Who Endorses Kindergarten "De-Primary-Schooling"? Latent Profiles of Parental Expectations and Parenting Stress

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Abstract. Kindergarten "schoolification" has prompted de-primary-schooling policies, but parents' endorsement, which is crucial for implementation, remains unclear. This study investigated 343 parents from urban and rural China. Using latent profile analysis, we identified subgroups based on parental expectations and parenting stress, profiled their demographic composition, and compared policy endorsement across profiles. Four profiles emerged: High expectation-High stress, High expectation-Low stress, Low expectation-High stress, and Low expectation-Low stress. Policy endorsement differed significantly across profiles, with the two low-expectation groups (regardless of stress level) showing the lowest endorsement. These findings highlight heterogeneity in parents' psychological profiles and provide implications for differentiated family communication and support strategies to promote and optimize de-primary-schooling policy implementation.

Keywords: Parental expectation; parenting stress; Parental Endorsement of Kindergarten De-Schoolification Policy.

1 Introduction

Many education systems have rolled out policies against kindergarten early academicization to safeguard developmentally appropriate practice and alleviate pre-formal schooling "schoolification" pressures[1], as intensive academic instruction runs counter to play-based learning and amplifies performance pressure. In China, the "de-primary-schooling" policy has become a key governance measure and even been legalized (e.g., The Preschool Education Law of the People's Republic of China, 2025). However, its effectiveness hinges not only on institutional compliance but also on parents' interpretation, acceptance and translation of policy messages into daily parenting practices. Even with preschool implementation, some parents may still prioritize advanced learning via home tutoring and private lessons[2][3][4], which indirectly reintroduces academic pressure into kindergarten settings. Parental endorsement is therefore a critical precondition for policy success. Despite this practical significance, limited research has ex-

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plored which parents endorse de-primary-schooling and how such endorsement correlates with their psychological profiles in China. Identifying parents with low policy sensitivity can facilitate targeted parent education support for educational and social institutions.

Two parent-level factors are closely linked to de-primary-schooling endorsement: parenting stress and parental expectations. Parenting stress refers to the strain parents experience in fulfilling caregiving roles and interacting with children, triggered by personal traits, parent-child interaction dysfunctions and children's behaviors[5]. Specifically, it derives from two sources: (1) doubts and anxiety over de-primary-schooling policies, with parents viewing them as inducing educational involution[6]; (2) academic pressure from policy implementation, where overly anxious parents increase educational investment to help children"win at the starting line", amid transition uncertainties[7][8]. Parents under excessive stress disregard the policy's long-term value, focus on short-term gains and resist it, while those with lower stress tend to endorse it, with this association varying across subgroups.

Parental expectations, which defined as assumptions about children's future academic and life development, shaped by parents' own experiences and future reflections[9], also exert complex impacts on policy endorsement. Existing studies show high expectations trigger parental anxiety and boost educational engagement[10], while low expectation parents hold modest outlooks for children's academics, life skills and careers yet still participate in their education, with involvement constrained by social structural factors[11]. Drawing on Vroom's Expectancy Theory[12], expectations function as motivational forces, implying that higher parental expectations may enhance motivation to understand de-primary-schooling policies.

Notably, parenting stress and expectations often coexist in distinct patterns, forming qualitatively different parent subgroups that shape parents' policy interpretation and subsequent decisions on kindergarten practices and home learning. Nevertheless, most scholars have adopted a variable-centered approach to confirm the mediating role of parental expectations between intensive parenting and educational anxiety during the kindergarten-primary school transition[8]. This approach, which only focuses on average main effects, may overlook policy-relevant family heterogeneity. To address this gap, we adopt a person-centered approach via latent profile analysis (LPA) to identify unobserved subgroups with similar indicator patterns.

Given the prior research has largely overlooked parents' psychological heterogeneity and the family-context mechanisms shaping de-primary-schooling acceptance, the current cross-sectional study aims to (1) identify latent profiles characterized by distinct patterns of parental expectations and parenting stress, (2) explore whether demographic characteristics are associated with profile membership, and most importantly, (3) examine whether these profiles differ in their endorsement of kindergarten de-primary-schooling policy.

2 Methods

2.1 Participants and Procedures

The present study was conducted from July 2025 to October 2025, with the approval of the Ethics Committee of Jimei University. With participants' consent, a total of 369 parents participated in this study and completed questionnaires on Wenjuanxin (the most prevalent online survey platform in China). We excluded careless responses by response completeness and response time (≤ 180 seconds), ending with 343 complete observations (demographics described in Table 1).

2.2 Measures

The variables of our concern were measured by the following assessment tools:

First, parental endorsement was measured by the Parental Endorsement of Kindergarten De-Schoolification Policy Questionnaire (PE-KDSPQ), adapted from the Parental Awareness of the Double Reduction Policy Scale for high school student families by Wang (2024)[13]. The adapted PE-KDSPQ is a 11-item single-dimension scale with good content validity and construct validity. Through the confirmatory factor analysis ($\chi^2/df < 3$, SRMR = 0.04, RMSEA = 0.07, CFI = 0.95, TLI = 0.93), 11 out of 12 items were retained (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.89$) Using a 5-Likert scale ranging from 1 ("Strongly inconsistent") to 5 ("Strongly consistent"), higher scores indicate higher level of parental awareness and endorsement of the policy of Kindergarten "De-Primary-schooling".

Second, parental expectation was measured by the Parental Expectation Scale (PES). Chinese Version of the PES was translated and adapted from the originally English version of parental expectation scale by Eisen (2004)[14]. Through cross-cultural revision and interviewed with 30 parents, two items were added ("I want my preschool-aged child to learn primary school knowledge"; "I hope my child can attend higher education") to the original 20-item scale, with good content validity. Then, as the exploratory factor analysis and confirmatory factor analysis showed, the PES (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.82$) finally remains 14 items and includes three subscales: Academic and development (seven items, Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.76$), Household chores (three items, Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.76$), Positive guidance (four items, Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.64$), uses 5-point scale (1 = "Strongly Disagree", 5 = "Strongly Agree"), with a higher score indicating higher parental expectation.

Third, parental stress was measured by Parental Stress Scale (PSS). We used the Chinese version of the parental stress scale, adapted and validated by Cheung (2000) from the original version (Berry & Jones, 1995)[15][16]. The 17 items (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.84$) measures parental strain and parental satisfaction in Chinese context. Each item was answered in a 5-point response format (1 = "Strongly Disagree", 5 = "Strongly Agree"). A higher total score of the PSS indicates more parental stress.

Fourth, Demographic and family variables. Parents were asked to report demographic information about their sex, completed educational years, occupation types, as well as their children's sex and age. They also reported their household registration,

who primarily made the educational decision for their children, whether they were an only-child family, and whether they were a single-parent family.

2.3 Analysis Strategy

We conducted latent profile analysis (LPA) in R using the tidyLPA package based on PES and PSS item scores, excluding demo-graphic variables, and estimated 1–5 profile solutions. Model selection prioritized parsimony and practical interpretability, guided by (a) low-er AIC and BIC[17][18], (b) entropy ≥ .80[19], (c) Lo–Mendell–Rubin (LMR) and boot-strap likelihood ratio test (BLRT) results[20][21], and (d) class proportions > 5%. For LMR and BLRT, $p < .05$ indicated a significant improvement in fit com-pared with the model containing one fewer class.

We used chi-square tests or ANOVA to examine whether demographic characteristics and parental policy endorsement differ across profile memberships.

3 Results

3.1 Descriptive Analysis

Correlations between variables were detailed in Table 1.

Table 1. The correlation between variables.

Variables	*Mean(SD)*/N(%)	PES	AD	HC	PG	PSS	PE-KDSPQ	EDU
Mother report	247(72.01%)	0.012	-0.023	0.004	0.085	-0.075	-0.112*	-0.051
Girl	190(55.39%)	0.031	0.052	-0.083	0.087	-0.078	-0.006	0.121*
Grade	1.11(0.74)	-0.032	-0.032	-0.029	-0.007	0.084	-0.152**	0.150**
Rural Registration	119(34.69%)	0.035	0.014	0.082	-0.007	0.137*	-0.156**	0.375**
Not only child	130(37.90%)	0.002	-0.002	0.001	0.010	0.177**	-0.167**	0.310**
Married parents	326(95.04%)	-0.111*	-0.129*	-0.044	-0.049	-0.083	-0.027	0.110*
PES	4.12(0.47)	/	0.891**	0.707**	0.649**	-0.063	0.406**	-0.052

AD	4.00(0.59)	0.891**	/	0.429**	0.381**	0.011	0.374**	-0.057
HC	4.09(0.75)	0.707**	0.429**	/	0.308**	0.004	0.271**	0.004
PG	4.35(0.50)	0.649**	0.381**	0.308**	/	0.235**	0.257**	-0.058
PSS	2.46(0.56)	-0.063	0.011	0.004	0.235**	/	-0.202**	0.166**
PE-KDSPQ	3.90(0.71)	0.406**	0.891**	0.271**	0.257**	0.202**	/	0.013
EDU	14.82(2.81)	-0.052	-0.057	0.004	-0.058	0.166**	0.013	/

Note. AD = Academic and development, HC = Household chores, PG = Positive guidance, EDU = education, M = means, SD = standard deviations, PES = Parental expectation scale, PSS = Parenting stress scale, PE-KDSPQ = Parental Endorsement of Kindergarten De-Schoolification Policy Questionnaire, Parent role: 0 = father, 1 = mother; Child sex: boy = 0, girl = 1; Grade: Junior Class = 0, Middle Class = 1, Senior Class = 2; Registration: Urban = 0, Rural = 1; Only-child: 0 = yes, 1 = no; Single-parent: 0 = yes, 1 = no; * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

3.2 Latent Profile Analysis

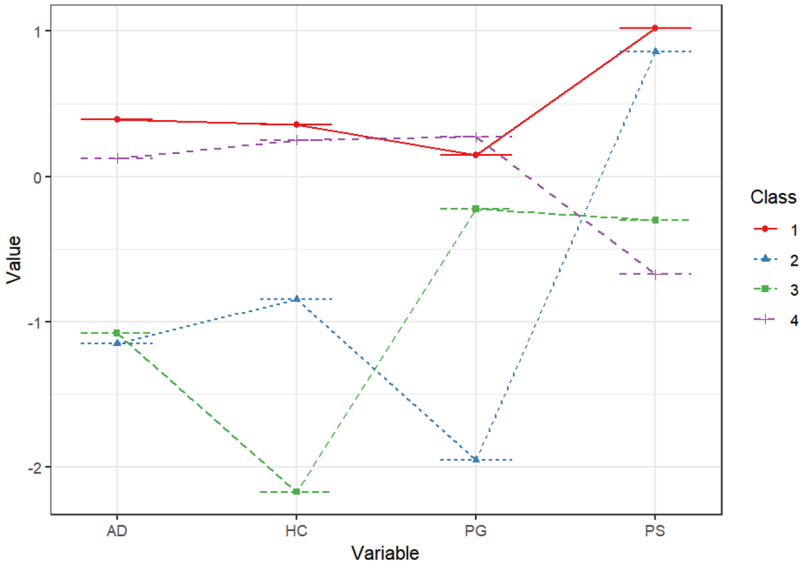
We estimated one- to five-class solutions and compared model fit indices (Table 2). A four-class solution was selected based on acceptable classification quality, nonsignificant improvement for the five-class model (LMR p = .824), decreasing AIC/BIC across models, no classes below 5% in the two- and four-class solutions, and overall interpretability.

The four profiles are shown in Figure 1. C1 (n = 99, 28.86%) was characterized by high expectations and high parenting stress (High expectation–High stress). C2 (n = 27, 7.87%) showed low expectations and high stress (Low expectation–High stress). C3 (n = 27, 7.87%) showed low expectations and low stress (Low expectation–Low stress). C4, the largest group (n = 190, 55.39%), was characterized by high expectations and low stress (High expectation–Low stress).

Table 2. Fit indices of the latent profile models.

Model	AIC	BIC	Entropy	LMR(ρ)	BLRT(ρ)	Class(%)
1	3905.56	3936.26	1.00	/	/	/
2	3749.80	3799.69	0.86	0.000	0.001	85.08%,14.92%
3	3722.1	3791.2	0.76	0.000	0.001	30.80%,13.71%,55.49%

4	3663.94	3752.21	0.81	0.000	0.001	30.08%,8.82%,7.72%,53.39%
5	3669.34	3776.80	0.80	0.824	0.132	20.46%,17.09%,6.26%,2.93%,53.26%



Note. C1 stands High expectation-High stress, C2 stands Low expectation-High stress, C3 stands Low expectation-Low stress, C4 stands High expectation-Low stress, AD = Academic and development, HC = Household chores, PG = Positive guidance, EDU = education.

Fig. 1. The four classes of parents.

3.3 Chi-square Test

For demographic variables across the four profiles, the results no difference in parent role ($\chi^2 = 3.942$, $p > 0.05$), child sex ($\chi^2 = 3.330$, $p > 0.05$) and children's grade ($\chi^2 = 7.231$, $p > 0.05$), but the values in occupation ($\chi^2 = 42.843$, $p < 0.001$), educational decision ($\chi^2 = 32.581$, $p < 0.001$) and registration ($\chi^2 = 10.450$, $p < 0.05$).

3.4 ANOVA Results

We conducted Welch's analysis of variance (ANOVA) to compare parents' years of education and their endorsement of the kindergarten "de-primary-schooling" policy across the four parent profiles. As shown in Table 3, significant differences were found across the four parent profiles. Parents' years of education differed significantly, $F(3, 65.366) = 3.888$, $p = 0.013$. A significant difference also emerged in policy endorsement, $F(3, 73.130) = 14.375$, $p < .001$. Specifically, parents in the Low Expectation-

High Stress and Low Expectation-Low Stress profiles reported the lowest levels of endorsement.

Table 3. Analysis of variable of endorsement in the four classes

Profile	N	PE M (SD)	EDU M (SD)
C1	99	3.894 (0.780)	14.08 (3.361)
C2	27	3.374 (0.528)	14.44 (3.154)
C3	27	3.532 (0.601)	14.59 (3.190)
C4	190	4.030 (0.651)	15.29 (2.263)
Overall F (df = 3, 339)		14.375***	3.888*
Post hoc pattern		C4 = C1 > C3 = C2	C4 > C1 = C2 = C3

Note. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$, M = Means, SD = standard deviation, C1 stands High expectation-High stress, C2 stands Low expectation-High stress, C3 stands Low expectation-Low stress, C4 stands High expectation-Low stress, PE = policy endorsement, EDU = education.

4 Discussion

This study identified four parental subgroups and analyzed their levels of policy endorsement. The major findings include:

Based on parental expectation and stress, parents were categorized into four profiles: High expectation-High stress, Low expectation-High stress, Low expectation-Low stress and High expectation-Low stress. Our findings confirm two parenting styles previously documented in the Chinese cultural context: High Expectation-High Stress and Low Expectation-High Stress. The High expectation-High stress profiles often discussed in the literature as "intensive parenting" in this context.

Among the four profiles, there was no significant difference in parent role, children's sex, and children's grade. However, significant differences emerged in terms of their occupations, education years, mode of family educational decision making, and household registration. Specifically, there was a significant difference in the years of education between the parents in C4 and those in the other three groups, while no significant differences were found among the latter three groups.

Policy endorsement differed significantly across the four profiles. Parents in C1 and C4 showed the highest scores in policy endorsement (with no significant difference between the two groups), while those in C2 and C3 showed the lowest, with no significant difference between these two low-endorsement groups. This is consistent with the theories and research findings of previous scholars: parents with high expectation will increase their educational investment and be more motivated to understand the policies related to the transition from kindergarten to primary school[10][12]. In addition, we found that two groups of parents with low expectation-high stress and low expectation-low stress showed low endorsement of the policy on the transition from kindergarten to primary school. Future research should focus on these two types of parents and explore the underlying reasons for their low endorsement, also provide corresponding assistance and support.

5 Conclusion

The parents involved in the study can be divided into four types, among which the parents with low expectation-low stress and low expectation-high stress had the lowest scores of policy endorsement, which should be paid attention to in future research. Although there are differences in parents' endorsement of the policy of Kindergarten "De-Primary-Schooling, the four types of parents' endorsement was high. Follow-up research should continue to pay attention to the development of home-school cooperative education in young convergence, and carry out more extensive and more specific research, so that the policy of Kindergarten "De-Primary-Schooling can be implemented in place to promote the healthy growth of every child.

Declaration

During the preparation of this paper, the authors used Doubao to translate and polish the expression of certain textual content. After using this AI tool, the authors reviewed and edited the content of the paper as needed, and assumed full responsibility for the published content of the paper.

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