

# Does Full-Day Kindergarten Reduce Parenting Daily Hassles?

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## Abstract

Parenting daily hassles are viewed as the recurring demands associated with raising a young child (Crnic & Greenberg, 1990) and contribute to parental well-being and parenting relationships (Crnic, Gaze, & Hoffman, 2005). The goal of this study was to examine differences in the daily hassles reported by parents of half-day and full-day kindergarten students following the phased-in implementation of full-day kindergarten in Ontario. Based on results from a previous demonstration project of integrated kindergarten and childcare, it was hypothesized that parents of full-day kindergarten children would experience fewer daily hassles related to education and childcare. Four hundred and forty-nine parents participating in a longitudinal study tracking Ontario's transition from half-day to full-day kindergarten were asked to complete a survey of their experiences with early childhood parenting daily hassles, as well as a demographic questionnaire as

part of the larger study. We investigated whether parents of children enrolled in full-day programs experienced reductions in parenting daily hassles as compared to parents of children in half-day programs. Overall, parents of children enrolled in full-day kindergarten reported similar levels of daily hassles to parents of children in half-day programs. Additional analyses of demographic factors indicated that full-day kindergarten was related to lower levels of daily hassles for parents who worked full-time. Policy implications regarding integrated full-day kindergarten and childcare are discussed.

*Keywords:* full-day kindergarten, parenting stress, parenting daily hassles, parent employment, integrated care model

## **Résumé**

Suite à la mise en œuvre du programme d'apprentissage à temps plein de la maternelle et du jardin d'enfants, cette étude a comme but d'examiner les différences de stress parentale, en particulier les difficultés quotidiennes identifiées par des parents d'enfants inscrits à des programmes à temps plein et à temps partiel. En se basant sur un projet de démonstration intégrant la maternelle/le jardin et les services de garde d'enfants, nous avons émis l'hypothèse que les parents d'enfants inscrits à un programme à temps plein éprouvent moins de difficultés quotidiennes. Dans le contexte d'une étude de suivi longitudinale sur la transition du programme à temps partiel au programme à temps plein dans la province, nous avons demandé aux parents participant à l'étude de remplir un questionnaire au sujet des difficultés quotidiennes des parents. Les résultats indiquent que le programme à temps plein diminue les difficultés quotidiennes seulement chez les parents employés à temps plein. Nous considérons les conséquences sur le plan politique de l'intégration du programme d'apprentissage à temps plein de la maternelle/du jardin d'enfants et des services de garde d'enfants.

*Mots-clés :* maternelle à temps plein stress parental, tracas quotidien, emploi des parents, modèle de soins intégrés

## Introduction

### Parenting Stress

Stress is considered a continuous interaction between a person and the environment (Lazarus, 1984). Parenting stress can result from the discrepancy between the demands of parenthood and the parent's personal resources (Östberg, Hagekull, & Hagelin, 2007). In addition, parenting stress is thought to arise from parents' perception of their own competence in the parenting role, as well as their perception of their child's behaviour (Bloomfield & Kendall, 2012). Parenting difficulties contribute to parenting stress, and involve characteristics of the child, the parent, and the context (Bloomfield & Kendall, 2012). Parenting stress has been related to negative child, parent, and family aspects, such as insecure child attachment and parent psychopathology (Östberg et al., 2007), and negatively influences both parenting behaviour and problem behaviours in children (Bloomfield & Kendall, 2012). Parents who report greater levels of parenting stress have been found to be more authoritarian in their parenting styles, more negative in their interactions with their children, and less involved in their children's lives (Crnic, Gaze, & Hoffman, 2005). Further, at least one study supports the idea that parenting stress may play a causal role in the emergence of problematic child behaviour (Crnic et al., 2005). For these reasons, it is important to explore possible factors that either reduce or increase parenting stress associated with raising young children.

Many factors influence parenting stress, such as extraneous environmental stressors, including lack of childcare or difficulty accessing services. Demographic variables such as low level of parent education, single parenthood, minority ethnic background, and economic hardship have all been linked to potential stressors in parents' lives (Östberg & Hagekull, 2013). In addition, stressful major life stresses such as illness or parent or child psychopathology have an adverse effect on family functioning, parenting attitudes and behaviour, and aspects of children's functioning (Crnic & Greenberg, 1990). However, while major life events are well-established as stressors, they are often an infrequent occurrence (Crnic & Booth, 1991). Therefore, minor stressors or daily hassles are considered an important aspect of stress affecting families' daily living and are particularly prevalent among families of young children (Crnic & Booth, 1991). Pioneered by Crnic

and Greenberg (1990), the model of parenting daily hassles was conceptualized within this minor event perspective that looks at potential everyday frustrations and irritations that accompany raising children.

## **Daily Hassles**

In the past 30 years, a new stress perspective has developed, and with it a view of stress in which minor or everyday events or “hassles” contribute to overall levels of stress (Chamberlain & Zika, 1990). Lazarus (1984) initially proposed an alternative measure of stressors that focused on everyday events or hassles, conceptualized as “experiences and conditions of daily living that have been appraised as salient and harmful or threatening to the endorser’s well-being” (p. 376). The “hassles” perspective views stress within a relational framework as a product of environmental events and appraisal of personal significance by the individuals involved. These minor events reflect the everyday concerns that are felt to be significant to an individual’s well-being (Chamberlain & Zika, 1990). Hassles are considered to be irritating and frustrating demands that characterize interactions with the environment, including events such as losing keys, traffic jams, arguments, or family concerns (Kanner, Coyne, Schaefer, & Lazarus, 1981). Further, hassles can be infrequent and determined by the situation, or recurring because the demands remain consistent and predictable (Crnic & Greenberg, 1990).

Expanding on the “hassles” stress perspective, Crnic and Greenberg (1990) presented a model of parenting daily hassles in which parenting stress was conceptualized within a minor event perspective to address the everyday frustrations that accompany childrearing. Parenting hassles were categorized as the minor, but frequent, day-to-day challenges of completing basic parenting tasks and managing child behaviours (Walerius, Fogleman, & Rosen, 2016). Subsequent research in the area of parenting daily hassles has supported the validity of parenting daily hassles as a meaningful stress context for families (Crnic et al., 2005), and other researchers have found that daily hassles are better predictors of parent stress and functioning than major life stressors (Walsh, Mulder, & Tudor, 2013; Kanner et al., 1981). In one study, researchers found that minor daily hassles predicted irritable responses to their child by mothers in a home observation (Crnic & Greenberg, 1990). In addition, parents’ satisfaction with parenting and children’s behaviour problems were correlated with parenting daily hassles (Crnic, et al., 2005). More

specifically, parenting hassles were associated with less dyadic pleasure in parent–child interactions, cumulatively affecting the quality of the parent–child relationship (Crnic et al., 2005). This accumulation of hassles throughout the day can be thought of as a “daily drip” or leaky faucet; the individual drips may seem negligible, but over time they can add up to a major life challenge.

In previous studies, levels of parenting daily hassles differed among groups of parents and were related to demographic factors. Bell (2011) determined that significant differences in reported daily hassles were found for parent gender, language, and employment status. These results indicated that fathers experienced higher levels of daily hassles than mothers, parents who spoke English as a second language experienced higher levels of daily hassles, and parents who were employed full-time or enrolled as a student experienced higher levels of daily hassles than parents who worked part-time or were unemployed or stay-at-home parents (Bell, 2011). Conversely, earlier research examining gender differences in reported parent hassles and stress generally demonstrated mixed and inconclusive results, with only small differences between mothers’ and fathers’ reported hassles (Arimura, 2008). Further research is required to examine how parent demographic factors have an impact on daily hassles and parent stress.

### **Full-Day Kindergarten Implementation in Ontario**

The commissioned report *With Our Best Future in Mind: Implementing Early Learning in Ontario*, released in 2009, was intended to move Ontario closer to an integrated and seamless early years’ system. Based on the report’s (2009) recommendations, the Ontario government introduced full-day kindergarten for Ontario’s four- and five-year-olds with a start date of September 2010. Over the next five years (2010–2014) full-day kindergarten for all four- and five-year-olds was introduced into publicly-funded schools in Ontario (Ministry of Education, 2013). Prior to the implementation of full-day kindergarten, four- and five-year-olds in Ontario attended junior kindergarten (JK) followed by senior kindergarten (SK) for daily half days or for alternating full days in Ontario schools (Ryan & Date, 2014). One exception to this was the Northeastern Ontario and French language boards in Ontario who had already opted to provide full-time JK and SK to all children in their schools (Ryan & Date, 2014). Once the implementation of full-day kindergarten was

completed in 2014, half-day or alternating-day options were no longer available to families (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013).

Full-day kindergarten (FDK) implementation in Ontario was designed to respond to children's rights and the need for high-quality play-based early learning, and also to address families' needs for full-day early learning and care programs for their children (Pascal, 2009; Pelletier, 2014). Thus, one of the goals of FDK was to provide parents with the opportunity to access employment and continuing education that would not have been possible without full-day childcare. In addition, based in part on the Toronto First Duty (TFD) demonstration project (Corter, Janmohamed, & Pelletier, 2012; Corter & Pelletier, 2010; Pelletier & Corter, 2005), full-day kindergarten schools were intended to become hubs for families, with opportunities to access local services to create an integrated service approach (Ontario Ministry of Education 2013). The long-term vision for Ontario's FDK program was to create better outcomes for children while providing supports for families in a seamless, integrated system that would incorporate individualized programming for children through play, more communication with parents/guardians, and a full-day early learning program delivered by a team of professionals, including extended-day options for families (Corter et al., 2012; Levy, 2016). While the Toronto First Duty (TFD) program was the seed that became the design for FDK (see Corter et al., 2012, for a full review), the entirety of the TFD program was not fully implemented when FDK was introduced. The transition from TFD to FDK consisted of a shift from the multiple services integration model in TFD to the more limited integration of childcare and kindergarten in the FDK model during the regular school day (Levy, 2016). More specifically, aspects of the program, including full-day learning programs for kindergarteners and the early childhood educator and teacher team were maintained, while other facets including the inclusion of other early childhood programs, seamless access to full-day care, and family support, were not taken up. As of September 2010, FDK was phased in over five years in schools across Ontario, welcoming four- and five-year-olds for a full day of play-based educational programming. Parents continued to pay for extended-day (before and after) care programs which were not necessarily located in the school. The Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) and Registered Early Childhood Educator (RECE) teaching team from the TFD pilot study was maintained, although challenges related to labour issues had not been resolved (Gananathan, 2015; Levy, 2016). Further, in implementing before- and after-school care programs for FDK children, school boards had the option of directly

operating the extended-day parts of the program or entering into agreements with other organizations to deliver the before-and-after school components. Due to administrative challenges in integrating before- and after-school care, most school boards opted out of directly offering the seamless day resources (see Janmohamed, McCuaig, Akbari, Ganathan, & Jenkins, 2014). Thus, while extended-day options continued to be available to families, this generally occurred through other avenues. These included district-run programs in some schools or programs run by eligible third party operators on behalf of the school boards in other schools (Levy, 2016). This raised an important question of whether the lack of a seamless day and integrated services may lessen the positive impact that FDK might have on parents and children.

### **Previous Research on Parenting Hassles in Half-Day and Full-Day Kindergarten**

In US research, parents of children in FDK reported feeling less stressed about finding childcare options and favoured full-day programs because FDK reduces the number of transitions their child experiences in a typical day (Shaffer, 2004). Specifically, parents of children in half-day kindergarten programs reported that their children felt stress from midday transitions to and from childcare (Wennstromm, 2005). In Toronto, parents who accessed integrated services through the Toronto First Duty program experienced fewer hassles related to picking up their child than parents whose children attended only half-day programs (Arimura, 2008), suggesting that the objective of the FDK program to support working parents should contribute to reduced hassles.

In US studies of full-day kindergarten, dual-income parents and single parents found that their schedules fit better with FDK programs and found comfort in reducing the number of transitions associated with childcare in their children's lives (Wennstromm, 2005). Children enrolled in FDK were reported to express less anger, shyness, and withdrawal than children in half-day programs (Wennstromm, 2005), potentially reducing parenting stress related to difficult child behaviour. Parents also reported that their child benefited socially and academically from FDK, and they were better prepared for the demands of first grade (Wennstromm, 2005). Parents of children in FDK reported that the teachers gave more frequent suggestions for home activities and were more accessible, and that parents had more opportunities to get to know their child's teacher and to

volunteer in the classroom (Wennstromm, 2005). Reports of easier access to educators was also found by Arimura (2008), who suggested that parents experienced a feeling of easier access because these classrooms had two educators, a teacher and an ECE; interestingly, parents did not necessarily know which educator filled which role.

Many working parents have reported that the traditional half-day program is not manageable for families with complex schedules and childcare needs (Wennstromm, 2005). Previous research examined differences in parenting daily hassles between parents accessing Toronto First Duty integrated kindergarten and childcare programs and parents accessing non-integrated programs. Arimura (2008) found significant differences in the scores for frequency and intensity of daily hassles between parents accessing integrated forms of early childhood programs compared to parents accessing traditional services, suggesting that parents who access integrated services experience fewer hassles and lower levels of stress (Arimura, 2008). Specifically, parents who accessed integrated services felt less hassled by daily parenting responsibilities, such as finding good after-school childcare, keeping track of the child's schedule, and picking up the child at the end of the day (Arimura, 2008). This was true for both the frequency of daily hassles and the intensity or the degree to which parents were affected by the hassles.

Preliminary analyses of parenting daily hassles during the first years of the study of FDK in Ontario in 2013 reported that parents of FDK children felt significantly less stress in the form of fewer daily hassles than HDK parents, in activities such as transporting their children from childcare to kindergarten, and finding out how their children are doing in school (Pelletier, 2014). Further, in the early implementation phase, FDK parents also reported that their children were significantly ahead of children enrolled in HDK programs across a range of academic and social areas (Pelletier, 2014). The question of whether the FDK policy would continue to help parents cope with the stresses of daily life with young children is still open. After the honeymoon stage of FDK implementation, when parents continue to find themselves challenged with piecing together kindergarten education and childcare, would these early reported benefits continue?

### **Purpose of the Present Study**

Currently, there is a paucity of empirical studies examining how early childhood services, such as integrated kindergarten and care, play a role in reducing parental hassles. With

the introduction of FDK in Ontario, the question of whether this new government policy for an all-day program reduces some of the hassles associated with parenting and accessing early childhood services is important to address. This study was conducted to examine differences in the daily hassles reported by parents of half-day and full-day kindergarten students following the implementation phase of FDK. This study aimed to answer the question of whether parents of children in half-day kindergarten (HDK) experience different intensity or frequency of daily hassles than parents of children in full-day kindergarten (FDK). In addition, demographic characteristics were considered in examining whether family-level factors were related to parental reporting of daily hassles.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

Participants were the parents of children who were enrolled in half-day or full-day kindergarten. Data were collected from parents between 2010 and 2014 during the phasing-in of FDK. The children of these parents attended 18 schools in two school boards in the Greater Toronto Area; these children were participating in a study tracking the transition from half-day kindergarten to the full-day kindergarten program. As part of the parent package, information, a consent form, a questionnaire, and the Daily Hassles Survey were sent home. All parents signed the consent form for their families to participate along with completing the demographic questionnaire; 449 parents completed the Early Childhood-Parenting Daily Hassles Survey (EC-PDH) (80% participation rate; Arimura, 2008). Recruitment took place in the winter term of their child's junior (four-year-old) or senior (five-year-old) kindergarten year. These parent packages were distributed to parents through the teachers at each school, who placed forms in the children's schoolbags to take home. Consents and completed Daily Hassles Surveys were returned to the university via a self-addressed stamped envelope. Parents were informed that a recognition of \$5 would be given to the classroom library when they returned their completed surveys.

## Measures

**Early Childhood-Parenting Daily Hassles Survey (EC-PDH).** The Early Childhood-Parenting Daily Hassles Survey (EC-PDH; Arimura, 2008) was adapted from the Parenting Daily Hassles Scale by Crnic and Greenberg (1990). Arimura's (2008) adaptation was designed to measure parental perceptions about hassles specific to early childhood settings. The scale consists of items relating to typical responsibilities and tasks associated with parenting of young children. Frequency and intensity of daily hassles summary scores are computed from this measure as well. The *frequency score* reflects the regularity of the stressors, while the intensity score reflects the extent of how stressful that item is to the parent. Both scores are rated on a scale from 0 to 5. On the frequency scale, a score of 1 indicates the hassle "never" occurs, a score of 2 indicates it "rarely" occurs, a score of 3 indicates it "sometimes" occurs, a score of 4 indicates it occurs "a lot," and a score of 5 indicates it occurs "always." On the *intensity scale*, a score of 1 indicates the situation is "no hassle," while a score of 5 is considered a "big hassle." For this study, if parents indicated the item was "not applicable" to them, then that item was assigned a score of 0. The current study used a modified version of the EC-PDH that was expanded to include 42 items (see this article's Appendix; Bell, 2011). Explanatory examples were eliminated from this modified version to simplify and condense each item (e.g., for the item "*I have a hard time getting my child ready for school or daycare in the morning*" the example "*It takes a lot of effort to get my child up from bed and dressed...*" was removed). Previous studies that have used this modified version of the EC-PDH have included statistical analyses to determine the quality of this measurement tool. Cronbach alpha analysis of the overall scale indicated a strong degree of internal consistency, at .95 (Bell, 2011).

**Demographic Questionnaire.** A demographic questionnaire gathered information from parents about a variety of parent and child characteristics, including: the reporting parent's gender, the child's gender, parents' employment status, the first language of the parents and children, and parents' level of education.

## Results

Descriptive statistics were run to examine the means for the total PDH scale, the frequency PDH scale, and the intensity PDH scale. Independent samples *t*-tests were conducted to compare total PDH scores, frequency PDH scores, and intensity PDH scores across the two kindergarten programs, full-day (FDK) and half-day (HDK). The daily hassles score was the dependent variable and kindergarten program type was the independent variable. Dependent samples *t* tests were conducted to compare intensity and frequency PDH scores in FDK and HDK parents respectively. A factorial ANOVA was also run using parent employment status (e.g., full-time, part-time, etc.) and kindergarten program type as the independent variables, with the DH total score as the dependent variable, to determine if parental employment explained some of the variation in parents' ratings of their experience of daily hassles.

Additional exploratory analyses were conducted to determine if other parent and child characteristics were related to parental reports of daily hassles, including the gender of parent, the child, the first language of the parent, and the education level of the parent.

### Daily Hassles Total Scale Score

An independent samples *t*-test was conducted to evaluate the hypothesis that daily hassles ratings from parents of full-day kindergarten children ( $N = 243$ ) would differ from ratings by parents of half-day kindergarten children ( $N = 206$ ). The test was not significant,  $t(447) = -.608, p = .543$ , with parents of full-day kindergarteners having a mean score of 147.36 ( $SD = 57.54$ ) and parents of half-day kindergarteners having a mean score of 144.07 ( $SD = 56.42$ ). The total possible scores for the Daily Hassles Scale range from 0 (if parents checked "not applicable" for every item) to 420 (if parents circled "5- big hassle/always" for every item).

### Daily Hassles Frequency Scale Score

An independent samples *t*-test was conducted to evaluate the hypothesis that daily hassles ratings on the frequency scale (how often an item is a hassle) from parents of full-day kindergarten children ( $N = 243$ ) would differ from ratings by parents of half-day kindergarten children ( $N = 206$ ). The test was not significant,  $t(447) = -.452, p = .651$ ,

with parents of full-day kindergarteners having a mean score of 81.87 ( $SD = 31.82$ ) and parents of half-day kindergarteners having a mean score of 80.53 ( $SD = 30.35$ ). The total possible scores for the Daily Hassles Frequency scale range from 0 (if parents checked “not applicable” for every item) to 210 (if parents circled “5-big hassle/always” for every item).

### **Daily Hassles Intensity Scale Score**

An independent samples  $t$ -test was conducted to evaluate the hypothesis that daily hassles ratings on the intensity scale (how much of a hassle an item is) by parents of full-day kindergarten children ( $N = 234$ ) would differ from ratings by parents of half-day kindergarten children ( $N = 204$ ). The test was not significant,  $t(436) = -1.32, p = .14$ , with parents of full-day kindergarteners having a mean score of 68.01 ( $SD = 29.04$ ) and parents of half-day kindergarteners having a mean score of 64.16 ( $SD = 31.73$ ). The total possible scores for the Daily Hassles Intensity scale range from 0 (if parents checked “not applicable” for every item) to 210 (if parents circled “5-big hassle/always” for every item).

### **Comparison of Intensity and Frequency Scores across Parents**

A paired-samples  $t$ -test was conducted to determine whether parent scores for perceived frequency of daily hassles differed from parent scores for perceived intensity of daily hassles. The results indicated that parent scores on the frequency scale ( $M = 78.58, SD = 31.04$ ) were higher than parent scores on the intensity scale ( $M = 63.79, SD = 31.16$ ),  $t(626) = -15.30, p = .000$ . The standardized effect size,  $d$ , was 0.61, which indicates a medium effect. The 95% confidence interval for the mean difference between the intensity and frequency scores ranged from -16.69 to -12.89.

### **Comparison of Intensity and Frequency Scores for HDK Parents**

A paired-samples  $t$ -test was conducted to determine whether parent scores for perceived frequency of daily hassles differed from parent scores for perceived intensity of daily hassles for parents of half-day kindergarten children ( $N = 204$ ). The results indicated that parent scores on the frequency scale ( $M = 80.20, SD = 30.12$ ) were higher than parent scores on the intensity scale ( $M = 64.16, SD = 31.73$ ),  $t(203) = -9.10, p = .000$ . The

standardized effect size,  $d$ , was 0.64, which indicates a medium effect. The 95% confidence interval for the mean difference between the intensity and frequency scores ranged from -19.51 to -12.56.

### **Comparison of Intensity and Frequency Scores for FDK Parents**

A paired-samples  $t$ -test was conducted to determine whether parent scores for perceived frequency of daily hassles differed from parent scores for perceived intensity of daily hassles for parents of full-day kindergarten children ( $N = 234$ ). The results indicated that parent scores on the frequency scale ( $M = 81.95$ ,  $SD = 31.71$ ) were higher than parent scores on the intensity scale ( $M = 68.01$ ,  $SD = 29.04$ ),  $t(233) = -9.65$ ,  $p = .000$ . The standardized effect size,  $d$ , was 0.63, which indicates a medium effect. The 95% confidence interval for the mean difference between the intensity and frequency scores ranged from -16.79 to -11.09.

The results of the paired-samples  $t$ -tests indicated that parents of full- and half-day kindergarten children all rated the frequency of daily hassles (how often it affects them) as being higher or more of an issue than the intensity of the daily hassles (how much it affects them). Overall, parents of children in both half-day and full-day kindergarten rated each daily hassles item on the low end of the scale, with mean ratings for each item ranging from .96 to 2.54, on a scale of 0 to 5. This suggests that generally parents of kindergarten children do not view the items on the daily hassles scale as either large or frequent hassles.

### **Interaction between Parent Factors and Kindergarten Program on Daily Hassles**

Although no differences were found in the levels of hassles experienced by parents of half-day and full-day kindergarteners, based on previous research examining the relation between parent demographics and daily hassles, additional exploratory analyses were conducted to determine if other factors such as parental employment status, gender of the parent or of the child, or the parents' educational achievement had an impact on perception of daily hassles.

A 3x6 ANOVA was conducted to evaluate the effects of parent employment status (e.g., full-time, part-time, stay-at-home, etc.), and kindergarten program (full-day kindergarten, half-day kindergarten, and the Best Start program) on parenting daily hassles scores. Of the 449 parents who completed the daily hassles scale, 119 parents of half-day kindergarten children and 102 parents of full-day kindergarten children provided information about their employment status. The ANOVA indicated no significant interaction between program and parent employment status,  $F(10) = .875, p = .557$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .025$ . There was no significant main effect of program,  $F(2) = 1.895, p = .152$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .011$ ; however, there was a significant main effect for parent employment status,  $F(5) = 3.345, p = .006$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .46$ . Follow-up analyses for the employment status main effect indicated that parents who work full time had significantly higher daily hassles total score ( $N = 112; M = 150.38, SD = 60.06$ ) than parents who reported staying at home ( $N = 51; M = 120.77, SD = 51.07$ ).

Upon a more detailed examination of the mean levels of reported daily hassles, parents of children enrolled in half-day kindergarten programs working full time indicated they experienced greater levels of daily hassles ( $M = 163.08, SD = 55.36$ ) than parents of children in full-day kindergarten programs who worked full time ( $M = 155.61, SD = 57.73$ ). Conversely, parents of children enrolled in half-day kindergarten programs who considered themselves stay-at-home parents experienced fewer daily hassles ( $M = 111.96, SD = 59.27$ ) than stay-at-home parents with children enrolled in full-day kindergarten programs ( $M = 140.26, SD = 45.09$ ). Overall, this suggests that employment status of the parent played a role in determining the levels of daily stressors experienced by parents of kindergarten-aged children, such that parents working full-time indicate experiencing fewer hassles when their child is in full-day kindergarten than parents working full-time with a child in half-day kindergarten.

Finally, additional analyses related to demographic factors revealed that parent reports of daily hassles did not differ based on the gender of the parent completing the survey, the gender of the kindergarten child, the parent's first language, or the education level of the parent completing the survey (see Table 1).

**Table 1.** Summary of ANOVAs examining the relationship between demographic characteristics and parent reporting of daily hassles

	df	F	partial $\eta^2$	<i>p</i>
Parent Gender (male/female)	1	.343	.002	.559
Child Gender (male/female)	1	.447	.002	.505
Parent ESL	1	.005	.000	.749
Parent Education	2	.399	.004	.672

## Discussion

Overall, it appears there are no differences in reported daily hassles between parents of children in full-day versus half-day kindergarten in general; however, parent employment status does appear to play a role in greater daily hassles ratings when their child is enrolled in a half-day kindergarten program. These results seem to suggest that parenting daily hassles are more intense and frequent for parents who are employed full-time and have to manage a child who is enrolled in half-day kindergarten compared to parents who are in a similar position but have their child enrolled in full-day kindergarten. Other factors such as the parent's gender, the child's gender, the parent's education level, or the parent's first language did not have an impact on levels of reported daily hassles.

In combination, these results suggest that the way in which full-day kindergarten was implemented may not have been as successful as indicated in previous research at reducing parents' daily hassles and stressors (e.g., Arimura, 2008). Potentially, the current implementation of the FDK program did not provide sufficient levels of support (e.g., childcare) as was suggested in the trial implementation of the Toronto First Duty and Best Start programs, as early research on these programs suggested that service integration in schools was associated with lower levels of daily parenting hassles (e.g., having to rush at the end of the day to pick up their child) (Arimura, 2008; Arimura & Corter, 2010; Arimura et al., 2011; Bell, 2011; Corter et al., 2012). The current study revealed that parents are still experiencing the hassles associated with half-day kindergarten, such as the

task of finding childcare before and after school. There is confirmatory evidence from a qualitative study examining a theory of change in FDK implementation; parents reported real benefits of FDK but also reported challenges with the current system, which did not wholly integrate early childhood services (Arimura, 2015). While it appears that the FDK program began to address some of the issues faced by full-time employed parents by providing a full-day early learning program during school hours, it seems that the FDK program was not able to address the hassles faced by all parents. Future research should compare the daily hassles of parents in seamless programs that operate from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. and that provide breakfast and lunch with those of parents whose children only have FDK during the school day.

Nevertheless, while the results of these analyses suggest that in general the current implementation of the FDK program has not yet been able to reduce the daily parent stressors that are commonly associated with raising young children and interacting with early childhood services, there are a number of important implications we can draw from this research. While not statistically significant, it does appear that parents working full-time experienced fewer reported daily hassles when their child was enrolled in full-day kindergarten as compared to parents of children enrolled in half-day programs. This suggests that some aspects of the full-day kindergarten program were helpful for working parents and provided some of the intended benefits. In addition, overall daily hassles scores suggest that the parents who participated in this study were not experiencing high levels of hassles in their daily lives, and overall did not view raising young children to be a highly and frequently stressful task. It is possible that the reason no differences were found in the hassles ratings of parents of children in full-day versus half-day kindergarten was because parents were not experiencing significant stress related to aspects of childrearing, so FDK could not reduce their stress levels any further. Conversely, approximately 560 parents were recruited to participate in the longitudinal full-day kindergarten study, and only 449 parents returned their Daily Hassles Survey (80% participation rate; Arimura, 2008). It is possible that the parents who were most stressed did not participate because completing and returning the survey would have been one more stressful thing for them to have to do.

This article also adds to the research literature investigating the concepts of hassles as a valuable construct for measuring stress. Prior to this study, the effect of minor stressors or hassles had not been examined in relation to the education system. Previous

research examining the impact of typical everyday events on parental stress has found that the accumulation of daily hassles is related to parental satisfaction with parenting as well as interactions between parents and children (Crnic et al., 2005). Given that children spend approximately 5,000 hours in primary educational settings (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2014), it is important to examine how different educational programs can affect the well-being of parents, children, and families. The daily hassles approach to measuring parental stress allows researchers to better understand the daily inconveniences and annoyances experienced regularly by parents, and allows them to develop programs, strategies, and resources to assist families. Further, the daily hassles explored in the current study reflect many situational factors that governmental action and policy could address (e.g., integrating free before- and after-care into schools, developing hot lunch programs in all schools).

### **Limitations and Directions for Future Research**

There are limitations that may have had an effect on the results discussed above. It is possible that the parents who completed the Daily Hassles Survey may not have wanted to appear stressed and may have reported their daily hassles as being less frequent and less intense than they truly were. A desire to appear more positive is common in survey data, and is known as socially desirable responding (Bornstein et al., 2015). In relation to self-reported parenting behaviours, social desirability appears to influence how parents respond to questions about negative parenting behaviours more so than positive parenting behaviours. Another limitation involves the language of the questionnaire and survey. Many of the families recruited for this study reported speaking a language other than English as their first language. Therefore, it is possible that parents did not feel confident in their English language skills and perhaps were not comfortable filling out the PDH survey in a way that highlighted daily hassles.

It would be beneficial for future research to address whether parents view the daily hassles highlighted in this study in a hierarchical nature. For example, do parents find the lack of integrated childcare to be the greatest hassle they face in the educational system, or is it more stressful to find time to speak with your child's educator, given the hours they work? Researching which hassles parents find most inconvenient and stressful

would provide opportunities to develop policy recommendations that would allow the educational system to better serve families.

Overall, this group of parents did not report being particularly hassled by their experiences with kindergarten or childcare or by the demands of raising young children. Like previous research in which parents reported low levels of daily hassles (Arimura, 2008; Bell, 2011), the parents of this study reported overall low levels of daily hassles (e.g., a mean score of 147 out of 420 on the total daily hassles scale). Further, many demographic characteristics, such as parent gender, child gender, and English language status, that are believed to be correlated with parenting stress (Arimura, 2008; Bell, 2011), did not play a significant role in the stress experienced by parents in this study; however, working parents of children enrolled in full-day kindergarten indicated they experienced fewer parenting hassles than working parents of children enrolled in half-day kindergarten. In sum, the results of this study suggest that full-day kindergarten did not have a great impact on parents' experiences of daily hassles except for parents who were employed full-time. In this sense, FDK has made a positive impact in reducing parenting stress. Future research should compare parenting daily hassles across a range of early childhood service deliveries to pinpoint the degree to which parent support is needed to reduce the stress experienced by all parents of young children.

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## Appendix

### Early Childhood-Parenting Daily Hassles Survey (EC-PDH)

#### **Instructions:**

- The statements below describe events or experiences that routinely affect families with young children. These events/experiences sometimes make life difficult.
- For each item please circle: (1) **how often it affects you** (Never, Rarely, Sometimes, A lot, or Constantly) **AND** (2) **how much of a hassle it has been for you** for the **past month**.
- If the item does not apply to you, please circle N/A. For example, for item 33, if English is your first language, please circle N/A.

Please be sure to fill in both columns!  It is difficult to...:	How often it affects you					How much of a hassle it is for you					Item does not apply to
	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	A lot	Constantly	NO Hassle	MEDIUM	BIG Hassle			
Get my child ready in the morning	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Find the time to make my child's lunch and snacks	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Transport my child to school or childcare in the morning	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Leave my child in the morning because he/she gets upset	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Interrupt my day or make special arrangements to get my child from school to childcare (or from childcare to school)	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Worry about my child's safety as he/she is taken back and fourth between childcare and the school	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Be separated from my child for long periods of time during the day	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Focus on what I need to do during the day because I worry about how my child is doing	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Rush at the end of the day to pick up my child	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Deal with my child when he/she is exhausted at the end of the day	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Get my child to tell me about his/her day	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Have to keep track of my child's daily schedule	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Have to deal with unexpected changes to our daily routine	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Have to make alternate arrangements for my child when he/she is sick	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	N/A

Know what to do about school and childcare when my child tells me he/she is not feeling 100%	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Find the time to read with my child	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Find the time to play with my child.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Know what my child should be able to do at his/her age	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Know whether my child's behaviour is a problem or whether he/she is behaving like other kids his/her age	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	N/A

	How <u>often</u> it affects you					How <u>much of a hassle</u> it is for you					Item does not apply to me
	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	A lot	Constantly	NO Hassle				BIG Hassle	
<b>*Please be sure to fill in Part (1) &amp; (2).</b>											
Get good advice on how to handle my child's challenging behaviours	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Get good advice on how to support my child's learning at home	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Find parenting programs that meet my needs	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Know what programs or services are available in my community	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Feel like an outsider among the parents of my child's classmates	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Find the opportunity to talk with other parents with young children	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Stay in contact with the <i>childcare</i> staff about day-to-day things	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Know whether my child is happy while he/she is in <i>childcare</i>	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Find the opportunity to discuss issues of concern with the <i>childcare</i> staff	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Be satisfied with the <i>childcare</i> program because I worry about the quality of my child's experience	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Avoid spending money on certain things because I have to pay for <i>childcare</i>	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Stay in contact with the <i>classroom teacher</i> about day-to-day things	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Know whether my child is happy while he/she is at <i>school</i>	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Find the opportunity to discuss issues of concern with the <i>classroom teacher</i>	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Know what my child is learning at school	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Know whether my child is learning enough at school	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Agree on what's best for my child because the school doesn't know my child the way I do	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	N/A

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Be satisfied with the school program because I worry about the quality of my child's experience	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Communicate with the school because English is not our family's first language	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Find out about my child's day because multiple people care for my child throughout the day	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Find the time to participate in my child's classroom activities	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Understand how things work at my child's school	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Understand what the school expects from me as a parent	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	N/A