



The Impact of Helicopter Parenting on Students' Learning Independence: A Critical Review from the Perspective of Islamic Education and the Concept of *Tawakkal*

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Abstract: Helicopter parenting significantly impedes students' learning independence by fostering academic anxiety, diminishing intrinsic motivation, and inducing learned helplessness. This critical review analyzes the detrimental impacts of overparenting and proposes an alternative conceptual framework rooted in Islamic *Tarbiyah* (holistic education) and *Tawakkal* (trust in God). Utilizing a qualitative library research method, this study synthesizes contemporary psychological findings with Islamic educational philosophy. The findings reveal that helicopter parenting fundamentally violates the child's innate disposition (*fitrah*) and stems from a profound spiritual deficit in parental *Tawakkal*. By shifting the parental role from an intrusive controller to a facilitating *murabbi* (nurturer), parents can effectively balance *Ikhtiar* (sincere personal effort) with reliance on divine decree. This vital paradigm shift alleviates parental anxiety and empowers students to develop resilient autonomy and self-regulated learning skills. Ultimately, integrating secular psychological insights with Islamic spiritual principles provides a comprehensive, holistic solution for educators and parents to cultivate independent, purpose-driven learners equipped to navigate modern academic challenges successfully in higher education and beyond.

Keywords: Helicopter parenting; Learning independence; Islamic *Tarbiyah*

Introduction

In contemporary educational landscapes, "helicopter parenting"—characterized by overinvolvement, overprotection, and excessive control over a child's life—has become increasingly prevalent. Driven by intense academic competition and parental anxiety regarding future success, modern parents often intervene excessively in their children's daily activities and academic endeavors (Dargis & Li, 2020). While initially intended to support and shield children from failure, this overparenting style frequently crosses the boundary from supportive involvement to intrusive micromanagement (Givertz & Segrin, 2014). Consequently, this phenomenon has sparked significant concern among educators and psychologists regarding its long-term developmental consequences for adolescents and young adults.

The most critical casualty of helicopter parenting is the development of learning independence, specifically the capacity for self-regulated learning

and academic autonomy. When parents consistently remove obstacles and dictate academic choices, students are deprived of the opportunity to develop essential problem-solving skills and intrinsic motivation (Wang & Cai, 2017). Recent empirical studies indicate that overparented students exhibit lower levels of academic resilience, higher rates of learned helplessness, and a diminished ability to manage their time and learning strategies independently (Hua et al., 2022; Wieland & Kucirka, 2020). Ultimately, constant parental hovering prevents students from internalizing the responsibility for their own educational journey, rendering them overly dependent on external validation.

Despite the extensive documentation of these negative psychological and academic outcomes within Western psychological paradigms, there remains a notable gap in the literature regarding alternative, culturally and spiritually grounded frameworks to address this issue. Most existing studies

predominantly rely on secular psychological theories, such as Self-Determination Theory, to explain the deficits caused by overparenting (Hong & Cui, 2023). There is a distinct scarcity of critical reviews that examine helicopter parenting through the lens of Islamic educational philosophy (*Tarbiyah*) and its spiritual counter-narratives. Exploring this phenomenon from an Islamic perspective is crucial, as it offers a holistic paradigm that addresses not only the behavioral symptoms but also the underlying spiritual anxieties driving such parenting styles (Madyawati et al., 2023).

Islamic education (*Tarbiyah*) emphasizes the nurturing of a child's innate disposition (*fitrah*) toward self-reliance, responsibility, and moral autonomy, which stands in direct contrast to the stifling nature of helicopter parenting. Central to this paradigm is the concept of *Tawakkal* (trust in God), which, when properly understood, does not negate effort (*ikhtiar*) but rather liberates the individual from the paralyzing anxiety of outcomes. By integrating *Tawakkal* into the educational process, parents and educators can shift their focus from controlling the child's academic outcomes to facilitating a resilient, effort-driven learning process. This spiritual framework encourages students to take ownership of their learning while trusting in divine decree, thereby fostering genuine independence free from the fear of failure (Desai & Wane, 2022).

Therefore, this article aims to critically review the impact of helicopter parenting on students' learning independence and to propose a conceptual alternative rooted in the principles of *Tarbiyah* and *Tawakkal*. By synthesizing contemporary psychological findings on overparenting with classical and modern Islamic educational literature, this study seeks to bridge the gap between secular developmental psychology and Islamic spiritual pedagogy. Ultimately, this review intends to provide educators, parents, and policymakers with a theoretically grounded, spiritually enriching framework to cultivate genuine learning autonomy and psychological resilience in students.

Method

This study employs a qualitative library research design, specifically utilizing a critical literature review approach rather than a Systematic Literature Review (SLR), to allow for a deeper, interpretive synthesis of conceptual and philosophical frameworks. The primary data sources were retrieved using Google Scholar as the central academic database, focusing exclusively on publications dated between 2018 and 2023 to ensure the currency and relevance of both contemporary psychological findings and modern

Islamic educational discourse. The search strategy utilized a combination of specific keywords and Boolean operators, including "helicopter parenting" OR "overparenting" AND "learning independence" OR "self-regulated learning," paired with Islamic educational terms such as "*Tarbiyah*," "*Tawakkal*," and "Islamic parenting." By relying on a non-systematic narrative review, this methodology facilitates a more flexible exploration of how secular psychological concepts can be critically examined and recontextualized through the lens of Islamic spirituality, rather than merely aggregating empirical data.

To ensure the rigor and relevance of the synthesized literature, strict inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied during the screening process. Articles were included if they were peer-reviewed journal publications or academic books written in English or Indonesian, available in full text, and directly addressed either the psychological impacts of overparenting or the theoretical foundations of *Tarbiyah* and *Tawakkal*. Opinion pieces, non-academic articles, and publications outside the 2018–2023 timeframe were excluded. The selected literature was then analyzed using thematic and content analysis. This analytical process involved categorizing the findings into two primary themes: the psychological deficits induced by helicopter parenting, and the conceptual mechanisms of *Tawakkal* and *Tarbiyah* in fostering autonomy. Finally, a critical synthesis was conducted to bridge these themes, constructing a cohesive, Islamically grounded conceptual framework for addressing the challenges of overparenting in modern education.

Results and Discussion

The Psychological Landscape of Helicopter Parenting and Its Erosion of Learning Independence

Contemporary psychological research consistently identifies helicopter parenting as a significant impediment to the development of self-regulated learning (SRL) and academic autonomy in students. This parenting style, characterized by excessive involvement and control over a child's academic life, directly undermines the core tenets of SRL, which include goal setting, strategic planning, and self-monitoring. Students subjected to such over-involvement often fail to internalize these critical metacognitive skills, as their parents habitually manage these processes for them. Consequently, they exhibit a profound dependence on external direction, struggling to initiate or sustain independent study

without parental prompting or supervision (Mardiah et al., 2023)

The consequences extend beyond mere skill deficits to encompass significant affective challenges. A primary manifestation is heightened academic anxiety, where students experience chronic worry about performance and an intense fear of failure, often stemming from the internalized pressure to meet their parents' perfectionistic standards. This anxiety is not merely a transient state but can become a stable trait that colors their entire educational experience. Furthermore, their intrinsic motivation—the internal drive to learn for its own sake—is frequently supplanted by extrinsic motivators, such as the desire to please their parents or avoid their disapproval. This shift creates a fragile foundation for lifelong learning, as engagement becomes contingent on external validation rather than personal curiosity or intellectual pursuit (Curry & Athanases, 2020; Serice, 2023)

This dynamic fosters a state of learned helplessness, wherein students develop a belief that their efforts are futile and that success is contingent on factors outside their control, primarily their parents' interventions. When faced with academic challenges, their default response is not to problem-solve but to seek immediate adult assistance, having never been allowed to navigate obstacles independently. This lack of practice in overcoming difficulties severely diminishes their problem-solving capabilities and overall academic resilience. The cumulative effect is a generation of students who may achieve short-term academic success under close supervision but are ill-equipped for the demands of higher education and professional life, where self-direction is paramount (Hook, 2012).

Table 1. Summary of Key Psychological Impacts of Helicopter Parenting on Student Learning

Psychological Impact	Key Manifestation
Reduced Self-Regulated Learning (SRL)	Difficulty in setting goals, managing time, and self-monitoring without external prompts.
Increased Academic Anxiety	Excessive worry about grades, fear of failure, and performance pressure.
Lower Intrinsic Motivation	Reliance on extrinsic rewards or parental approval rather than internal drive.

Learned Helplessness	Belief that effort is futile; tendency to give up easily when faced with challenges.
Diminished Problem-Solving Skills	Inability to navigate academic obstacles independently; seeks immediate adult intervention.

The data presented in Table 1 synthesizes the core findings from recent empirical studies, providing a clear and concise overview of the multifaceted negative impacts of helicopter parenting. It demonstrates a consistent pattern across various psychological domains, all converging on the central theme of eroded autonomy. The table underscores that the problem is not isolated to a single aspect of student development but is a systemic issue affecting motivation, emotional well-being, cognitive strategy use, and behavioral responses to challenge. This comprehensive erosion of independence highlights the urgent need for alternative parenting and educational paradigms that can effectively counteract these detrimental effects.

Deconstructing Helicopter Parenting Through the Lens of Tarbiyah: A Spiritual and Philosophical Critique

From the perspective of Islamic educational philosophy, or *Tarbiyah*, the phenomenon of helicopter parenting represents a fundamental misalignment with the divine purpose of human creation and the sacred trust (*amanah*) of parenthood. *Tarbiyah* is not merely about imparting knowledge (*ta'lim*) but is a holistic, lifelong process of nurturing a child's innate disposition (*fitrah*) toward moral excellence, intellectual curiosity, and spiritual connection with Allah. This process requires allowing the child to experience the natural consequences of their actions within a supportive framework, thereby developing their capacity for judgment, responsibility, and self-correction—qualities that are systematically suppressed by overprotective parenting (Nurhuda, 2023).

The core critique lies in the violation of the child's *fitrah*. Islam posits that every child is born with a natural inclination toward recognizing truth and goodness. The role of the parent, as a *murabbi* (nurturer), is to facilitate the flourishing of this innate potential, not to impose their own anxieties and ambitions upon it. Helicopter parenting, by its very nature, projects the parent's fears onto the child, treating them not as an independent agent with their own unique path but as an extension of the parent's ego and social standing. This approach contradicts the Prophetic tradition where the Prophet Muhammad

(PBUH) encouraged children to perform tasks independently, such as allowing his young companion to descend from his camel by himself during the Farewell Pilgrimage, a powerful symbolic act affirming the importance of fostering physical and, by extension, intellectual autonomy.

Furthermore, this over-involvement often stems from a spiritual deficit in the parent: a lack of *Tawakkal*. True *Tawakkal* is not passive resignation but an active trust in Allah that follows sincere effort (*ikhtiar*). Parents who engage in helicopter parenting often operate from a place of *khawf* (fear)—fear of their child's failure, fear of societal judgment, and ultimately, a subtle fear that their efforts alone are insufficient to secure their child's future. This mindset inadvertently teaches the child to place their ultimate trust in human agency (the parent) rather than in the divine decree (*qadar*). Thus, helicopter parenting can be seen as a form of hidden *shirk* (associating partners with Allah) in the realm of cause and effect, where the parent usurps the role of the ultimate Provider and Planner, thereby depriving the child of the profound spiritual security that comes from direct reliance on Allah (Vigdal & Brønnick, 2022).

The Antidote: Reconstructing Parental Roles through Tawakkal and Ikhtiar

The Islamic concepts of *Tawakkal* (trust in God) and *Ikhtiar* (personal effort) provide a powerful and coherent antidote to the anxieties that fuel helicopter parenting. A correct understanding of *Tawakkal* liberates both the parent and the child from the paralyzing fear of uncertain outcomes. The famous Prophetic saying, "Tie your camel and then place your trust in Allah," perfectly encapsulates this balance. For the parent, "tying the camel" means fulfilling their duty by providing a conducive learning environment, access to quality education, and moral guidance. However, "placing trust in Allah" means relinquishing the obsessive need to control every detail of the child's academic journey and accepting that the ultimate outcome is in Allah's hands.

This spiritual framework fundamentally redefines the parental role from that of a controller to a facilitator and mentor. Instead of micromanaging homework or intervening in every minor conflict, the *murabbi* focuses on equipping the child with the tools for *ikhtiar*. This includes teaching them effective study strategies, fostering critical thinking, and, most importantly, nurturing their spiritual connection so they understand that their efforts are an act of worship. The child is thus empowered to take full ownership of their learning process, knowing that

their sincere effort is what is required of them, while the result is a matter of divine wisdom. This separation of effort from outcome is crucial for building resilience, as failure is no longer a personal catastrophe but a valuable learning opportunity within a larger, divinely ordained plan (Beckham, 2023).

For the student, this paradigm cultivates a unique form of resilient autonomy. Their motivation to learn is intrinsically linked to their desire to fulfill their role as a vicegerent (*khalifah*) on earth and to seek knowledge as a means of drawing closer to Allah. This purpose-driven learning is far more robust than motivation based on external rewards or the avoidance of parental disappointment. When a student grounded in *Tawakkal* faces a setback, their response is not despair or helplessness but a renewed commitment to *ikhtiar*, coupled with prayer and trust. They understand that their worth is not defined by a grade but by the sincerity and quality of their effort, a perspective that fosters long-term psychological well-being and a genuine love for learning (Nurhuda, 2023).

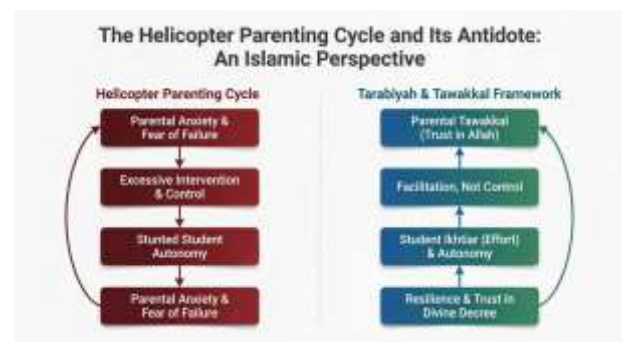


Figure 1. The Helicopter Parenting Cycle and Its Antidote: An Islamic Perspective

The conceptual diagram in Figure 1 visually contrasts the self-perpetuating negative cycle of helicopter parenting with the virtuous positive cycle enabled by the *Tarbiyah* and *Tawakkal* framework. On the left, parental anxiety drives excessive control, which stunts the child's autonomy, thereby reinforcing the parent's original anxiety in a closed, red-toned loop. On the right, parental *Tawakkal* enables a shift to facilitation, which fosters the child's *Ikhtiar* and autonomy, building resilience and trust in divine decree, which in turn strengthens the parent's own *Tawakkal*. This visual representation clearly illustrates how a spiritual shift in the parent's mindset can break the destructive cycle and initiate a

constructive, empowering dynamic for the child's development.

Synthesizing Paradigms: Towards an Integrated Framework for Cultivating Resilient Learners

The most promising path forward lies not in rejecting secular psychological insights but in integrating them within the richer, spiritually grounded framework of Islamic *Tarbiyah*. Secular psychology, particularly Self-Determination Theory (SDT), provides a robust empirical foundation for understanding the universal human needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness as prerequisites for intrinsic motivation and well-being (Mosca et al., 2023). These needs are not at odds with Islamic principles; rather, they find their most profound and sustainable fulfillment within the Islamic worldview. The need for autonomy aligns with the Islamic concept of the individual as a morally responsible agent; competence is the fruit of sincere *ikhtiar*; and relatedness is fulfilled through the bonds of family, community, and, ultimately, the relationship with the Creator.

An integrated framework, therefore, leverages the descriptive power of psychology to diagnose the problems caused by helicopter parenting while using the prescriptive and normative power of *Tarbiyah* to offer a holistic solution. For instance, while SDT identifies the need for autonomy, *Tarbiyah* provides the spiritual rationale and practical methodology for nurturing it—by connecting the child's independent choices to their accountability before Allah. Similarly, while psychology identifies academic anxiety as a problem, the concept of *Tawakkal* offers a spiritual mechanism for its alleviation by reframing the source of one's security and self-worth. This synthesis creates a more resilient form of learning independence that is not only psychologically sound but also spiritually anchored (Walsh, 2020).

Figure 2 presents a Venn diagram that maps this integration. The left circle represents the key components of secular psychology (SDT), and the right circle represents the core tenets of Islamic *Tarbiyah* and *Tawakkal*. Their intersection—the space where these paradigms converge—reveals the characteristics of an "Integrated Framework for Learning Independence." This framework produces learners with deep intrinsic motivation (fueled by both personal interest and a sense of divine purpose), resilient autonomy (the ability to act independently even in the face of adversity, grounded in trust in Allah), and purpose-driven learning (where education is seen as a sacred trust and a means of fulfilling one's role in the world). This visual model serves as a blueprint for educators and parents seeking to cultivate truly independent and resilient students.

In conclusion, addressing the crisis of helicopter parenting requires moving beyond superficial behavioral adjustments to a fundamental transformation of the underlying parental philosophy. By grounding parenting practices in the timeless principles of *Tarbiyah* and the liberating concept of *Tawakkal*, parents can break free from the cycle of anxiety and control. This shift empowers students to develop a robust, spiritually-rooted independence that equips them not only to succeed academically but to navigate the complexities of life with confidence, resilience, and a profound sense of purpose. The integration of modern psychological understanding with classical Islamic wisdom offers a compelling and holistic pathway to raising a generation of learners who are both intellectually capable and spiritually grounded.

Conclusion

This critical review demonstrates that helicopter parenting fundamentally undermines students' learning independence by stifling self-regulated learning, fostering academic anxiety, and inducing learned helplessness. Viewed through the lens of Islamic *Tarbiyah*, this overprotective approach represents a pedagogical and spiritual misalignment, as it suppresses the child's innate disposition (*fitrah*) for autonomy and inadvertently projects parental anxieties onto the learner. The integration of *Ikhtiar* (sincere effort) and *Tawakkal* (trust in Allah) offers a profound antidote to this phenomenon. By shifting the parental role from a controlling micromanager to a facilitating *murabbi*, parents can alleviate their own fears of failure while empowering students to take ownership of their educational journey, thereby transforming learning from a source of external



Figure 2. The Intersection of Secular Psychology and Islamic Tarbiyah for Fostering Learning Independence

pressure into a purposeful, spiritually grounded endeavor.

Ultimately, this study contributes to the educational literature by bridging secular psychological insights, such as Self-Determination Theory, with the holistic paradigm of Islamic philosophy, presenting a robust framework for cultivating resilient and autonomous learners. The synthesis of these perspectives provides educators, policymakers, and parents with a practical, faith-based roadmap to dismantle the destructive cycle of overparenting and replace it with an environment that nurtures both psychological well-being and spiritual maturity. Future empirical research is highly recommended to quantitatively measure the efficacy of *Tawakkal*-based parenting interventions on student autonomy, ensuring that this conceptual framework translates into measurable, positive educational outcomes across diverse cultural and educational contexts.

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