

# Parents' Attitude to the Double Reduction Policy and Its Influencing Factors from the Perspective of ABC Model

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doi:10.56397/JARE.2023.01.05

## Abstract

Parental attitude is one of the important factors to promote the formation of the long-term mechanism of the double reduction policy (DRP). By exerting ABC Model, the questionnaire and interview are designed to investigate the attitudes and influencing factors from the parents of middle school students in Nanchong towards the DRP from the three dimensions. Three dimensions are cognition, behavior, and affect. Parental attitudes studied contributes to the formation of long-term mechanism of the DRP. The results show that on the affect dimension, the parental attitude of supporting the DRP policy has a significant positive impact; parental cognition of the DRP shows positive impact on students' learning and school education; in behavioral indicators, parental attitude towards the DRP confirms positive supportive behavior. Three suggestions are proposed based on the findings.

**Keywords:** double reduction policy, long-term mechanism, parental attitudes, family education

## 1. Introduction

In July 2021, the General Office of the CPC Central Committee and the General Office of the State Council (2021) issued the *Opinions on Further Reducing the Burden of Homework and Off-Campus Training on Students in Compulsory Education* (hereinafter referred to as DRP), one of the goals of which is to reduce the burden on students and parents in and out of school and to achieve educational equity. As a core part of the education policy process, the implementation of education policy has a profound impact on the achievement of policy goals (Wang & Si, 2020). Parents are important players in the educational ecology and play an irreplaceable role in the top-down implementation of the DRP.

According to Ning (2018), the difficulty of reducing the burden is not only an educational issue but also a cultural and social issue, and parents, as educational stakeholders, have a profound influence on the implementation of the policy at the micro level. At the micro level, parents' educational perceptions have a profound impact on the degree of implementation and effectiveness of the DRP. According to Liu (2021), parents are important participants in the process of education policy reform and implementation. Parents are both the victims of the overburden problem and one of the causes of students' overburden.

Since the promulgation of the DRP nearly a year ago, what specific attitudes do parents have

towards this round of DRP? What impact and extent will parents' actions driven by these attitudes have on the formation of the long-term mechanism of DRP in the big education ecology? These are the answers that education departments and schools need to know urgently. In January 2022, the Law of the People's Republic of China on the Promotion of Family Education came into force, marking the emphasis on the importance of family education at the national legal level. By studying the parents' attitude towards the DRP in Nanchong, it is conducive to strengthening the parents' sense of responsibility, making full use of the parents' action power in the implementation of the policy, and promoting the formation of a long-term mechanism to implement the "double reduction" policy in Nanchong from the perspective of family education.

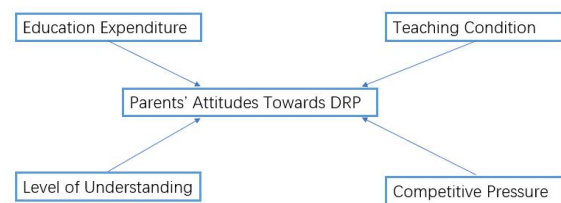
## 2. Research Design and Research Questions

Through the scientific investigation of parents' attitudes toward the "double reduction" policy through the attitude triad theory, the problem of inaccurate parental role and unclear parental role in the implementation of the DRP was solved, so as to make full use of the family education function and parental action power to provide local research data to support the formation of a long-term mechanism for the DRP in Nanchong City.

### 2.1 The Parents' Attitudes Towards DRP and Extraction of Influencing Factors

In June 2022, semi-structured interviews were conducted with four parents of secondary school students from Nanchong City based on a pre-prepared interview outline and using a convenience sampling method. The interview was based on the following questions: a) The main purpose of the DRP is to reduce the burden of homework and off-campus training on students. b) Before the implementation of the DRP, did you have any anxiety about your child's education? c) What behavioral changes have you made in your child's education after the implementation of the DRP in your school? During the interview process, the questions were asked flexibly depending on the respondents' responses in order to obtain more feedback. The analysis of the transcribed text revealed that parents' attitudes toward the DRP was related to the following issues: they were worried that their children would lose badly in further education; their children were not

self-motivated and did not use their after-school time effectively; their children did not do well in the midterm exams and were shifted to vocational high schools; the price of one-to-one extracurricular tutoring is overpriced; non-publication of test results leads to children's slacking in learning. In this study, we analyzed the existing literature and interview results, and summarized the factors affecting parents' attitudes toward the DRP as follows: teacher conditions, competitive pressure, educational expenses, and understanding, as shown in Figure 1. (Ting, 2020)



**Figure 1.** Factors affecting parents' attitudes toward the DRP

### 2.2 Indicators and Hypotheses of Measurement's Parental Attitude

Attitude is a common psychological phenomenon in human life and has become an important direction of research in social psychology (Luo, 2020). Myers (1993) considered attitude as an evaluative reaction of liking or disliking something or someone, which is expressed in people's beliefs, feelings and tendencies. Inheriting and developing Myers' view, Friedman (Bohner & Dickel, 2011) argued that attitudes are composed of affect, behavior, and cognition which is also known as the triadic theory of attitudes. In this study, we used the triadic theory to conduct interviews and questionnaires to examine the three perspectives of parents' cognitive, affective, and behavioral actions toward the DRP. The power of parental action that has long been neglected in the process of policy implementation. Parents' perceptions of the DRP refers to their knowledge and perceptions of the DRP. The interview results show that four factors, namely teacher conditions, competitive pressure, educational expenses, and understanding, all influence parents' perceptions of the DRP. Therefore, these four factors were used as secondary indicators of cognition in this study and developed into specific questionnaire questions; the emotion of the DRP refers to the support, wait-and-see and

opposition to double reduction; the behavior of the DRP in terms of attitude is the plan to reduce the number of students. The behavioral aspect of the DRP is the specific action of the plan state,

which refers to the parents' behavioral willingness and action tendency towards the DRP, as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Indicators of parents' attitudes toward the DRP

Research subjects	Tier 1 indicators	Secondary indicators
Parents' Attitudes towards DRP	Cognition	Teaching condition
		Competitive pressure
		Education expenditure
		Level of understanding
	Affect	Support
		Wait and see
		Oppose
	Behavior	Tendency to act
		Willingness to act

### 3. Questionnaire Statistics and Analysis

The semi-structured interview text was coded at three levels by combining the attitudinal triad to extract indicators of parents' attitudes toward the DRP, and the indicators were used to design the questionnaire. The validity and reliability of the questionnaire were tested using IBM Statistics 26, and the data showed that the validity and reliability of the questionnaire met the standards. The questionnaire was divided into three modules: introduction, basic information and formal questionnaire. The introductory module introduces the implementation of the DRP and its basic contents. In June 2022, the questionnaires were distributed and collected in the form of electronic questionnaires in parents' groups and social software for two weeks, and parents were asked to fill in the questionnaires carefully and honestly. In terms of respondent characteristics, 55.91% of the respondents were mothers, 32.26% were fathers, and 11.83% were (maternal) grandparents or other relationships to take care of their children. Regarding parents' attitude toward the DRP, 74.7% of parents were in favor of the DRP, 25.3% were on the fence, and 0% were against the DRP. 74.7% of parents are against the DRP.

#### 3.1 Reliability Analysis

A self-administered questionnaire was used to measure parents' attitudes toward the DRP and the overall internal consistency of the

questionnaire was high (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.887$ ). Cronbach's  $\alpha > 0.7$  (0.949-0.978) for each of the factors covered in the six questions of the formal questionnaire section indicated that the questionnaire had good internal consistency and validity of the test hypothesis.

#### 3.2 Validity Analysis

Based on the semi-structured interview texts, the indicators of parents' attitudes toward the DRP were extracted by three-level coding, and the questionnaire was designed by combining the indicators with the dimensional classification of attitudes in the attitude triad. The construct validity of this study was interpreted by exploratory factor analysis using IBM Statistics 26. The KMO value was  $0.930 > 0.7$ , with significant Bart's spherical value, and the data showed that the questionnaire met the conditions of factor analysis. Factor analysis showed that the characteristic root value (pre-rotation, post-rotation) =  $5.07 > 1$  indicated that the questionnaire basically reflected the actual parental attitudes.

#### 3.3 Result Analysis

Before the implementation of the DRP, there was a negative effect in the form of load reduction policy, which was manifested as load reduction in school leading to load increase outside school. One year after the implementation of the DRP, this study investigated parents' attitudes and influencing factors toward the DRP. Based on the research data, the following findings were

obtained in this study.

a) 74.7% of the respondents supported the “double reduction” policy, while 25.3% of the respondents had a wait-and-see attitude. The main reasons for supporting the implementation of the “double reduction” policy are as follows: to rectify the chaos of off-campus training institutions (58.06%); to improve students’ overall quality and ability (77.42%); to reduce students’ homework burden (51.61%); to reduce family education investment (67.74%); to reduce parents’ tutoring (51.61%); reducing parents’ mental stress (33.87%). The reasons for the subjects’ wait-and-see attitude toward the “double reduction” policy are as follows: parents need to invest more energy in home education (42.86%); students are less self-motivated to study, and not taking exams or announcing their results leads to a more diffident attitude and weaker motivation to study (57.14%); quality education requires higher educational costs and more expenses (33.6%). (33.33%); students have weak self-control and spend more leisure time to indulge in bad habits (52.38%); they are worried about the growing gap between rich and poor families (57.14%); students are weak in subjects and need tutoring, but there is no channel for tutoring (33.33%).

The above data show that parents’ attitude toward the DRP has a significant positive impact on the emotional dimension. The implementation of the DRP has cracked the theater effect in education at the policy level(Dongping, 2018), further mobilized the emotional power of parents, and realized the change of parents’ attitude towards the DRP from a wait-and-see attitude to a supportive attitude. The implementation of the has further mobilized the emotional power of parents and realized the change of parents’ attitude towards “double reduction” from wait-and-see to support.

b) Based on the results of the interviews, we examined the extent to which parents’ knowledge of the DRP was influenced by four dimensions: teacher conditions, competitive pressure, educational expenses, and knowledge. 3.23% of the subjects knew a lot about the DRP, 43.01% knew a lot about the “double reduction” policy, 43.01% knew a lot about the DRP, 43.01% heard about the DRP but did not know much about it, and 10.75% had never heard of the DRP. The study found that 3.23% of the subjects were

very familiar with the DRP, 43.01% were basically familiar with the DRP, 43.01% had heard of the DRP but did not know much about it, and 10.75% had never heard of the DRP. Parents were concerned about three aspects of teachers’ conditions under the DRP: the DRP will increase teachers’ pressure and reduce educational accuracy (66.27%); school teachers’ educational level is not sufficient for the original extracurricular education (44.17%); and school teachers’ difficulty in providing extracurricular education (44.17%); and the difficulty for school teachers to meet the professionalism requirements of the DRP (55.63%). The study also found that parents have the following perceptions of competitive pressure under the DRP: they are very worried about their children’s further education (66.27%); they are worried that their children will be overtaken by other children (66.27%). In terms of education expenses, parents mainly have the following two perceptions: additional education expenses can be reduced under the DRP (72.9%); additional education expenses used to bring more pressure to the family (77.11%).

c) Parents’ attitudes toward the DRP showed positive support in terms of behavioral indicators, which were reflected in behavioral tendencies and behavioral intentions. According to the data, the following behavioral tendencies were observed: children do not need tutoring at all for homework (33.73%); occasionally children need tutoring for homework (55.42%); most of the time children need or completely need tutoring for homework (10.84%); and extra homework tasks are given to children for fear that they do not have enough practice (26.51%). The following behavioral tendencies were observed among the subjects: creating a good study atmosphere and study habits for their children to help reduce their homework burden (57.14%); seeing other parents enrolling their children in more tutorial classes under the DRP (62.64%); and being willing to learn more about the relationship between the DRP and their children’s healthy development. They are willing to learn more about the connection between the DRP and their children’s healthy development (95.30%).

#### 4. Implications

DRP is an education reform policy implemented from top to bottom. The survey results show that parents’ attitude is an important factor to ensure the effective implementation of the DRP



and form a long-term mechanism. Previous studies have also pointed out that parents' attitude towards burden reduction is closely related to social environment, utilitarian education concept, traditional education culture, education ecology and other situations (Zhenzhen & Yang, 2018). Therefore, in the process of implementing the DRP, we should correctly look at the status and role of parents, deeply explore the situation related to parents' attitude, and effectively use the positive attitude of parents towards DRP.

#### *4.1 Forming a Synergy of School, Family and Social Education Fields*

Jonas et al. (2020) found that students' achievement motivation was significantly related to academic performance. In the educational field of schools, not testing or publishing grades does not fundamentally address parents' anxiety about students' test scores, and the implementation of the DRP could consider publicizing test scores or publishing them in a better way. In addition, in the process of implementing the DRP, the Ministry of Education clearly states that teachers should be given subsidies for after-school services. Therefore, the implementation of the policy in the school field should also protect teachers' healthy working hours and respect their willingness to participate in after-school services, so as to alleviate parents' concerns that the DRP will increase teachers' pressure and reduce educational accuracy. In the social sphere, the implementation of the DRP needs to break the perception of society's prejudice against vocational education for the training of skilled personnel.

In order to give better play to the positive promotion of the DRP in the social education field, corresponding measures should be introduced at the education policy level to form a standardized and scientific vocational education, improve the construction level of vocational and technical education, realize vocational and technical education in line with employment, and try to change parents' one-sided attitude toward DRP.

#### *4.2 Promote the Positive Development of DRP*

The survey found that some parents' attitudes toward the DRP have led to underground out-of-school training, one-to-one homework tutoring, and the tendency for schools to reduce the burden while families increase it. In the

process of forming a long-term mechanism for the DRP, in order to effectively eliminate the above-mentioned resistance from parents' attitudes, the *Opinions of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council on Deepening the Reform of Education and Teaching to Comprehensively Improve the Quality of Compulsory Education* (2019) mentions that parents should effectively fulfill their responsibilities in family education, strengthen communication with their children, and cultivate good ideas and good communication with them. They should help their children rationally determine their growth goals, overcome blind comparison, and prevent their children from being overburdened with extracurricular activities. The implementation of educational policies cannot be achieved without the guidance of the school, an important body in the educational ecology. Schools help parents scientifically master family education methods and clearly understand the boundaries between home and school in the process of children's growth, which is conducive to the joint prevention of outward transfer of responsibilities at the respective educational levels by both home and school. The above-mentioned home-school cooperation is conducive to parents' scientific approach to home education, which helps the DRP to develop positively on the basis of the existing effectiveness and eventually form a long-term mechanism of the DRP.

#### *4.3 Returning Parents to Their Role as Nurturers*

Parents are the primary caregivers of their children. The resistance to the DRP exhibited by parents' attitudes largely stems from the disparity in returns to higher education, the competitive job market, and the shortage of quality employment resources. The above-mentioned sources derive from parents' utilitarian perceptions of education and negatively influence their attitudes toward the DRP. Driven by the utilitarian education concept, students, parents, and schools will continue the original model and hollow out the DRP. Therefore, in the process of implementing the long-term mechanism of the DRP, parents return to the role of nurturer, which is conducive to the construction of a benign parenting culture and ecology. Parents' reassurance to return to their role as nurturers cannot be achieved without the support of the education system. Therefore, the education system level should dilute the

competition and selection among children and reduce the influence of school education in social mobility. Fang (2022) pointed out that the root cause of the intense competition and even alienation of education in today's society lies in the overly prominent division of social interests and the increase in social mobility and its perceptions and expectations. On the surface, the secondary school entrance examination diversion mentioned by Parent B in the interview is an important cause of parents' anxiety in the compulsory education stage, but in essence, it can be traced to the linkage between the social interest structure and education. The gradual realization of the development goal of common prosperity in the *14th Five-Year Plan* and *Long-Range Objectives Through the Year 2035* can fundamentally ensure the decoupling of the social interest structure from education, and thus firmly form a benign parenting culture.

### Fund Project

This paper is a research result of the Nanchong Social Science Foundation project, *Research on the Influence of Parents' Attitude on the Formation of Long-term Mechanism of Double Reduction Policy* (Project No. NC22C418).

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