

The Mediating Role of Career Stress and Career Awareness in the Relationship Between Mother Helicopter Parenting, Autonomy Supportive Behaviors, and Career Instability

Anne Helikopter Ebeveynliği ve Özerklik Destekleyici Davranışları ile Kariyer İstikrarsızlığı Arasındaki İlişkide Kariyer Stresi ve Kariyer Farkındalığının Aracı Rolü

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Abstract: This study aims to examine the structural relationships between mothers' parental helicopter parenting and autonomy supportive behaviors, and emerging adults' career instability, career awareness, and career stress. The study sample includes 970 university students, comprising 635 women (65.4%) and 335 men (34.6%), aged between 17 and 25. Participants provided self-reported data on helicopter parenting, autonomy supportive behaviors, career instability, career awareness, and career stress. Structural equation modeling was utilized to assess the intricate relationships among these variables. Findings indicate that maternal autonomy supportive behaviors significantly correlate with career awareness, though they do not have a statistically significant relationship with career stress. Helicopter parenting is positively associated with career stress, whereas career awareness shows a negative association. Additionally, career awareness inversely contributes to career instability, while both career stress and helicopter parenting have positive contributions. The link between helicopter parenting and career awareness was not statistically significant. Helicopter parenting's impact on career instability is mediated by career stress, while the influence of autonomy supportive behaviors on career instability is mediated through career awareness and both career awareness and career stress.

Keywords: Helicopter parenting, autonomy supportive behaviors, career instability, career awareness, career stress

Öz: Bu çalışma, annelerin helikopter ebeveynlik ve özerklik destekleyici davranışları ile gelişmekte olan yetişkinlerin kariyer istikrarsızlığı, kariyer farkındalığı ve kariyer stresi arasındaki yapısal ilişkileri incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Çalışmanın örneklemi, yaşları 17 ile 25 arasında değişen 635 kadın (%65,4) ve 335 erkekten (%34,6) oluşan 970 üniversite öğrencisinden oluşmaktadır. Katılımcılar helikopter ebeveynlik, özerklik destekleyici davranışlar, kariyer istikrarsızlığı, kariyer farkındalığı ve kariyer stresi konularında öz bildirimde bulunmuşlardır. Bu değişkenler arasındaki karmaşık ilişkileri değerlendirmek için yapısal eşitlik modellemesi kullanılmıştır. Bulgular, annenin özerklik destekleyici davranışlarının kariyer farkındalığı ile önemli ölçüde ilişkili olduğunu, ancak kariyer stresi ile istatistiksel olarak anlamlı bir ilişkisi olmadığını göstermektedir. Helikopter ebeveynlik kariyer stresi ile pozitif bir ilişki gösterirken, kariyer farkındalığı negatif bir ilişki göstermektedir. Buna ek olarak, kariyer farkındalığı kariyer istikrarsızlığına ters yönde katkıda bulunurken, hem kariyer stresi hem de helikopter ebeveynliğin olumlu katkıları vardır. Helikopter ebeveynlik ile kariyer farkındalığı arasındaki bağlantı istatistiksel olarak anlamlı değildir. Helikopter ebeveynliğin kariyer istikrarsızlığı üzerindeki etkisine kariyer stresi aracılık ederken, özerklik destekleyici davranışların kariyer istikrarsızlığı üzerindeki etkisine kariyer farkındalığı ve hem kariyer farkındalığı hem de kariyer stresi aracılık etmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Helikopter ebeveynlik, özerklik destekleyici davranışlar, kariyer istikrarsızlığı, kariyer farkındalığı, kariyer stresi

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Introduction

In an era where technological advancements and globalization are rapidly accelerating, maintaining a linear career path is becoming increasingly challenging, and individuals are seeking to gain experience in different fields. As a result, individuals are seeking to diversify their experiences across different fields. Career instability, which includes working in multiple domains throughout one's professional life, frequent job changes, or uncertainty in career choices, is a significant issue encountered during this process (Lent & Brown, 2020). This is because, in the modern work environment, technological developments, globalization, and changing economic conditions have necessitated flexibility and adaptability in individuals' career paths (Buntak et al., 2017). In this context, career instability has emerged as a process that requires individuals to redefine their professional identities and career goals.

Career instability refers to a lack of reliability or uniformity in actions, performance, or experiences that can negatively impact professional development and opportunities (Brown & Lent, 2012). This concept can manifest as erratic behavior related to one's profession, missed deadlines, low work

quality, and a perception of unreliability. Such behaviors may cause colleagues and supervisors to lose confidence in an individual's judgment and ability to meet commitments, thus diminishing their reliability and effectiveness within team environments (Kim & Kim, 2014). Additionally, the habit of frequently changing jobs due to instability may raise red flags for potential employers. Employers may question the candidate's commitment and predict the likelihood of the individual leaving shortly after being hired (Creed & Saporta, 2003). Furthermore, career instability can affect relationships with colleagues and supervisors. When individuals fail to align their actions with their statements, it can lead to a breakdown in trust (Winkielman & Nowak, 2022). Colleagues may hesitate to collaborate with someone perceived as unreliable, limiting professional networking and advancement opportunities.

Career instability also has the potential to affect individuals' personal lives in various ways. A notable disparity between desired and achieved career goals may lead to increased levels of psychological issues such as depression, anxiety, and stress (Praskova & McPeake, 2021; Widyowati et al., 2024). Furthermore, individuals experiencing career

instability might choose career paths below their potential by scaling down their goals. Difficulty in revising career plans can result in stagnation in professional growth (Kim, 2009). Long-term instabilities can impede career advancement, and the associated loss of self-confidence can result in missed opportunities (Kim & Kim, 2023). These findings suggest that career instability may heighten psychological distress, hinder career adaptability, and negatively impact career planning. As such, identifying the individual and environmental factors contributing to career instability and understanding the underlying dynamics is essential for career counselors, educators, and psychologists. This knowledge is vital for addressing the challenges individuals encounter during career planning. Among the factors related to career instability are career awareness and career stress.

Career Awareness and Career Stress: Role in Career Development and Career Instability

Career awareness and career stress play crucial roles in both career development and career instability. Having a clear awareness of career paths allows individuals to make informed decisions by understanding the choices available, the skills required, and the challenges that may arise. This understanding is crucial for setting realistic goals and devising strategies to overcome potential obstacles (Baloch & Shah, 2014). Recognizing the demands of a chosen career path enables individuals to identify the skills they need to enhance. By actively pursuing relevant training or educational opportunities, they can improve their chances of success and boost their employability (Getachew et al., 2020). In today's fast-paced job market, staying aware of career trends is key to remaining adaptable. Being informed about industry trends and emerging career opportunities puts individuals in a better position to explore and seize new opportunities critical for professional growth (Seibert et al., 2016). Moreover, career awareness can help individuals anticipate stressors in their chosen fields and prepare accordingly (Liao et al., 2023). By understanding the challenges ahead and developing coping strategies, they can navigate their career paths more effectively and maintain a healthier balance between work and life. Furthermore, awareness can encourage individuals to connect with others in their desired fields, which can provide valuable insights, support, and mentorship that contribute significantly to career progression (Carlson, 2014). Networking and mentorship opportunities can provide valuable insights, support, and guidance that significantly contribute to career development. Lack of career awareness can lead to unrealistic expectations about job roles, working conditions, and career progression. When reality does not meet these expectations, individuals may experience stress and dissatisfaction, resulting in frequent job changes or career instability (Creed et al., 2007). Additionally, poor career awareness may lead individuals to pursue paths that do not align with their skills or interests, which can result in frustration, stress, and ultimately, career instability (Wardani et al., 2021).

Career stress, on the other hand, can have a significant impact on an individual's well-being and performance. Career stress stems from the pressures and demands related to one's career. It can arise from various sources, including workload, job insecurity, career transitions, and the balance between work and personal life (Gunnar, 2017). Moderate levels of career stress can serve as a source of motivation, pushing individuals to perform better, develop new skills, and seek

advancement opportunities, while high levels of career stress are associated with the opposite effects (Nisar & Rasheed, 2020). Persistent high stress can cause individuals to change jobs frequently, struggle to maintain their performance, or even leave their careers altogether (Chandio et al., 2013). High stress levels can also impair decision-making, resulting in hasty or poorly thought-out career choices. This may create a cycle of instability, as individuals may frequently switch roles or industries without a clear plan (Starcke & Brand, 2012). Chronic stress can also have adverse effects on physical and mental health, further reducing one's ability to work effectively or maintain steady employment, thereby contributing to career instability (Ilogho, 2011).

Environmental factors, particularly parental attitudes toward their children, can also play a significant role in career instability. The level of interest, support, discipline, and freedom that parents provide can influence the likelihood of their children experiencing career instability (Köksal & Yam, 2023).

Helicopter Parenting and Autonomy Supportive Behaviours: Role in Career Development and Career Instability

Helicopter parenting and autonomy supportive behaviors represent two distinct parenting approaches that significantly influence an individual's psychological well-being and development (Reed et al., 2016). Helicopter parenting refers to the tendency of parents to over-intervene in their children's lives and overprotect them (Çok et al., 2022). In fact, this attitude encompasses a parenting style characterized by excessive control and overprotection of children even as they transition into adulthood (Güçlü et al., 2022). On the other hand, autonomy supportive behaviors involve parents encouraging their children to make independent decisions and manage their own lives, which fosters a sense of independence and self-regulation (Güçlü & Çok, 2021). Autonomy supportive parenting supports a sense of independence and self-regulation and encourages individuals to make their own decisions, take responsibility for their actions, and develop basic life skills (Güçlü et al., 2022). While it is important for parents to exhibit an attitude that supports their children's autonomy needs and provides them with opportunities for independent decision-making in terms of their healthy development (Hwang & Jung, 2022), helicopter parenting, which is an overprotective and intrusive parenting style, can negatively affect children's development (Alsancak-Akbulut & Kömürcü-Akik, 2024; Hwang & Jung, 2022).

Helicopter parenting and autonomy supportive behaviors also influence career development and the potential for career instability. Individuals who perceive high levels of helicopter parenting have lower career adaptability. They also experience difficulties in establishing a stable occupational identity. This supports career instability by increasing problems in career decision-making (LeBlanc & Lyons, 2022). Helicopter parents tend to make decisions on behalf of their children, limiting their opportunities to explore different career options (Bai & Luo, 2024). This lack of exploration can lead to instabilities in personal interests and career paths. Additionally, such parenting reduces the intrinsic attribution of academic success and diminishes career decision-making competence, which can contribute to career instability (Howard, 2022). In addition, children of helicopter parents may develop low self-efficacy due to constant parental interference (Reed et al.,

2016). They may lack confidence in their ability to make independent decisions, which can lead to hesitation and instability, i.e. frequent changes in career choices while seeking reassurance or approval from others.

In contrast, autonomy supportive parenting is associated with positive career outcomes and reduced career instability. Parents who encourage independence and self-directed decision-making help their children explore a variety of interests and career paths, which can lead to more informed and satisfying career choices in the long term (Lerner et al., 2022). As children explore different options, they are more likely to identify paths that align with their interests, thereby reducing the likelihood of career instability. Katz and colleagues (2018) highlight that autonomy supportive parents help their children develop strong decision-making skills by allowing them to make their own choices. These skills are crucial for evaluating personal interests and making consistent career decisions, which can reduce career instability. Furthermore, as individuals develop their interests and discover what really resonates with them, they may reduce their levels of career ambivalence. Children raised with autonomy supportive behaviors tend to have more intrinsic motivation, which may increase their likelihood of making career choices that are aligned with their personal values and interests (Jungert et al., 2015). This alignment can lead to greater satisfaction and stability in the long run. Career changes made by these individuals are often the result of genuine self-discovery rather than external pressures. Additionally, autonomy supportive parenting has been found to increase job satisfaction and reduce the intention to quit (Van Fossen, 2023).

These findings suggest that helicopter parenting, by limiting self-discovery, fostering dependence on external validation, and instilling a fear of failure, tends to contribute to career instability. Children raised with this parenting style may struggle to find a career that aligns with their true interests and values, leading to frequent changes in career decisions. Conversely, autonomy supportive behaviors generally promote self-discovery, independent decision-making, and intrinsic motivation, which support career stability. As children explore their options, they are more likely to make stable and satisfying career choices in the long term.

Research indicates that mothers may exhibit more helicopter parenting behaviors due to traditional gender roles and societal expectations that emphasize nurturing and protective behaviors (Hofer & Moore, 2010; Hunt, 2008; Marano, 2008; Somers & Settle, 2010). When mothers display these behaviors, particularly towards daughters, they may reinforce traditional gender roles, limiting the child's exploration of non-traditional or ambitious career paths, potentially leading to career instability. This tendency may be attributed to the stronger emotional bonds that women often have with their children and their heightened concern for their children's futures (Schiffrin et al., 2014). This emotional investment can contribute to helicopter parenting behaviors, as mothers may be more inclined to intervene in their children's lives to prevent potential failures or risks (Gar & Hudson, 2008). Additionally, societal norms often expect mothers to be more nurturing and involved, which can drive them toward helicopter parenting. From this perspective, the concepts of helicopter parenting, which is associated with various challenges and negative outcomes, and autonomy supportive behaviors, which are linked to numerous positive outcomes such as psychological health and positive communication, can

be analyzed through the lens of Feminist Therapy. This approach would focus on gender roles, power dynamics, and the importance of fostering autonomy in children, particularly girls.

Helicopter Parenting, Autonomy Supportive Behaviours and Feminist Therapy

Feminist Therapy is a psychotherapy approach focused on empowering women and advancing gender equality (Brown, 2008). The primary objective is to enable women to recognize their strengths, develop effective coping mechanisms, and make informed life choices, thereby fostering empowerment (Bondi & Burman, 2001). This therapeutic approach also challenges traditional power dynamics and gender roles that contribute to women's disadvantages (Worell & Remer, 2002).

Feminist Therapy challenges the patriarchal notion that a woman's primary role is motherhood and that her worth is linked to her ability to bear children (Brown, 2008). It encourages women to define motherhood on their own terms, free from societal pressures. Additionally, it posits that a mother's empowerment and autonomy have a direct impact on her child's autonomy development (Chase & Rogers, 2001). Mothers who are involved in decision-making and assert their independence model these behaviors for their children, encouraging similar traits in them (Arellano et al., 2020). For instance, mothers who are pressured by societal expectations to prioritize caregiving over their desires may struggle to model autonomy, potentially hindering their children's development of independence (Slater et al., 2001).

From a Feminist Therapy viewpoint, a mother's helicopter parenting style can be interpreted as perpetuating traditional gender roles, where women may feel pressured to conform to societal expectations of being nurturing and protective (Brown, 2008). In this context, a mother's helicopter parenting behavior might reinforce mutual dependence between her and the child, which can be criticized. This perspective aligns with feminist principles advocating for dismantling oppressive structures to support individual independence (Allen, 2015). Mothers, in particular, play a crucial role in their children's career development. From a Feminist Therapy perspective, when mothers overcome the pressures of traditional gender roles and exhibit autonomy and strength, they impart these qualities to their children (Chase & Rogers, 2001). Consequently, children may approach their career paths with greater creativity and freedom. The principles highlighted in Feminist Therapy support children in making career decisions that are more confident, autonomous, and well-informed.

Career research often focuses on specific behaviors within the context of career development (De Vos et al., 2009; Strauss et al., 2012). For instance, while parental attitudes' influence on career development has been studied (Ginevra et al., 2015), research on which parent plays a more significant role remains limited. This gap can lead to a broad evaluation of career management by researchers and practitioners in career counseling, without considering the various factors that impact career development. This study aims to clarify concepts such as career instability, career awareness, and career stress, particularly in relation to maternal helicopter parenting and autonomy supportive behaviors, thereby enriching the existing body of knowledge on career development. Additionally, it draws attention to various factors related to the role of female parents in the family and their influence on their children's career development, offering insights for future research. It

also highlights the factors that career development practitioners should consider. By identifying factors that may mediate the influence of female parents on their children's career instability, this study provides new insights into variables affecting the transition to work, employment, and subsequent career processes.

This study ultimately aims to contribute to the understanding of the underlying mechanisms in the career development process of university students by examining the complex interactions between maternal helicopter parenting and autonomy supportive behaviors, and individual factors such as career instability, career awareness, and career stress. The study specifically aims to investigate the structural relationships between maternal helicopter parenting and autonomy supportive behaviors, and emerging adults' career instability, career awareness, and career stress using the hypothetical model depicted in Figure 1. According to this model, it is hypothesized that maternal helicopter parenting behaviors will reduce career awareness and increase career stress in emerging adults, leading to greater career instability. Conversely, maternal autonomy supportive behaviors are expected to increase career awareness and reduce career stress, thus decreasing career instability insistency.

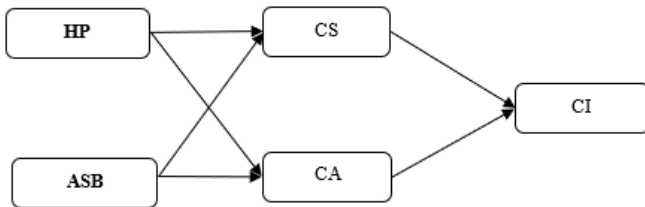


Figure 1. The structural model tested

HP = Helicopter Parenting, ASB = Autonomy Supportive Behaviors, CA = Career Awareness, CS = Career Stress, CI = Career Instability.

Method

Study Group

The gender distribution of the sample was 65.4% female (n=635) and 34.6% male (n=335). All participants were informed about the aims and procedures of the study. In addition, a written informed consent form was obtained from the participants. Approval for the procedures of the study was obtained from the ethics committee of Erzincan Binali Yıldırım University. Participants were 1,011 university students, selected through convenience sampling. A control question—"If you are reading this question, please code 3"—was used during data collection to ensure attention, and 41 participants who did not answer correctly were excluded from the study. Consequently, the final sample consisted of 970 university students, aged between 17 and 25 (M = 22; SD = 4.19). The gender distribution of the sample was 65.4% female (n = 635) and 34.6% male (n = 335). A power analysis conducted with RMSEA to assess the statistical power of a structural model (Preacher & Coffman, 2006) indicated that the current study has a statistical power of 1, demonstrating that it possesses sufficient statistical power. All participants were informed about the study's aims and procedures, and written informed consent was obtained. The study procedures were approved by the Ethics Committee of Erzincan Binali Yıldırım University.

Data Collection Tools

Helicopter Parenting Behaviors Questionnaire (HPBQ)

The questionnaire used to examine university students' perceptions of helicopter parenting behaviors was developed by Schiffrin et al. (2014) based on self-determination theory. The 15-item questionnaire comprises two dimensions of parenting behavior: Helicopter Parenting Behaviors (9 items; e.g., "My mother regularly wants me to call or text her to let her know where I am") and Autonomy Supportive Parenting Behaviors (6 items; e.g., "My mother encourages me to keep a budget and manage my own finances"). It was rated on a scale ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 6 (Strongly agree). The scale specifically focuses on maternal behaviors due to literature indicating that mothers are more involved in the lives of their adult children compared to fathers (Schiffrin et al., 2014).

The scale was adapted into Turkish by Çok et al. (2022). The internal consistency coefficients for the original form of the scale were found to be .77 for Helicopter Parenting Behaviors and .71 for Autonomy Supportive Behaviors (Schiffrin et al., 2014), while the Turkish adaptation showed internal consistency coefficients of .80 for both subdimensions (Çok et al., 2022). In the present study, the internal consistency coefficients were found to be .83 for Helicopter Parenting Behaviors and .85 for Autonomy Supportive Behaviors.

Career Goal Discrepancy Scale (CGDS)

The Career Goal Discrepancy Scale, developed by Creed and Hood (2015), is a unidimensional scale. It consists of 12 items, such as "My plans are not working out to get the career I really want." and "Despite my best efforts, I think I am going to miss out on my ideal career." The scale is designed in a seven-point Likert format. There are no reverse-coded items, and the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was found to be .96. The scale's Turkish adaptation was conducted by Yam et al. (2020), with a Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient of .92. In this study, the Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient was determined to be .93.

Career Awareness Scale (CAS)

This instrument, developed by Yaşar and Sunay (2019), is divided into four sub-dimensions. The first, *Professional Development Susceptibility*, includes six items such as "I am aware of career opportunities within my field of study" and "I know where to seek guidance for career planning." The second, *Professional Readiness*, consists of four items, including "I feel ready to enter the professional workforce" and "I am confident in my ability to succeed in any job." The third, *Professional Consciousness*, has four items like "Advancing my career is a key goal for me" and "I actively seek information about my career options." The final sub-dimension, *Professional Self-Confidence*, also consists of four items, such as "I am capable of making the best career decisions" and "I am prepared to handle the competitive nature of the workforce." with sub-dimension coefficients of .83 for Professional Development Susceptibility, .81 for Professional Readiness, .80 for Professional Consciousness, and .79 for Professional Self-Confidence. This study produced similar results, with an overall Cronbach's Alpha of .90 and sub-dimension coefficients of .80, .81, .76, and .77, respectively.

Career Stress Scale (CSS)

The Career Stress Scale was developed by Choi et al. (2011) to measure the stress sources and challenges related to career issues among university students. It consists of 20 items and four sub-dimensions: career ambiguity, lacking information, employment pressure, and external conflict. The measure is a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The internal consistency reliability, represented by Cronbach's Alpha, was reported as .89 for career ambiguity, .89 for lacking information, .85 for employment pressure, and .83 for external conflict. The adapted scale consists of three sub-factors. The first factor, career uncertainty and lack of knowledge, consists of 10 items (e.g., 'I am worried because I do not know what my ability is'), the second factor, external conflict, consists of four items (e.g., 'I am worried about the negative opinions of others about my career choice'), and the third factor, employment pressure, consists of six items (e.g., 'I am worried about the possibility of not finding the job I want'). Cronbach's Alpha coefficients of the scale are .81 for total scores, .94 for career uncertainty and lack of information, .86 for job search pressure, and .83 for external conflict. In the present study, Cronbach's Alpha coefficients are .80 for total scores, .93 for career uncertainty and lack of information, .87 for job search pressure and .82 for external conflict.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted in a two-step process. First, descriptive statistics were calculated. Subsequently, a structural model was tested to explore the relationships among the variables of interest. Statistical analyses were performed using MPlus version 8.4 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2017) and JASP version 0.16.1 (JASP Team, 2022). Normality was assessed using skewness and kurtosis, and descriptive statistics and correlation coefficients were computed for the sample. A structural equation model (SEM) was then constructed to examine the relationships among the variables of interest. Following Anderson and Gerbing's (1988) two-step SEM procedure, the measurement model was first tested using confirmatory factor analysis, followed by an examination of the structural model. Model fit was evaluated using CFI ($\geq .90$), TLI ($\geq .90$), SRMR ($\leq .08$), and RMSEA ($\leq .08$) with 90% CI, as recommended by Brown (2015), Kline (2011), and Wen et al. (2004). Additionally, indirect effects were examined using the bootstrapping method with 2000 bootstrap samples and a 95% bias-corrected confidence interval.

Findings

Descriptive Statistics

The statistical measures, including means, standard deviations, and Cronbach's alpha values of the psychometric instruments, along with the correlations between the scale scores, are detailed in Table 1.

Measurement Model

The initial measurement model did not fit the data adequately ($\chi^2(183) = 1282.774$, $p < 0.001$; RMSEA [95% CI] = 0.079 [0.075 - 0.083], $p < 0.05$; CFI = 0.90; TLI = 0.89; SRMR = 0.047). To address this, modification indices were reviewed, and it was found that correlating the error terms of items 5 and 6, as well as items 8 and 9 from the Career Inconsistency Scale (CIS), would enhance the model fit. The final measurement

model demonstrated an acceptable fit to the data ($\chi^2(181) = 1037.010$, $p < 0.001$; RMSEA [95% CI] = 0.070 [0.066 - 0.074], $p < 0.05$; CFI = 0.92; TLI = 0.91; SRMR = 0.044). Factor loadings for the indicators were significant, ranging from 0.309 to 0.906. Additionally, all latent variables showed significant correlations with one another ($p < .05$), with standardized correlation coefficients ranging between 0.086 and 0.683.

Structural Model

The proposed structural model, examining relationships among helicopter parenting, autonomy-supportive behaviors, career inconsistency, career stress, and career awareness, initially indicated a lack of adequate fit to the data: $\chi^2(517) = 2472.398$; $p < .01$; RMSEA [90% CI] = 0.062 [0.060 - 0.065], $p < .05$; CFI = 0.882; TLI = 0.872; SRMR = 0.062. The standardized regression coefficients suggested that the connections between helicopter parenting and career awareness ($\beta = 0.086$, $SE = 0.198$, $p > .05$), as well as autonomy supportive behaviors and career stress ($\beta = -0.490$, $SE = 0.384$, $p > .05$), were not statistically significant, leading to the exclusion of these paths from the model. Further examination of modification indices indicated that correlating the error terms of items 14 and 9, items 5 and 4, items 11 and 3 from the Helicopter Parenting Scale, and items 10 and 11, 2 and 1, 3 and 2 from the Career Instability Scale would improve the model fit.

After these adjustments, the final structural model exhibited a good fit to the data: $\chi^2(512) = 2016.686$; $p < .01$; RMSEA [90% CI] = 0.055 [0.053 - 0.058], $p < .05$; CFI = 0.909; TLI = 0.901; SRMR = 0.055. The standardized regression coefficients demonstrated a significant positive relationship between autonomy supportive behaviors and career awareness ($\beta = 0.310$, $SE = 0.039$, $p < .001$). Moreover, helicopter parenting was found to be a positive predictor of career stress ($\beta = 0.147$, $SE = 0.037$, $p < .001$), whereas career awareness was a negative predictor of career stress ($\beta = -0.432$, $SE = 0.046$, $p < .01$). Career awareness negatively influenced career instability ($\beta = -0.114$, $SE = 0.041$, $p < .01$), while both career stress ($\beta = -0.663$, $SE = 0.035$, $p < .01$) and helicopter parenting ($\beta = -0.119$, $SE = 0.032$, $p < .01$) significantly contributed to career instability (Figure 2).

Indirect Relationships

As shown in Table 2, the structural model indicates that all possible indirect relationships between the variables included in the model are statistically significant. Helicopter parenting has an indirect effect on career instability through career stress ($\beta = 0.93$, $SE = 0.024$, $CI = 0.053-0.140$, $p < 0.001$). Additionally, the total indirect effect of autonomy supportive behaviors on career instability was found to be statistically significant ($\beta = -0.120$, $SE = 0.018$, $CI = -0.155-0.085$, $p < 0.001$). Furthermore, autonomy supportive behaviors have an indirect effect on career instability through career awareness ($\beta = -0.035$, $SE = 0.013$, $CI = -0.061-0.10$, $p < 0.01$) and both career awareness and career stress ($\beta = -0.085$, $SE = 0.014$, $CI = -0.113-0.057$, $p < 0.001$).

Table 1. Means, standard deviations, internal reliability and Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. HP	-											
2. ASB	,586**	-										
3. CI	,130**	,011	-									
4. CA	,180**	,275**	-,290**	-								
5. PSC	,157**	,185**	-,275**	,838**	-							
6. PA	,120**	,276**	-,174**	,792**	,586**	-						
7. PR	,128**	,210**	-,253**	,805**	,659**	,565**	-					
8. PDS	,168**	,232**	-,231**	,815**	,526**	,532**	,448**	-				
9. CS	,055	-,058	,637**	-,325**	-,228**	-,167**	-,274**	-,297**	-			
10. CALI	,079*	-,045	,626**	-,375**	-,329**	-,228**	-,327**	-,316**	,953**	-		
11. EC	,110**	-,132**	,455**	-,169**	-,125**	-,107**	-,163**	-,145**	,779**	,671**	-	
12. EP	-,044	-,003	,538**	-,227**	-,225**	-,045	-,159**	-,258**	,846**	,706**	,494**	-
Mean	28,63	24,42	40,39	66,47	14,49	16,04	15,29	20,66	56,63	27,04	9,93	19,66
Sd	10,12	7,74	16,10	10,51	3,03	2,51	3,16	4,22	16,84	9,34	4,06	5,65
Skewness	,147	-,429	,114	-,862	-,465	-,1206	-,775	-,472	-,096	,051	,394	-,443
Kurtosis	-,369	,431	-,516	,880	,584	,890	1,028	,897	-,340	-,586	-,623	-,209
α	,83	,85	,93	,90	,80	,81	,76	,77	,80	,93	,82	,87

**= p< .01, *= p< .05; HP = Helicopter Parenting, ASB = Autonomy Supportive Behaviors, CI = Career Instability, CA = Career Awareness, PSC= Professional Self-Confidence, PA= Professional Awareness, PR= Professional Readiness, PDS= Professional Development Susceptibility, CS = Career Stress, CALI = Career Ambiguity and Lacking Information, EC= External Conflict, EP= Employment Presure.

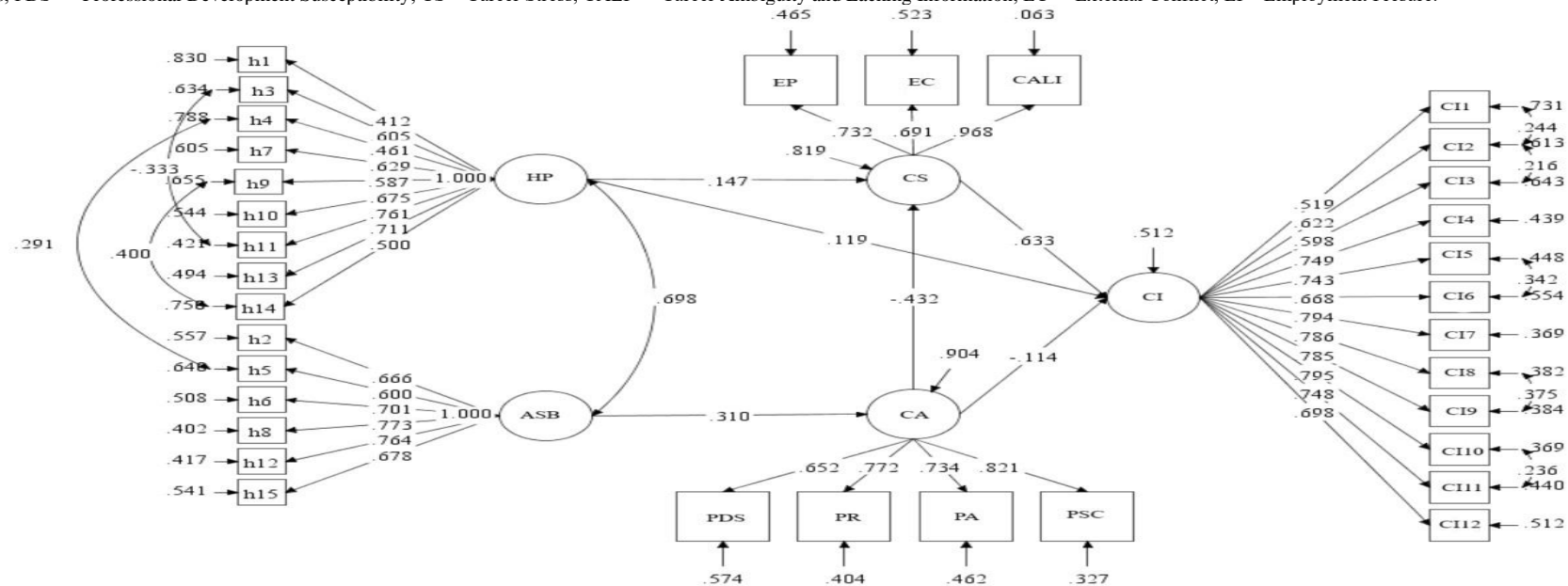


Figure 2. Standardized maximum likelihood estimates of the structural model.

HP = Helicopter Parenting, ASB= Autonomy Supportive Behaviors, CI = Career Instability, CA = Career Awareness, PSC= Professional Self-Confidence, PA= Professional Awareness, PR= Professional Readiness, PDS= Professional Development Susceptibility, CS = Career Stress, CALI = Career Ambiguity and Lacking Information, EC= External Conflict, EP= Employment Presure.

Table 2. Indirect relationships in the structural model

Indirect relationships	Indirect β (SE)	95% BC-CI [LL, UL]	<i>t</i>	<i>P</i>
HP → CS → CI	.093 (.024)	[.045, .140]	3.835	.000
Total Indirect Impact from ASB to CI	-.120 (.018)	[.155, .085]	-6.722	.000
ASB → CA → CI	-.035 (.013)	[.061, .010]	-2.724	.006
ASB → CA → CS → CI	-.085 (.014)	[.113, .057]	-5.946	.000

Note. Instrumental variables are shown in bold. HP= Helicopter Parenting, ASB= Autonomy Supportive Behaviors, CI= Career Instability, CS= Career Stress, CA= Career Awareness. *B*= Standardized regression coefficient; *SE*= Standard error, BC-CI= Bias-corrected confidence intervals. LL and UL indicate the lower and upper bound of a confidence interval, respectively.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study revealed a significant association between autonomy supportive behaviors and career awareness. Additionally, while helicopter parenting had a positive influence on career stress, career awareness negatively affected it. Moreover, career awareness had a significant negative impact on career instability, whereas career stress and helicopter parenting contributed positively to it. Contrary to expectations, the statistical analysis showed that the relationship between helicopter parenting and autonomy supportive behaviors with career stress was not significant. The study also indicated that helicopter parenting indirectly affects career instability through its impact on career stress. Furthermore, the total indirect effect of autonomy supportive behaviors on career instability was statistically significant. Finally, autonomy supportive behaviors had an indirect impact on career instability through both career awareness and career stress.

In line with Feminist Therapy principles, the findings suggest that a mother's autonomy supportive behaviors positively impact her child's career awareness. This supports Feminist Therapy's emphasis on the importance of supporting individuals in developing their identity and making autonomous choices (Evans et al., 2005). Allowing children, particularly girls, to explore various career options helps them make more informed and independent decisions, moving beyond traditional gender roles (Enns, 2004). This approach is likely to enhance career awareness. Specifically, when parents encourage their children to explore diverse career paths without imposing their own preferences, it fosters more deliberate career choices (Razali et al., 2022). Furthermore, the support for self-efficacy in career-related decision-making provided by autonomy supportive parenting reinforces this finding. Individuals with high self-confidence are anticipated to have greater career awareness as they feel more capable of seeking out career-related knowledge and experiences (Girelli et al., 2018).

Another important finding of this study is the direct relationship between a mother's helicopter parenting style and the child's career instability, while autonomy supportive behaviors do not show a direct relationship. This suggests that career instability is more closely associated with helicopter parenting than with autonomy supportive behaviors. According to Feminist Therapy, the effect of helicopter parenting on career instability may be related to the individual's questioning of their identity influenced by societal expectations and family dynamics (Daniels, 2016). Helicopter parenting might inhibit children's independence, leading to greater career instability (Gomes & Deuling, 2019). Excessive parental interference is particularly linked to challenges in setting and achieving personal career goals. Such a parenting

style may reduce self-confidence, increasing the likelihood of experiencing career instability (Wen et al., 2023). This aligns with findings by LeBlanc and Lyons (2022), which indicate that higher perceived helicopter parenting is associated with lower career adjustment and increased career doubts.

Moreover, the study finds that a mother's helicopter parenting style positively predicts the career stress of emerging adults, while their own career awareness negatively predicts it. From a Feminist Therapy perspective, helicopter parenting involves excessive intervention in decision-making processes (Wu et al., 2023), potentially undermining the child's independence and self-confidence (Lee & Lee, 2013). Thus, it can be suggested that a mother's helicopter parenting may increase career stress by diminishing the individual's sense of security regarding their career. Given that Feminist Therapy promotes enhancing personal control and making independent decisions (Enns, 2004), it can be argued that helicopter parenting negatively affects these traits, thereby increasing career stress.

Finally, a lack of career awareness might indicate difficulties in determining a career path due to societal gender norms and family pressures (Joseph, 2012). Supporting this view, Hivick et al. (2019) found that helicopter parenting reduces scores on autonomy, competence, and social relatedness. Lee and Kang (2018) also found that higher levels of helicopter parenting predict depressive symptoms through parental career expectations. This suggests that a mother's helicopter parenting negatively affects crucial career skills such as autonomy, competence, and social relatedness, as well as mental health, thereby impacting career stress.

The observed negative correlation between career awareness and career stress is expected. Liao et al. (2023) found similar results in their research with dental students, indicating that increased career stress is associated with decreased career awareness. Hashish (2019) also highlighted that while career awareness positively affects career self-efficacy, it negatively impacts career barriers such as career stress. Furthermore, Braverman et al. (2002) reported that for part-time workers, higher levels of career awareness are linked to lower levels of career stress. These findings support the study's results concerning the negative association between career awareness and career stress.

Another key finding of the study is the negative association between career awareness and career instability. This relationship may be explained by the abundance of career choices, as well as the unrealistic expectations and societal pressures emphasized by Feminist Therapy. Reduced career awareness can expose individuals to a broad range of career options, potentially leading to confusion and indecision. Having too many choices might result in difficulty committing to a single career path, thereby increasing career instability. This issue is particularly evident among young adults who may

not yet have a clear understanding of their interests or strengths (Unay-Gailhard & Brennen, 2022). Additionally, low career awareness may lead to unrealistic expectations about certain professions. Young adults may form idealized views of a career based on limited information, which can lead to disappointment when faced with the realities of that profession. This disillusionment might prompt individuals to abandon their initial career paths in favor of alternatives they believe will better meet their expectations, contributing to career instability (Gracida, 2019). Societal norms and peer influences can also affect career awareness. Individuals might feel pressured to pursue careers perceived as prestigious or financially rewarding, rather than those aligned with their personal interests or values. This external pressure can diminish career awareness and lead to career choices that are misaligned with one's true desires, thereby increasing career dissatisfaction and instability (Beecher et al., 2022).

The study also reports that career stress and a mother's helicopter parenting style are significant contributors to career instability. Career stress can stem from high expectations and demands related to career success (Akkermans & Tims, 2017). This pressure may prompt individuals to frequently reevaluate their career choices, leading to a cycle of indecision and career instability (Lee, 2023; Zhang et al., 2022). Additionally, heightened stress levels can negatively impact career planning, making it difficult for individuals to follow a consistent career path. This lack of planning can further increase career instability by causing individuals to struggle with sticking to any particular career decision (Zhang et al., 2022).

A mother's helicopter parenting approach may constrain an individual's ability to make independent career decisions (Luebbe et al., 2018). According to Feminist Therapy, such constraints on autonomy can arise from excessive reliance on external validation and guidance, leading to uncertainty regarding personal career objectives (Balin, 2014). Consequently, individuals might frequently alter their career choices to align with parental expectations or escape the pressures of their upbringing, thus increasing career instability (Ann & Kim, 2023). While parental support can enhance decision-making self-confidence, excessive support can have the opposite effect (Kim & Kang, 2023). These findings suggest that over-involvement can contribute to increased indecision and, subsequently, instability.

This study also highlights that a mother's helicopter parenting style indirectly affects career instability through career stress. Feminist Therapy often links helicopter parenting with diminished self-confidence (Dieng & O'Reilly, 2020). From this standpoint, a mother's helicopter parenting may indirectly impact career instability by increasing career stress in various ways. For example, low self-confidence can heighten stress related to career choices (Park & Lee, 2015). Individuals with low self-confidence may experience stress and seek additional options when they doubt their career decisions, which can further exacerbate career instability (LeBlanc & Lyons, 2022). Similarly, Sari and Santi (2024) found that individuals exposed to helicopter parenting might experience greater self-doubt regarding their careers. This self-doubt can lead to stress and anxiety about exploring and committing to a specific career path, contributing to career instability (LeBlanc & Lyons, 2022).

A mother's helicopter parenting style may impede the research necessary for career development, and it leads to career stress due to a lack of relevant information (Zhang et al., 2022). The stress from insufficient information can

contribute to career instability (LeBlanc & Lyons, 2022). Another explanation might be the stress from trying to meet a dominant parent's expectations. When individuals feel compelled to pursue specific careers to please a dominant parent, the resulting anxiety and stress can lead to career indecision. The struggle to balance personal desires with parental approval can increase career instability (Lee & Kang, 2018).

The study also identifies that a mother's autonomy supportive behaviors have an indirect effect on career instability through career awareness. Autonomy supportive behaviors, as outlined by self-determination theory, involve offering choices, encouraging initiative, and fostering a sense of control over decisions (Hocine et al., 2014). In this context, individuals with a strong sense of control over their career decisions are more likely to engage in career exploration and develop a clearer understanding of their interests, values, and goals (Nie et al., 2023). This enhanced career awareness can aid individuals in making more informed career choices, thereby reducing the likelihood of indecision and instability (Ann & Kim, 2023). Zhang et al. (2022) support this perspective, suggesting that environments that support autonomy allow individuals to explore their interests and make decisions aligned with their values, thus increasing career awareness. This increased awareness can mitigate feelings of being overwhelmed by external pressures or uncertainties that contribute to career indecision, potentially reducing career instability (Boo & Kim, 2020). Additionally, perceived autonomy support is positively associated with higher self-efficacy in career decision-making (Ann & Kim, 2023). When individuals feel empowered to make their own career choices, they are more likely to have confidence in their ability to advance along their career paths, thereby decreasing the likelihood of indecision or instability.

Finally, this research shows that a mother's autonomy supportive behaviors indirectly affect career instability through both career awareness and career stress. This relationship can be understood by exploring how these behaviors both increase awareness of career options and reduce the stress associated with career decisions. When a mother supports autonomy, it helps individuals develop a greater sense of control over their career choices (Distefano et al., 2018). This enhanced motivation can positively influence career development and lower the level of instability. Those who receive support for autonomy are more likely to explore and understand various career paths, thus improving their career awareness (Dalkılıç et al., 2022). As individuals become more knowledgeable about their career options, they are better able to align their choices with personal goals and desires, as highlighted by Feminist Therapy (Jung, 2013). This alignment reduces uncertainty and indecision, leading individuals to follow career paths that match their identities (Vignoli, 2015). Additionally, supporting autonomy may help in reducing career-related stress (Havermans et al., 2017). Individuals who feel their autonomy is supported generally experience less anxiety and stress related to career decisions (Katz et al., 2018). This reduction in stress can enhance clarity and confidence in career choices, thereby decreasing instability (Peter et al., 2016). Moreover, autonomy support boosts self-confidence in making career decisions, which is the belief in one's ability to make sound career choices (Jungert et al., 2013). As individuals feel more capable in their career progress, increased self-efficacy can help reduce stress

(McKay et al., 2014). This increased confidence and reduced stress contribute to lower career instability (Liu et al., 2024).

In conclusion, analyzing the impact of a mother's helicopter parenting and autonomy supportive behaviors through the lens of Feminist Therapy indicates that these dynamics align with feminist goals of enabling individuals to express their identities and pursue their aspirations without being restricted by traditional gender expectations (Pasque & Nicholson, 2023). Autonomy supportive behaviors help enhance children's self-confidence, and lead to more informed and independent career decisions, which also supports gender equality goals. Conversely, individuals may find it challenging to define their career paths due to societal norms and family pressures.

Implication

Understanding these relationships from a Feminist Therapy perspective is crucial for career counselors, educators, and psychologists. It provides essential insights into the obstacles individuals may face in career planning, particularly concerning excessive parental involvement. Additionally, it highlights the significance of parental attitudes, especially maternal ones, in shaping a child's career development. This information can help improve guidance and career counseling services in schools, aiding students in understanding parental influences and developing a consistent career plan based on their interests and skills. More psychological and sociological research is needed to examine these variables and determine which parenting styles and parental figures are most impactful in a child's career development.

The findings highlight the importance of addressing parental influences, particularly helicopter parenting and autonomy-supportive behaviours, in career counselling. Parent-focused interventions can be implemented to promote autonomy-supportive behaviours and reduce overprotective tendencies. These programmes can educate parents about the long-term consequences of helicopter parenting on career development. Applying principles of feminist therapy can empower both parents and children to challenge traditional gender roles and support autonomy, thereby promoting healthier career exploration and decision-making. Workshops focusing on managing career stress and understanding the impact of parental behaviour can prepare students for independent career planning. The findings highlight the need for policies that support career guidance services in educational institutions, particularly those that address the intersection of family dynamics and career planning. Policies that promote constructive parental involvement in career development, emphasizing autonomy rather than control, may be beneficial.

Researchers should further explore the role of fathers and other caregivers in career development. In addition, longitudinal studies could provide insights into how these dynamics evolve over time. Given the cultural specificity of this study, cross-cultural research can examine how different cultural norms influence the relationships between parenting styles and career outcomes. The study's integration of feminist therapy principles offers insights into how challenging traditional gender roles can positively impact career development, particularly for young women. By reducing the stress associated with helicopter parenting and career instability, these findings indirectly contribute to better mental health outcomes for emerging adults.

Limitation

The study used a convenience sample of university students aged 17-25 years, which may not be representative of a wider population of emerging adults or individuals in other educational or professional contexts. The sample had a higher proportion of female participants (65.4%), which may limit the generalizability of the findings to men or other gender groups. The research was conducted in a specific cultural and geographical context (e.g., Turkey). The findings may not be directly applicable to other cultures or societies where parenting styles and career dynamics are different. The study relies on self-reported measures, which are subject to biases such as social desirability and recall bias. The cross-sectional design of the study does not allow for causal inference or examination of changes in relationships over time. The study primarily examined maternal behaviour and may not have considered the influence of the parenting styles of fathers or other caregivers.

Author Contributions

The entire study was conducted by the corresponding author. No other author contributed to the study.

Ethical Declaration

This study was conducted with the permission of Erzincan Binali Yıldırım University Educational Sciences Ethics Committee with the number E-88012460-050.04-376460 and date 01.08.2024.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest with any person or institution.

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