



# Family education for left-behind children of parents in overseas: current situation and challenges.

Yuanyuan Gu<sup>1</sup>, Wenyao Gu<sup>1</sup>, Saiqi Tian<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> College of Education, Wenzhou University, Wenzhou, People's Republic of China.

ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p><b>Article No.:</b> 100923105</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Research</p> <p><b>Full Text:</b> <a href="#">PDF</a>, <a href="#">PHP</a>, <a href="#">HTML</a>, <a href="#">EPUB</a>, <a href="#">MP3</a></p> <hr/> <p><b>Accepted:</b> 09/10/2023</p> <p><b>Published:</b> 16/10/2023</p> <hr/> <p><b>*Corresponding Author</b></p> <p>Saiqi Tian</p> <p><b>E-mail:</b> <a href="mailto:tiansaiqi@wzu.edu.cn">tiansaiqi@wzu.edu.cn</a></p> <hr/> <p><b>Keywords:</b> Family education, Left-behind children, Parents in overseas.</p>	<p>Because both parents or one of them has moved overseas, most of the children are left to their grandparents to take care of them, and we call them "left-behind children of parents in overseas" (LBCPO). Due to the distance and time difference, it is difficult for parents to provide family education guidance to them. The age gap between the cross-generation guardians and the children is large, and their own cultural level is low, so their performance in family education is weak. This study distributed questionnaires to 207 LBCPO and their guardians to understand the implementation status of LBCPO family education, guardians' attitude towards family education, self-efficacy, resource utilization and evaluation. We then interviewed 15 LBCPO, 11 LBCPO guardians, and 6 teachers in LBCPO's schools. The results show that LBCPO family education has the following problems: (1) Guardians' understanding of family education is biased, and the content of family education is biased; (2) Guardians recognize the importance of family education, but their attitudes and actions differ greatly; (3) Guardians lack self-efficacy and rely too much on out-of-school care institutions; (4) Lack of family education resources, guardians lack scientific guidance; (5) The effect of family education is not good, lack of evaluation and supervision mechanism. This study also put forward recommendations on the LBCPO family education from three aspects: government, school and family.</p>

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In July 2021, Chinese government issued the "Double Reduction" policy, which reduces the burden of homework and out-of-school training for students (The General Office of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and the General Office of the State Council of People's Republic of China, 2021). This had

a considerable impact on Chinese fundamental education. To effectively reduce the burden on students and the anxiety of parents, it is necessary to pay attention to family education (Eryong et al., 2022). For parents, the "Double Reduction" policy actually increased the requirement for their science education ability.

Because their parents have been working and

living abroad for a long time, most of the children are left to receive education in their hometown, which has formed a special group of left-behind children (Wang & Tong, 2019). Most of them are left to their grandparents to take care of them. Due to the distance and time difference, it is difficult for parents to give family education guidance to left-behind children. As the age gap between the intergenerational guardians and children is large and their own educational level is low, their performance in family education is weak. After the issue of the "Double Reduction" policy, accompanied by the reduction of after-school homework and the closure of after-school tutoring classes, children's time at home has also increased greatly, which makes the implementation of family education difficulties for left-behind children increasingly prominent.

Therefore, we distributed questionnaires to 207 left-behind children and their parents in overseas to understand the implementation status of family education for left-behind children of parents in overseas (LBCPO), parents' attitudes towards family education, self-efficacy, resource utilization and evaluation. Then, 15 left-behind children, 11 parents and 6 teachers of left-behind children of parents in overseas were interviewed to supplement and explain the contents of the questionnaire. This study can improve parents' understanding of family education, update their ideas and truly implement home-school cooperative parenting. This paper proposes family education strategies for left-behind children, which can reduce the blindness of family learning activities and improve the effectiveness of family learning activities.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 *Left-behind children of parents in overseas*

In the current situation of the globalization of capital and labor, more and more labor force choose transnational employment because of the pull of more job opportunities or better pay abroad, resulting in the transnational flow of the world population, and thus producing the left-behind children, a group derived from international population flow. We define "left-behind children of parents in overseas" (LBCPO)

as children whose parents or one of them has moved overseas for any reason and left them in China under the care of one of their parents or grandparents, or children who have had such left-behind experience.

In terms of psychological characteristics, the mental health status of LBCPO is worse than that of non-left-behind children (Udrea & Guiu, 2022; Chen, 2014; Jin, 2022). Among LBCPO with psychological problems, girls are more severe than boys (Jin, 2022). LBCPO who have more frequent contact with their parents are less likely to have psychological problems (Wang, 2022). Nevertheless, electronic information technology cannot replace hugging or physical contact (Udrea & Guiu, 2022). The loneliness experience of LBCPO whose parents go abroad is significantly higher than that of LBCPO whose single parents go abroad, and the longer the left-behind years are, the more adverse the psychological development of LBCPO (Chen & Yu, 2022).

Due to the lack of heteronomy and the lack of parents' teachings, rewards and punishments, LBCPO are more likely to have problems in conduct and habits (Lin, 2012; Wu, 2019), such as late completion of homework, plagiarism (Yu, 2020), weak self-control (Sun & Deng, 2018; Yu, Iying (Chen, 2014), etc.

The overall performance of LBCPO is lower than that of non-left-behind children due to the low expectations of their parents, the low educational level of their grandparents and the lack of parental supervision (Zeng, 2011; He, 2008; Sun, 2016; Wang, 2022; Xiao et al., 2022). Some LBCPO are born and grow up abroad and come back to China. Due to the lack of Chinese influence in the growing environment, their Chinese learning is difficult (Xiao et al., 2022). Therefore, after returning to China, some LBCPO study beyond the school age, and some go out to exchange residence in the middle of study, so there are some LBCPO who want to study but do not have law (Wu, 2019). In terms of learning attitude, most of the LBCPO have low enthusiasm and lack of initiative, and even some LBCPO are tired of learning (Tomşa & Jenaro, 2015; He, 2008; Sun & Deng, 2018; Xiao et al., 2022).

### 2.2 *Family education*

The Dictionary of Education defines family education

as the interaction and education of family members, and emphasizes that family education usually refers to the education of children and children by parents or other elders (Gu, 1986). The Law of the People's Republic of China on the Promotion of Family Education stipulates that family education refers to the cultivation, guidance and influence of parents or other guardians on the moral character, physical fitness, life skills, cultural accomplishment and behavioral habits of minors in order to promote their all-round and healthy growth (Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China, 2021). There are different kinds of understanding about the connotation of family education in academic circles, but it is generally recognized that family education has broad sense and narrow sense. Family education in a broad sense is a kind of education and influence implemented among family members, while family education in a narrow sense is the education of minor children by parents or other guardians (Liu & Shao, 2021; Liu et al., 2022; Luo, 2018; Yu, 2020). In the narrow sense, family education is the category that the academic circles pay attention to and study, and it is an educational form relative to school education.

From the perspective of behavior, family education refers to a kind of education and influence activities of parents or other guardians on the growth of children; From the perspective of space, the space of family education has extended beyond the physical space of the family to multiple regional Spaces (such as outdoor, shopping malls and other public places), including family education through online forms; From the point of view of subject and object, parents or other guardians are the subject of family education, and minors are the object of family education. From the content point of view, family education includes the ideal and belief of socialism with Chinese characteristics; Core values of socialism, excellent traditional Chinese culture; Social morality, family virtue, individual morality; Life knowledge, scientific knowledge, legal knowledge, safety knowledge; Behavioral habits, mental health, labor literacy, network literacy; Other education conducive to the all-round development and healthy growth of minor children.

### 3. METHOD

#### 3.1 Research design

This paper used quantitative and qualitative methods. Firstly, questionnaires were distributed to LBCPO, with one side of the questionnaire for children and the other for parents. After completing the questionnaire, LBCPO participating in the survey were asked to take the questionnaire home and invited parents to fill in the parent version. Either the actual guardian in China or parents abroad can be invited to fill in the questionnaire online. Then the LBCPO who participated in the survey was asked to take the questionnaire back to the school and collect it.

The interviews were conducted after the collection and analysis of questionnaire data, and all interviews were conducted in the form of one-to-one between the interviewer and the interviewee. At the beginning of the interview, the interviewer explained to each respondent the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of the study, and informed them of their right to decline or withdraw from the study at any time, and explained that all research results were presented anonymously. After obtaining the consent of the interviewees, the interviewer recorded the interview content. The first step was to conduct an interview with LBCPO. All interviewees filled out questionnaires before being interviewed. The second step is to conduct interviews with LBCPO parents or guardians. After the interviews, the interview results of the first step and the second step are analyzed, the problems existing in LBCPO family education are summarized, and some of the problems are attributed. The third step is to interview the teachers of the school where LBCPO is located, to make a supplementary understanding of the current situation of LBCPO family education, and to attribute the existing problems.

#### 3.2 Participants

The study involved 207 LBCPO and their guardians. The mean age of the children participating in the questionnaire was 11.15 years old (standard deviation 0.92), of which 104 were boys (50.24%) and 103 were girls (49.76%). The average age of the parents or guardians who participated in the questionnaire was

44.49 years old (standard deviation 11.59), among which 102 (49.28%) were the children's mothers, 37 were the children's fathers (17.87%), 28 were the children's grandmothers (13.53%), and 19 (9.18%) were the children's grandfathers. There were 21 other relationships with the children (including 18 aunts, 2 older brothers and 1 older sister). Among the guardians who participated in the questionnaire survey, 108 (52.17%) had a middle school education or below,

69 (33.33%) had a high school/secondary school education, 20 (9.66%) had a junior college education, and 9 (4.35%) had a bachelor's degree. In particular, only one of the parents who participated in the survey had a master's degree or above, and this guardian was the aunt of the child. The demographic information of the participants in the questionnaire is summarized in Table 1.

**Table 1. Demographic information of the participants in the questionnaire.**

		N	%
Gender	Male	104	50.24
	Female	103	49.76
Relationship	Mother	102	49.28
	Father	37	17.87
	Grandmother	28	13.53
	Grandfather	19	9.18
	Aunts	18	8.69
	Other		
	Older brother	2	0.97
Older sister	1	0.48	
Educational level	Middle school and below	108	52.17
	High school/secondary school	69	33.33
	Junior college	20	9.66
	Bachelor	9	4.35
	Master and above	1	0.48

A total of 15 LBCPO participated in the interview. Their mean age was 11.73 years old (SD= 0.85), of whom 9 were boys and 6 were girls, 7 were born domestically and 8 were born abroad. One returned to China at the age of 12, and the rest returned before entering primary school. We invited 15 guardians whose children participated in the interview, but 5 guardians refused to accept the interview survey after understanding the purpose of the study, and 11 guardians accepted. Their mean age was 59.45 years (SD= 10.05), 7 were female and 4 were male. Of the interviewees, 4 are LBCPO's grandmothers, 4 are LBCPO's grandfathers, 2 are LBCPO's mothers, and 1 is a LBCPO's aunt. The education level of 8 guardians is middle school or below, the education level of 2 guardians is junior college, and the education level of 1 guardian is bachelor degree. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 6 teachers who taught classes with a high number of LBCPO. The mean age of the teachers was 37.00 years (SD= 10.54), the

mean teaching experience was 14.17 years (SD= 11.19), and all of them were female. The education level of one teacher is master degree, the education level of one teacher is junior college, and the education level of 4 teachers is bachelor degree. One of them taught English, two of them taught mathematics, three of them taught Chinese.

### 3.3 Instruments

The questionnaire is divided into two sections, one for children and the other for guardians. The questionnaire for children is divided into two parts. The first part is the basic information of children, including gender, grade and age. In the second part, family education from the perspective of children is compiled according to the guidance content for children aged 7-12 in the National Guiding Outline for Family Education. It is divided into six dimensions, namely, health monitoring, life education, self-care ability

education, labor concept and spending habit education, gratitude and integrity education, learning habit and learning interest cultivation. The second part is a 5-level Likert scale, based on the frequency of the family education, from 1 to 5 are never, occasionally, sometimes, often, always. The questionnaire for guardians is divided into 6 parts. The first part is the basic information of the guardians, including the relationship with the child, age and education. The second part is the attitude towards family education, which is divided into four dimensions, namely the perceived importance, willingness, positive emotion and negative emotion. The third part is the self-efficacy of guardians in family education. The fourth part is the utilization of family education resources, and the fifth part is the evaluation of the effect of family education. Among them, the second and third parts of the questionnaire are 4-level Likert scales, from 1-4 are very inconsistent, inconsistent, consistent, and very consistent respectively.

The Cronbach's  $\alpha$  of the children's version (0.955) and guardians' version (0.859) are both greater than 0.8, indicating that the reliability of the questionnaire is very ideal. The results of KMO test and Bartlett sphericity test (KMO value is greater than 0.6, p value is less than 0.05) indicate that there is a correlation between variables, and the questionnaire has good validity.

This study adopts the semi-structured interview method. The interview for LBCPO consisted of four main questions. The first question is to obtain the basic information of the interviewees, the second question is to understand the current situation of LBCPO's family education, the third question is to understand LBCPO's attitude towards family education, and the fourth question is to understand the implementation effect of family education. There are five main questions in the interview for guardians. The first question is to obtain the basic information of the interviewees, the second question is to understand guardians' attitude towards family education, the third question is to understand guardians' self-efficacy and possible difficulties in family education, the fourth question is to understand the current situation of resource utilization in family education, and the fifth question is to understand the current situation of evaluation of the effect of family education. There are

five main questions in the interview for teachers. The first question is to obtain the basic information of the interviewees; the second question is to understand the psychological characteristics, learning characteristics and behavioral characteristics of LBCPO in school; the third question is to understand the current situation and existing problems of LBCPO family education from the perspective of teachers; the fourth question is to understand the characteristics of LBCPO compared with the left-behind children of parents in China and the characteristics of family education.

### **3.4 Data analysis**

The data collected by the questionnaire were analyzed using SPSS software. The frequency analysis was used to process the basic information of the respondents and the evaluation of the effect of LBCPO on family education. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the general situation of LBCPO family education, guardians' attitude towards family education and guardians' self-efficacy in family education. Independent sample t test and one-way analysis of variance were used to analyze the differences between different types of LBCPO and guardians' family education situation, attitude and self-efficacy.

The interview data were analyzed using inductive content analysis. First, the recording data was transcribed verbatim and analyzed along with the participants' descriptive words; Second, read through the transcribed data several times to fully understand the results of the interview; Then, the data sharing classification code; Finally, the code is divided into subcategories based on differences and similarities.

## **4. FINDINGS**

### **4.1 Current situation of family education for left-behind children of parents in overseas**

Table 2 shows the analysis results of the current situation of family education from the perspective of LBCPO. The 5-level Likert scale was used in this part of the questionnaire, and the average score of each dimension was between 3-4, indicating that all

dimensions of LBCPO family education were between "sometimes" and "often". Among them, the value of "gratitude and integrity education" is the highest (3.983), indicating that this kind of family education has the highest frequency, and the scores of "health monitoring" and "self-care ability" are also relatively high, respectively, 3.949 and 3.929, indicating that guardians also attach great importance to these two aspects of family education. The mean value of "life education" is the lowest (3.121) and the standard

deviation is the lowest (0.757), which is the closest to "sometimes", and the difference of this kind of family education for LBCPO is the least. The average value of "labor concept and spending habits" is also significantly lower (3.126), but the standard deviation is the largest (1.288), indicating that some guardians pay more attention to LBCPO labor concept and spending habits, but some guardians ignore family education in this aspect.

**Table 2: The analysis results of the current situation of family education from the perspective of LBCPO.**

	M	SD
Health monitoring	3.949	1.022
Life education	3.121	0.757
Self-care ability education	3.929	1.101
Labor concept and spending habit education	3.126	1.288
Gratitude and integrity education	3.983	1.151
Learning habit and learning interest cultivation	3.800	1.103

According to the interview, 15 guardians attach importance to "self-care ability" education. There are differences in the cultivation of children's "labor concept and spending habits", 9 guardians attach importance to it, while the other 6 parents do not attach importance to it. None of the 15 guardians attached importance to "life education".

Table 3 shows the different analysis results of LBCPO family education of different genders. In the

six dimensions of family education, there was no difference ( $p > 0.05$ ), indicating that guardians did not conduct different family education because of children's genders. In the interview, the interviewed teachers all said that the current guardians generally do not have a "preference for boys" or "preference for girls over boys", and do not treat boys and girls differently.

**Table 3: The difference analysis results of LBCPO family education of different genders.**

	Gender	M	SD	t	p
Health monitoring	Female	3.990	0.921	0.810	0.446
	Male	3.921	1.113		
Life education	Female	3.191	0.682	1.673	0.190
	Male	3.043	0.819		
Self-care ability education	Female	4.003	1.043	0.547	0.579
	Male	3.853	1.160		
Labor concept and spending habit education	Female	3.113	1.253	0.572	0.565
	Male	3.125	1.327		
Gratitude and integrity education	Female	4.025	1.095	0.554	0.575
	Male	3.933	1.207		
Learning habit and learning interest cultivation	Female	3.885	1.030	0.989	0.374
	Male	3.726	1.170		

Table 4 shows the results of correlation analysis between LBCPO age and family education, and there is no correlation between LBCPO age and family education.

**Table 4: The results of correlation analysis between LBCPO age and family education**

	r	p
Health monitoring	0.114	0.103
Life education	-0.004	0.952
Self-care ability education	-0.013	0.857
Labor concept and spending habit education	0.075	0.280
Gratitude and integrity education	0.103	0.138
Learning habit and learning interest cultivation	0.092	0.189

#### 4.2 LBCPO guardians' attitudes towards family education

Table 5 shows results of guardians' attitudes towards family education, which uses a 4-level Likert scale. Among them, "importance" refers to whether guardians think family education is important. For example, the item "The earlier children are educated at home, the better" has the highest mean value (0.509) and the lowest standard deviation (0.509), indicating that guardians generally believe that family education is very important and have very consistent views in this regard. "Willingness" refers to guardians' willingness to conduct family education for LBCPO and to improve their own level of willingness for better family education, such as the item "I am willing to adopt a variety of ways to educate my children", and the average value of this dimension is slightly lower than that of "importance" (3.316). This indicates that although guardians recognize the importance of family education, they are less active in implementing it into action. "Positive emotion" refers to the positive feelings that guardians showed to LBCPO during

family education, such as happiness, pleasure, liking, enthusiasm, etc. The average score of this dimension was also high (3.331), indicating that guardians mainly showed positive emotions during family education for LBCPO. "Negative emotion" refers to the negative feelings that guardians show during the family education of LBCPO, such as anxiety, tension, stress, etc. Negative feelings are not contradictory to positive feelings. For example, when guardians are educating LBCPO at home, he may feel stressed due to lack of knowledge, but he also enjoys spending time with LBCPO, thus showing both positive and negative emotions. The dimensional average of negative emotion is 2.403, which is greater than 2, indicating that guardians do have certain negative feelings when conducting family education for LBCPO, but the standard deviation of this dimension is the largest (0.758), indicating that guardians have a large difference in this dimension. Some guardians did not show much negative feelings, while others showed some negative feelings.

**Table 5: Results of guardians' attitudes towards family education**

	M	SD
Importance	3.425	0.509
Willingness	3.316	0.550
Positive emotion	3.331	0.546
Negative emotion	2.403	0.758

In the interviews with guardians and LBCPO, it is found that 11 guardians think that family education is very important. 10 guardians say that although family education is important, they are weak in their

willingness, 9 guardians will have negative emotions in family education, and only 1 guardian has fewer negative emotions. For example, a guardian said:

*I think family education is important, and I would like to educate my child, but I don't have the ability to educate them, I haven't been educated, I don't know how to educate a child.*

Table 6 shows the results of guardians' attitudes towards family education in different relationships with LBCPO. In the three dimensions of importance, positive emotion and negative emotion, there was no difference in the attitude of different categories of guardians ( $p>0.05$ ). There are differences in the

dimension of action intention ( $p=0.013<0.05$ ), among which the average action intention of grandpa is the highest (3.553), while the average action intention of grandma is the lowest (3.045). It is worth noting that the standard deviation of the three dimensions of importance, action intention and positive emotion of other guardians in this category is relatively high, indicating that there are relatively large differences in attitudes towards family education. In the interview, four teachers pointed out that aunts pay more attention to family education than grandparents.

**Table 6: Results of guardians' attitudes towards family education in different relationships with LBCPO.**

	Relationship	M	SD	F	p
Importance	Mother	3.429	0.462	1.622	0.170
	Father	3.514	0.456		
	Grandmother	3.232	0.495		
	Grandfather	3.553	0.430		
	Other	3.393	0.801		
Willingness	Mother	3.311	0.532	2.900	0.023*
	Father	3.365	0.470		
	Grandmother	3.045	0.582		
	Grandfather	3.553	0.575		
	Other	3.405	0.605		
Positive emotion	Mother	3.343	0.549	1.393	0.238
	Father	3.365	0.451		
	Grandmother	3.125	0.520		
	Grandfather	3.474	0.583		
	Other	3.357	0.650		
Negative emotion	Mother	2.434	0.697	1.018	0.399
	Father	2.439	0.718		
	Grandmother	2.393	0.780		
	Grandfather	2.079	0.965		
	Other	2.500	0.873		

Table 7 shows the results of guardians' attitudes towards family education with different educational level. Considering that only one guardian (aunt) has a master's degree, this data may be somewhat accidental. Therefore, this data is excluded in all the difference analysis based on education background in this paper, and only the family education situation of guardians with middle school and below, high school/secondary school, junior college, and bachelor is analyzed. Guardians with different educational level

have differences in importance ( $p=0.039$ ), willingness ( $p=0.043$ ) and positive emotion ( $p=0.040$ ). The overall trend is that the higher the educational background of guardians, the higher the average value of importance, willingness and positive emotion. There was no difference in the dimension of negative emotion among guardians with different educational level ( $p=0.301$ ). In the interview, the interviewed teacher indicated that the same view was also presented. For example, a teacher stated:



The probability of highly educated guardians attaching importance to family education is relatively high, but it does not mean that guardians with low education do not attach importance to family education. Many guardians working abroad is very hard, they have a rough time because of lack of education and do

not want their children to have the same rough time, so it is very important to the education of children. Highly educated guardians know how to carry out family education for their children, while guardians with low education attach great importance to them, but lack of methods to educate their children.

**Table 7: The results of guardians' attitudes towards family education with different educational level.**

	Educational level	M	SD	F	p
Importance	Middle school and below	3.382	0.463	2.850	0.039*
	High school/secondary school	3.399	0.573		
	Junior college	3.600	0.409		
	Bachelor	3.806	0.583		
Willingness	Middle school and below	3.273	0.559	2.759	0.043*
	High school/secondary school	3.293	0.532		
	Junior college	3.438	0.479		
	Bachelor	3.778	0.579		
Positive emotion	Middle school and below	3.322	0.549	2.823	0.040*
	High school/secondary school	3.257	0.514		
	Junior college	3.450	0.599		
	Bachelor	3.778	0.458		
Negative emotion	Middle school and below	2.338	0.748	1.226	0.301
	High school/secondary school	2.453	0.682		
	Junior college	2.663	0.929		
	Bachelor	2.278	1.019		

The interview results show that LBCPO guardians' attitude towards family education has a great impact on LBCPO. A teacher gave two examples:

*Wu's mother does not take the initiative to communicate with me about his education, pay less attention to his family education. His grandparents in addition to taking care of his life, almost no education. Wu is introverted and not confident. Xu's mother often communicates with me about his learning status, and timely communicated and solved any problems. His mother often makes video calls with him, and tells his grandparents to pay attention to the family education, although his academic performance is not ideal, but the character is very cheerful.*

**4.3 Self-efficacy of LBCPO guardians in conducting family education**

Table 8 shows the results of guardians' family education self-efficacy in different relationships with LBCPO. Self-efficacy in conducting family education refers to parents' confidence in their ability to use the skills they have to conduct family education, such as "I have enough knowledge to guide my child at home." In general, the average value of guardians' self-efficacy is 2.558, which is greater than 2, indicating that the self-efficacy is positive. Guardians with different relationships with LBCPO showed different levels of self-efficacy (p=0.025), grandmothers had the lowest mean value of self-efficacy (2.214), the other parents had the highest

mean value of self-efficacy (2.833), and grandfathers had the highest standard deviation of self-efficacy (0.940). Mothers had the lowest standard deviation of self-efficacy (0.646). It shows that grandmothers have the lowest confidence in family education, other types

of guardians have the highest confidence in family education, grandfathers have the greatest difference in confidence in family education, and mother has the least difference in confidence in family education.

**Table 8: The results of guardians' family education self-efficacy in different relationships with LBCPO.**

Relationship	M	SD	F	p
Mother	2.510	0.646		
Father	2.750	0.819		
Grandmother	2.214	0.871	2.855	0.025*
Grandfather	2.645	0.940		
Other	2.833	0.864		
Total	2.558	0.776		

Table 9 shows the self-efficacy in family education of guardians with different educational level. Guardians with different educational levels showed differences in self-efficacy of family education (p=0.027). Guardians with a junior college education had the strongest self-efficacy, followed by those with a bachelor's degree, high school/secondary school, middle school and below, showing a trend of higher self-efficacy with higher educational background. The interview data showed the same findings. A guardian with only an elementary school education said:

*I usually practice writing at home. When my child was in the lower grade, I could read his Chinese homework. But now I can not understand, also can not teach the him, can only let the teacher pay more attention to him at school.*

The other guardian, who is the grandmother of a LBCPO, with a junior college education stated:

*I could help the her with homework and accompany her to read together. Sometimes she asks me questions, I will call her mother or search information on the Internet. I feel that I can teach most of the problems.*

A teacher described a situation that,

*My school has a family class, sometimes the school teachers give lessons to guardians, sometimes ask outside experts to give lessons to guardians, and teach guardians how to teach their children. Guardians with relatively low education rarely participant such family lessons. They think they can't teach their children, and they can't learn such learning activities. The more they don't learn educational methods, the more they won't teach their children, and the vicious circle.*

**Table 9: The self-efficacy in family education of guardians with different educational level.**

Educational level	M	SD	F	p
Middle school and below	2.417	0.802		
High school/secondary school	2.641	0.658		
Junior college	2.888	0.700	3.119	0.027*
Bachelor	2.833	1.166		

#### 4.4 Resource utilization of LBCPO family education

Most of our family education resources come from the life experience. Eight guardians said that they used life experience to educate their children, and three of them used the Internet, ask teachers for help or consult other parents.

#### 4.5 Evaluation of the family education on LBCPO

Eight guardians said they never evaluate the effectiveness of family education, and only three guardians said they evaluated the effectiveness of family education based on school test scores. For example, a LBCPO' mother said:

*My child is rebellious. She won't listen to me. I asked her what happened at school but her didn't tell me. She wouldn't tell me my test scores or let me contact my teachers. I can't judge family education.*

The other LBCPO' mother stated:

*I usually see my children's test results at school, and there is no other way to evaluate them. A good test means a good education. A bad test means a bad education.*

## 5. DISCUSSION

LBCPO is a special group of left-behind children, they are often included in the left-behind children, but this special group is different from the children who are left behind because their parents work across provinces. One feature is "distance", that is, the distance between parents and children is far, parents work abroad most of the time, and the difficulty and cost of children wanting to meet their parents is much higher than that of common left-behind children. Another feature is "high income", LBCPO family income compared to the traditional inter-provincial migrant workers, the family income is higher. The high income of their parents in

foreign countries can create a good material environment for LBCPO. LBCPO are often hosted in after-school care institutions to complete their homework after class. The educational environment they enjoy is also different from that of traditional left-behind children. However, the guardians of LBCPO are usually their grandparents, most of whom are not capable of family education for LBCPO, so the family education situation of LBCPO is not optimistic.

#### 5.1 Challenges of LBCPO family education

The content of family education should be multi-dimensional, but most guardians think that family education is to guide children's homework and solve learning problems, and then ignore the cultivation, guidance and influence of children's moral quality, physical quality, life skills, cultural accomplishment, behavior habits and other aspects. China's talent selection system is mainly based on exams, which makes guardians attach great importance to their children's learning, especially test scores. Therefore, guardians will equate "family education" with "help with homework and study." Although many guardians teach their children in moral character, physical fitness, life skills, etc., this kind of family education is usually unconscious, unsystematic, and less frequent.

Most LBCPO guardians think that family education is very important, but in practice, they rarely consciously family education for children, especially children raised by grandparents, they think that they only need to be responsible for children's "food and clothing", education is nothing to do with them. There is a big difference in guardians' attitude and action force towards family education. Usually, mothers and aunts have the most positive attitude and the strongest action force, while grandparents have the most negative attitude and the weakest action force. Guardians' attitude and motivation towards family education are related to the effect of family education. The more positive the attitude and stronger the motivation of guardians, the better the children's mental health, academic status, moral quality, physical quality, life skills, cultural accomplishment, behavior habits and other aspects.

Most LBCPO guardians have a low

self-efficacy in family education, and most of them think that they do not have the ability to conduct family education. This is mainly related to the educational level of LBCPO guardians. Most of them have a college education or below, and more than half of them have a junior high school education or below. The educational limitation makes them lack of information about family education for their children. After school, most LBCPO guardians put their children in after-school care institutions. However, the main function of after-school care institutions is to supervise and guide children to complete school homework, and the care staff has the problem of low learning and weak professional level, and the area of the after-school care institutions is small, which is difficult to meet the activity needs of students.

Guardians lack resources such as materials, teaching cases, equipment and materials, and tools for family education. Some guardians use resources for family education under the guidance of teachers, more guardians rely on their own life experience when conducting family education, and a small number of guardians use the Internet, consult relatives and other parents. Generally speaking, family education resources are scarce. Guardians have few opportunities to learn the theory and practice of family education, and the main learning resources come from schools and teachers. However, most parents in foreign countries have little communication with teachers due to time difference and examples, while grandparents lack the awareness and ability to learn due to educational limitations. Ultimately, family education stays more at the level of "tutoring homework and learning".

LBCPO has a higher probability of problems in mental health, behavior and habits, especially in academic status, which is greatly related to the lack of family education, indicating that the effect of family education is not good. Parents work abroad, there is a time difference, LBCPO can only communicate and communicate with parents at certain times. Therefore, most LBCPOs have little contact with their parents and limited communication. Although some parents will conduct online family education for their children, its effect is far less than offline companionship and teaching by words and deeds. Most LBCPOs are raised by their grandparents, and they generally have

a negative attitude towards family education and a low sense of self-efficacy, and generally have a low educational background. They think they only need to be responsible for their children's food and clothing, family education is not their responsibility. Most LBCPO guardians do not evaluate the effectiveness of family education or rely solely on school grades. Guardians have no awareness of the effect evaluation of family education, and lack of tools to evaluate family education, and most guardians do not have the ability to evaluate family education. In addition, at present, there is no supervision mechanism to supervise the family education of guardians, which is one of the reasons for the poor effect of family education

## **5.2 Recommendations for LBCPO family education**

Improving the current situation of LBCPO family education is a very complex issue, which requires the cooperation and role of many aspects, and the government, schools and families must form a joint force. On the basis of the current situation and challenges of LBCPO family education, this study proposes some recommendations of LBCPO family education from the three main aspects of government, school and family.

The government should pay more attention to LBCPO family education, set up specialized agencies, and coordinate all relevant departments to give full play to their functions. The root cause of the LBCPO family education problem is that local employment cannot meet the needs of residents, forcing many people to leave their homes and seek work opportunities abroad. Therefore, the government should develop local industries, formulate preferential policies for employment and entrepreneurship, and promote the return of personnel. It is also necessary to establish a supervision and evaluation system for family education, and actively organize professionals to develop evaluation tools. The supervision and management of after-school care institutions must be strengthened to ensure the orderly development of after-school care institutions.

Schools should establish a long-term communication mechanism with parents who work abroad. According to the time difference of parents'

countries, coordinate communication time, establish a regular communication mechanism, exchange children's daily study and life, ideological and psychological conditions through new communication media such as Wechat, QQ, Dingding and Tencent Conference, and pass family education knowledge and methods to parents directly or indirectly. Schools should help parents fully understand the connotation of family education, master the methods of family education, enhance parents' attention to family education, improve parents' level of family education, and improve parents' self-efficacy in family education. Both online and offline parent meetings could be held, and LBCPO parents should be encouraged to participate in these meetings online. It is helpful to establish a communication platform between LBCPO parents, encourage them to supervise each other, and exchange more experiences and methods of online family education. Schools can set up online parent schools to guide parents to participate in family education discussions through the combination of live and video broadcasting, provide parents with online family education methods and strategies by listing real cases, and regularly set small tasks for online family education, so that parents can continuously improve their online family education ability and self-efficacy by completing the tasks. Schools should establish a family education resource library and develop family education cases, micro-lessons, teaching materials and evaluation tools suitable for guardians with low education levels, so that guardians can directly use these resources to carry out family education. The school can set up a reward mechanism, by the head teacher set up the task of family education punch, to actively complete the task of guardians for timely spiritual or material rewards, to help guardians form the awareness of family education.

Guardians should fully understand family education and fulfill their responsibilities as guardians. Guardians should learn advanced family education ideas and methods, fully understand the connotation of family education, broaden the content of family education, and change the traditional education methods. Although parents abroad cannot accompany their children, they should often communicate with their children online and use online platforms to subtly educate their children. Parents abroad should

communicate with the actual guardian of the child in a timely manner, understand the current situation of the child from the perspective of the actual guardian, and exchange family education methods with the actual guardian. Parents abroad and actual guardians of children in China should actively contact school teachers and cooperate with teachers to solve various problems in children's study, life and psychology.

### **5.3 Limitations and future studies**

The age of LBCPO surveyed in this study was concentrated between 9 and 14 years old, and the average age was 11.73 years old. There is no investigation on the family education status of LBCPO in other age groups. Future studies should expand the scope of research objects to analyze the family education of LBCPO of other ages. This survey is a cross-sectional study. The data collected are based on a short period of time and can only reflect the current situation of family education at this point. Future studies can select sample families, carry out pilot reforms of family education, and track and investigate the effect of family education reform.

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### **Ethics declarations**

#### ***Conflict of interest***

The authors have not disclosed any competing interests.

#### ***Ethical approval***

Our institution's relevant body deemed ethical approval not required because the study was not medical research nor regarded human experimentation as stated in the Declaration of Helsinki. All procedures performed were in accordance with the ethical guidelines outlined by the Human Subjects Ethics Committee of Wenzhou University, considering obtained and anonymized data

for this non-interventional study. In the survey, a preamble was included indicating the collection of information for a research project, explaining what it consists of and what it is intended to obtain (objectives, the benefits that the information will bring, the voluntary nature of participation, the anonymous treatment of the data and reference to the treatment of the information in accordance with the Data Protection Act).

### **Data availability**

The data generated during and/or analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

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