experience is considered an important factor in their academic success and homework is a key aspect of that. However it seems some parents may take the notion too far and continue to assist children at an age the child should be taking most of the responsibility for their academic work, such as the senior school years.

"Parental assistance with homework should slowly reduce as a child gets older and daily parental involvement in an adolescent's homework would be developmentally inappropriate."

"These parents appear to not only help their child more, they also expect their child's teachers to help them more, particularly in the middle school and senior school years.

"We know from recent research, that there may be a point where high levels of parental assistance ceases to be beneficial, especially as children reach adolescence and young adulthood, and can result in poor resilience, entitlement and reduced sense of responsibility."

Dr Locke said studies in America which reported on parental over-involvement in a student's university life found it to be extremely detrimental.

"Some parents choose their adult child's subjects, edit or complete their assignments and badger lecturers to improve their child's grades," Dr Locke said.

"When parents are making these decisions or providing academic pressure it has been found the adult student disengages from their education and often has increased depression and decreased satisfaction with life.

"The results of our study may go some way to explain why some parents are continuing to be highly involved in their adult child's academic life."

The 'Overparenting and Homework: The Student's Task, But Everyone's Responsibility' study, which used the new Locke Parenting Scale (LPS) overparenting measure, will be published by the Journal of Psychologists and Counsellors in Schools.

Participating [parents](#) completed online questionnaires about their parenting beliefs and intentions, and their attitudes associated with their child's homework.

"Parental help can be constructive by showing interest and coaching them to complete their work, but unconstructive assistance includes telling a child the right answer or taking over from them when they are completing school tasks," Dr Locke said.

"Those who scored highly on the LPS measure in our study may have been reacting to greater academic difficulties of their child and without an objective measure of the child's academic skills we cannot rule that out.

"However, this study is one of the first to indicate that overparenting may result in parenting actions and expectations of their [child's school](#) which may not enable children to fully develop academic responsibility and self-regulation skills."

Dr Locke added that further research should examine whether extreme parental attitudes and reported behaviours were impacting on a student's sense of responsibility for their homework.

More information: Overparenting and homework: The student's task, but everyone's responsibility. eprints.qut.edu.au/92434/

Provided by Queensland University of Technology
APA citation: Helicopter parents take extreme approach to homework (2016, February 2) retrieved 12 June 2021 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2016-02-helicopter-parents-extreme-approach-homework.html>

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