Delayed Retirement and Firm Value: Evidence from Chinese Listed Firms*

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Abstract: Raising the statutory retirement age has become a policy adopted worldwide in response to an aging population, yet the consequences for firms and the associated social costs remain unexplored. This paper examines how China's 2024 delayed retirement announcement affected the value of listed firms. Using an event study approach, we find a significant stock price decline, suggesting that investors viewed delayed retirement as increasing labor costs and reducing expected profits. Losses of value are larger for firms with higher managerial and rank-and-file wages, or with younger management teams. Heterogeneity analyses show that the negative effect of managerial wages on stock prices is more pronounced in smaller firms, while the negative impact of rank-and-file wages is stronger in non-family and low tech firms. By contrast, older management teams partially offset the value loss, particularly in larger and low tech firms.

Keywords: Delayed retirement, firm value, China, event study

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1. Introduction

Population aging has made delayed retirement a central policy response in many countries. By raising retirement ages, governments seek to ease pressure on public pension systems and sustain labor supply (Jones, 2022; Bi and Zubairy, 2023; Pritchett, 2026). Table 1 summarizes selected retirement age reforms across countries. Yet a reform designed to relieve fiscal pressure may also create costs for firms. By delaying older workers' exit from employment, delayed retirement extends the period over which firms pay wages to older employees and may increase expected labor costs. Existing studies mainly examine how retirement age reforms affect individuals and households, including retirement, employment, savings, consumption, and health (Staubli and Zweimüller, 2013; Behaghel and Blau, 2012; Cribb et al., 2016; Bertoni et al., 2018; Rabaté and Rochut, 2020; Etgeton et al., 2023; Rabaté et al., 2024). Table 2 summarizes the related international evidence. However, evidence on the consequences for firms remains limited. Thus, whether these firm costs constitute an important but largely unmeasured component of the social costs of retirement age reforms remains an open question.

[Insert Table 1 Here]

[Insert Table 2 Here]

In this paper, we address this question by examining China's 2024 delayed retirement reform using stock market reactions. The reform was announced on 13 September 2024, with implementation scheduled to begin in 2025. Before the announcement, neither the adjustment schedule nor the target retirement ages had been publicly disclosed, creating a clean setting for identifying the market reaction to the reform. The reform is also economically sizable. As shown in Table 1, China's adjustment pace is faster than that of many retirement age reforms in other countries: retirement ages increase by about three months per year for men and for women previously retiring at age 55, and by about six months per year for women previously retiring at age 50. This setting allows us to examine whether capital markets price the costs borne by firms under a major retirement age reform.

First, we develop a simple static model based on Lazear's (1979) deferred compensation framework to interpret why delayed retirement can reduce firm value. The key idea is that workers receive wages below their marginal product early in their careers and wages above

their marginal product later in their careers. By delaying older workers' exit from employment, a statutory increase in the retirement age extends this later stage, while wage rigidity and separation costs make it difficult for firms to offset the resulting increase in expected labor costs. The model therefore predicts a negative valuation effect following the delayed retirement reform.

We then examine the market reaction to the reform announcement. Using daily stock return data for Chinese listed firms, we implement an event study and find a significant decline in firm value. Cumulative abnormal returns (CARs) fall after the announcement and reach −1.69% by the fifth trading day, corresponding to an average value loss of RMB 192.57 million, or USD 27.04 million, per firm. This negative reaction suggests that investors viewed delayed retirement as increasing firms' expected labor costs and reducing future profits.

In addition to the average market reaction, we examine which firm characteristics shape the impact of the policy. These characteristics include average managerial wages, average rank-and-file wages, and average managerial age. In the cross-sectional analysis, we find that both wage measures are negatively associated with CARs, whereas managerial age has a positive impact. Heterogeneity analyses further show that the negative effect of managerial wages on firm value is more pronounced in smaller firms, while the negative impact of rank-and-file wages is stronger in non-family and low tech firms. By contrast, the positive role of managerial age is more pronounced in larger and low tech firms.

Although our empirical setting is China, our results have broader relevance. The mechanisms we emphasize, such as deferred compensation, employment protection, and high separation costs for older workers, are present in numerous countries. Therefore, our findings remain informative for understanding how capital markets may respond to delayed retirement reforms more broadly.

This study contributes to two strands of literature. First, we contribute to the literature on labor costs and firm value. While an extensive body of work has investigated how human capital or

human resource decisions influence firm value (Brickley et al., 1985; Abowd et al., 1990; Arthur and Cook, 2004; Farber and Hallock, 2009; Lee and Mas, 2012; Brauer and Zimmermann, 2019; Eshghi and Astvansh, 2024), most of these studies focus on voluntary, endogenous human resource decisions, such as compensation schemes, layoffs, unionization, and employee benefit plans. By contrast, we exploit the exogenous labor market shock created by the delayed retirement reform, thereby offering a novel perspective that complements the existing literature.

Second, we extend the literature on delayed retirement reforms by examining their consequences for firms, whereas existing studies have focused primarily on outcomes for individuals and households. Hut (2024) exploits a Dutch reform and shows that the rise in older employees induced by the reform constitutes a cost shock to firms, leading to reduced hiring of younger workers, lower investment, and weaker profitability. We contribute to this literature by taking a capital market perspective and documenting a negative valuation response to the unexpected announcement of China's delayed retirement reform. Our use of daily stock market data enables an event study over a short window, which limits contamination from confounding events and yields a cleaner estimate of the market response to the reform.

Chino (2025) is the closest study to ours. It examines Japan's age-dependent employment protection, which requires firms to continue employing older regular employees who wish to work beyond the statutory retirement age, and documents higher labor costs, weaker profitability, and lower firm value. Our setting differs in the nature of the reform. The Japanese reform constrains firms' retention decisions, so its valuation effect captures investors' response to an employment protection policy. This policy is selective, as it applies only to older workers who choose to remain employed. China's reform, by contrast, raises the statutory retirement age itself and delays workers' institutional exit from the labor market under a national schedule based on birth cohorts. The market reaction in our setting therefore captures how investors value a statutory retirement age increase and its heterogeneous cost implications across firms with different wage levels and age profiles.

Our findings also have implications for the design and evaluation of retirement age reforms. Retirement age reforms are often evaluated by their effects on pension sustainability, labor supply, and individual retirement behavior. Our evidence shows that such reforms can also place a burden on firms, and that this burden is not evenly distributed across the corporate sector. Using financial market data from China's 2024 delayed retirement reform, we show that investors price this overlooked dimension of the policy. These findings suggest that policymakers should consider not only the fiscal benefits of delayed retirement, but also the burden placed on firms.

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 describes China's retirement system and the recent delayed retirement reform. Section 3 presents a simple theoretical model. Section 4 details the data sources, the event study specification, and the cross-sectional regression design. Section 5 reports the empirical results. Section 6 presents the heterogeneity analyses. Section 7 concludes.

2. Background

2.1 China's Retirement System

China's statutory retirement ages have remained anchored in the regulations enacted in the early 1950s: 60 years for men, 50 years for women cadres, and 55 years for women blue-collar workers. Despite subsequent piecemeal adjustments and pilot reforms, this universal retirement age framework has remained fundamentally unchanged for more than seven decades.[1] Yet a system designed under China's economic and demographic conditions in the mid twentieth century has become increasingly misaligned with the country's contemporary socioeconomic realities.

Driven by rapid socioeconomic development and marked improvements in public health and medical care, China's average life expectancy has risen substantially, reaching 78.6 years in 2023, which is approximately 2.18 times the level observed in the 1950s, according to the *National Bureau of Statistics of China (NBS)*. This longevity gain, compounded by declining fertility, has steadily increased the share of middle aged and elderly individuals. At the end of 2023, China's population aged 60 and older reached 297 million, NBS data show, accounting for 21.1% of the total population and constituting the largest elderly cohort in the world. Consequently, the nation faces a growing pension burden: the old-age dependency ratio reached 22.5% in 2023, according to *NBS*, implying that every 4.4 working-age adult supports one elderly person, and this ratio continues to rise.

At the same time, *NBS* data show that the average years of schooling among Chinese residents have increased markedly. In 2023, the average educational attainment of new labor market entrants stood at 14 years, which postpones individuals' initial entry into the workforce and objectively reduces the utilization rate of human capital. The result is a substantial labor shortfall. According to Zhang et al. (2023), China's cumulative labor supply shortage between 2016 and 2039 is projected to reach 153 million workers, or roughly 11 % of the total population.

[1] For instance, subsequent regulations have introduced targeted adjustments: permitting early retirement for workers in arduous positions or special trades, while granting flexible extensions of the statutory retirement age for senior executives and technical personnel.

Population aging poses formidable fiscal challenges to China's public finances and social security system. Under the current pay-as-you-go pension framework, a shrinking working-age population reduces contribution inflows, while rising old-age dependency raises benefit outlays, intensifying the financial strain on pension schemes. According to data released by China's Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security, the cumulative balance of the basic pension insurance for urban enterprise employees grew from RMB 2.39 trillion in 2012 to RMB 5.26 trillion in 2021; yet the number of months that these reserves can cover declined from 18.5 to 11.2 over the same period. According to projections by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, the cumulative balance of China's Urban Employees' Basic Pension Fund will peak at RMB 6.99 trillion in 2027 and then decline precipitously, with the entire reserve projected to be depleted by 2035.

2.2 China's Delayed Retirement Reform

Challenges such as insufficient labor supply, the weakening of the demographic dividend, and mounting pressure on pension systems are by no means unique to China. Developed economies that confronted population aging earlier have widely resorted to raising retirement ages in response to similar demographic and fiscal pressures.

Against this broader international background, China's delayed retirement reform was not an isolated policy response. China's policy deliberations on delayed retirement can be traced to 2012. In June 2012, seven central ministries and commissions jointly issued the Social Security 12th Five-Year Plan, which first proposed "researching policies for the flexible postponement of pension claiming ages." In 2013, the Decision of the CPC Central Committee on Some Major Issues Concerning Comprehensively Deepening Reform subsequently specified "formulating and researching a progressive policy for raising the statutory retirement age." At that time, delayed retirement provoked extensive social controversy. An online survey conducted by the state social media platform People.cn in 2012 on "postponing the pension claiming age" drew 450,000 participants, of whom 93.3% expressed opposition. In the following years, policy statements on delayed retirement remained largely confined to public remarks by officials at

the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security; the detailed implementation plan originally scheduled for release in 2016 was not unveiled as anticipated.

Since 2020, discussions regarding delayed retirement have appeared with increasing frequency in key national policy documents. In March 2021, the State Council formally committed to implementing a progressive increase in the statutory retirement age during the 14th Five-Year Plan period (2021–2025). In July 2024, the Third Plenary Session of the 20th CPC Central Congress adopted the Decision of the CPC Central Committee on Further Deepening Reform Comprehensively to Advance Chinese Modernization, which called for "prudently and steadily advancing the progressive reform of the statutory retirement age in accordance with the principles of voluntariness and flexibility." Then, on 13 September 2024, the State Council promulgated the Measures for the Progressive Increase of the Statutory Retirement Age, stipulating that, commencing on January 1, 2025 and over a period of 15 years, the retirement age for male employees will be raised from 60 to 63 years, while for female employees it will rise from 50 and 55 to 55 and 58 respectively. The adjustment schedule prescribes an increment of one month every four months for male employees and for female employees previously retiring at 55, and an increment of one month every two months for female employees previously retiring at 50.

The formal announcement of China's delayed retirement policy on 13 September 2024 constitutes a valid event study date owing to its unexpected nature. We substantiate this claim in three ways: (1) Institutional timeline: before 13 September 2024, no public draft rules or consultation documents were released. Key design parameters, such as the cadence and magnitude of gradual adjustments and the ultimate target ages for different demographic groups, remained unspecified, making it infeasible for the public to form reliable expectations about the exact design or timing. (2) Attention dynamics: we collect the 2024 daily Baidu Search Index (analogous to Google Trends) for the keyword "delayed retirement" ("延迟退休"). Figure 1 shows that public attention remained at a consistently low level until the official announcement. The spike in July 2024 reflected heightened interest following the directional language in the Third Plenary Session documents, yet as illustrated in Appendix Figure A1,

similar transient surges occurred repeatedly and were not anticipatory responses to any concrete policy rollout. (3) Placebo tests: we take the two peaks before the announcement (21 July 2024 and 10 September 2024) from Figure 1 as pseudo event dates (Figures A2 and A3). Examining the five trading days surrounding each date, we do not observe any anticipatory market reaction. Together, these patterns support treating the announcement as unexpected.

[Insert Figure 1 Here]

Consequently, this paper examines the immediate impact on firm value of China's formal announcement of delayed retirement policy on 13 September 2024. Unlike earlier general policy signals or vague expectations, the 13 September announcement definitively disclosed implementation details and the effective date, providing the market with complete and unambiguous information. This paper therefore designates this date as the event date.

3. Theoretical model

To guide the subsequent empirical analysis, this subsection employs a simple static model to examine how the increase in labor supply of older workers caused by delayed retirement affects firm profits. Under the Efficient Market Hypothesis, investors rationally value equities and fully incorporate all available information into their investment decisions (Fama, 1970). If the hypothesis holds, stock prices will fully reflect firms' intrinsic values. Consequently, a firm's market capitalization can be interpreted as investors' expectation of the net present value of its future profits (Horsky and Swyngedouw, 1987). Therefore, when a delayed retirement policy is introduced, investors' reactions will hinge on their rational assessment of the policy's impact on expected corporate profits.

For a competitive firm seeking to maximize its own profit, the production function is specified in Cobb-Douglas form as follows:

$$Y = AK^{\alpha}L^{\beta}, \alpha + \beta < 1 \tag{1}$$

where A denotes total factor productivity (TFP), K denotes the capital input in production, and L denotes the quantity of labor employed. Decomposing the workforce into older workers (L_o) and younger workers (L_y), the firm's production function becomes:

$$Y = AK^{\alpha}\left(L_y\right)^{\beta}(\theta L_o)^{\gamma}, \alpha + \beta + \gamma < 1 \tag{2}$$

where θ is the efficiency coefficient capturing the relative productivity change associated with employees' aging. Empirically, $\theta > 0$, yet its precise magnitude is indeterminate. Although medical evidence indicates declines in muscular strength, vision, cardiopulmonary capacity, and other physiological indicators with age, accumulated work experience, work attitudes, and interpersonal skills concurrently increase (Burtless and Moffitt, 1985; Ng and Feldman, 2010, 2013; Börsch-Supan and Weiss, 2016). Consequently, whether θ is larger than 1 (implying productivity rises with age) or lies between 0 and 1 (implying productivity declines with age) remains an open empirical question.

Let w_o and w_y denote the wage rates of older worker L_o and young worker L_y, respectively. According to traditional human capital theory, wages generally rise with age, hence $w_o > w_y$ (Mincer, 1974). However, unlike in a perfectly competitive market, wages and productivity are not perfectly aligned over the life cycle. In Lazear's (1979) deferred compensation model, implicit contracts over the life cycle between firms and workers govern lifetime wage profiles: workers are typically paid below their marginal product when young and compensated with wages above their marginal product when old.[2] Under this arrangement, firms retain older workers until retirement rather than dismiss them or smoothly reduce their wages. Beyond this "soft constraint" generated by deferred compensation, China's institutional setting features upward wage rigidity and employment protection rules that make separations costly (Ding and Zhou, 2025). Since the 2008 implementation of *the Labor Contract Law of the People's Republic of China*, dismissal costs have risen substantially. [3]Tenure is pivotal in determining statutory entitlements: in OECD countries, severance pay at 20 years' tenure is about seven times that at 9 months (Hut, 2024), whereas under China's formula the multiple is 20. Consequently, dismissing older workers is extremely costly, and firms often have to retain them.

Within this framework, denote marginal products of younger and older labor by mp_y and mp_o. Then wages can be expressed as $w_y = mp_y - \delta_y$ and $w_o = mp_o + \delta_o$ with $\delta_y \geq 0$, $\delta_o \geq 0$ reflecting deferred compensation, so that young workers are paid below and older workers above their contemporaneous marginal products. Let r denote the cost of capital K.

Further, define the degree of exogenous labor increase (i.e., the policy intensity of delayed retirement) as $\tau \geq 0$. The stock of older workers becomes $L_o = (1 + \tau)\bar{L}_o$, where $\bar{L}_o$ is the firm's stock of older workers before the policy. In practice, τ may differ across firms. For example, firms with stronger unions or stricter internal labor protection may retain more older workers. However, such variation across firm types is limited in China because, as noted above,

[2] This pattern is supported by empirical findings (Lazear and Moore, 1984; Hutchens, 1987; Kotlikoff and Gokhale, 1992).

[3] Specifically, employers must generally provide advance written notice or compensation in lieu of notice, and severance pay increases with years of service. Workers who have been employed by the same firm for at least 15 consecutive years and are within five years of the statutory retirement age also receive stronger protection against dismissal. These rules raise the cost of separating older workers.

statutory employment protections and dismissal costs are set nationally and do not meaningfully vary by firm type. In the Chinese institutional context, we argue that an important factor shaping τ is the firm's age structure. The delayed retirement reform in China is implemented gradually on a cohort schedule with fixed cadence. Therefore, workers who are closer to the statutory retirement age at the reform's start face smaller mandated extensions than younger cohorts.[4] This yields predictable shifts in working life that vary by cohort and map mechanically into a value of τ at the firm level determined by workforce age composition.

However, this framework is not specific to China and applies across institutional settings. What differs across countries is how τ is determined. Outside China, τ may be shaped by ownership structure, family control, managerial preferences, the strength of unions, industry characteristics, and related factors. These differences change the value of τ but do not alter the model's comparative statics.

The firm's profit function is then expressed as:

$$\pi = Y - w_y L_y - w_o L_o - rK \tag{3}$$

Given the exogenous stock of older worker $L_o = (1+\tau)\bar{L}_o$, the firm chooses capital K and young labor L_y to maximize profits. Let $(K^*, {L_y}^*)$ denote the optimal choices and define the corresponding value function to be $\Pi(\tau)$. Differentiating $\Pi(\tau)$ with respect to the delayed retirement intensity τ yields

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{d\Pi}{d\tau} &= \left[\frac{\partial \pi}{\partial L_o}\cdot\frac{dL_o}{d\tau} + \frac{\partial \pi}{\partial L_y}\cdot\frac{dL_y}{d\tau} + \frac{\partial \pi}{\partial K}\cdot\frac{dK}{d\tau} + \frac{\partial \pi}{\partial \tau}\right]_{L_y={L_y}^*, L_o={L_o}^*} \\ &= \left(\frac{\partial Y}{\partial L_o} - w_o\right)\bar{L}_o = \left({mp^*}_o - w_o\right)\bar{L}_o = -\delta_o \bar{L}_o < 0 \end{aligned} \tag{4}$$

Proposition 1: *The exogenous increase in the labor supply of older workers induced by the delayed retirement policy reduces firms' expected profits.*

[4] The adjustment schedule increases the statutory retirement age in fixed increments: one month every four months for men and for women previously retiring at age 55, and one month every two months for women previously retiring at age 50. For example, a man born in January 1965 faces an extension of one month, a man born in September 1965 faces an extension of three months, and a man born in January 1975 faces an extension of two years and seven months.

Economically, this prediction is intuitive. Because of deferred compensation and wage rigidity, many older workers are paid above their marginal product, and firms face legal and institutional constraints that require retention until retirement. The gap between wages and productivity therefore becomes a cost burden. Therefore, investors are likely to perceive the policy as a signal of heightened future labor cost burdens (via extended working lives of older employees), thereby exerting a negative effect on firms' stock market values. In Section 5, we test this prediction by employing the cumulative abnormal stock return obtained from an event study methodology as the proxy for firms' market value.

From Equation (4) the negative effect on profits becomes larger as the wage of older workers w_o increases. Although w_o may be positively correlated with the marginal product mp^*_o, we include industry fixed effects and measure wages using average pay within firms, which mitigates confounding related to productivity to some extent, though it may not remove it entirely. At the same time, from the perspective of investors, worker productivity is not directly observable, whereas wage levels provide a more visible signal of firms' potential labor cost burden under delayed retirement. This leads to the following proposition.

Proposition 2: *Firms with higher wages will experience a larger profit decline following the policy shock.*

In the empirical analysis that follows, we document a negative relationship between firms' CARs and both managerial and rank-and-file wages, thereby providing evidence in support of this proposition.

The reform is gradual and cohort based, so older cohorts face shorter mandated extensions. Firms with older workforces therefore experience a smaller increase in the supply of older labor induced by the policy, and thus a milder cost shock. This leads to the final proposition.

Proposition 3: *Firms with an older workforce will experience a smaller decline in profits following the delayed retirement policy shock.*

Similarly, in the subsequent empirical analysis, we confirm a positive relationship between the average age of management teams (since data on the average age of rank-and-file employees at the firm level is unavailable) and firm value, which supports this proposition.

4. Data and Empirical Strategy

As discussed in the above section, a firm's stock market value mirrors the market's assessment of how the delayed retirement policy will affect its expected profits. This subsection therefore employs an event study methodology to empirically examine the impact of China's delayed retirement policy on firms' stock market valuations.

4.1 Event Study

If markets are efficient, the difference between the actual and expected stock return around the event date (the abnormal return) constitutes a sufficient measure of the policy's impact on firm value. Following the standard event study methodology in finance, the abnormal return of firm *i* on trading day *t* is simply defined as:

$$AR = r_{it} - E[r_{it}|X_t] \tag{5}$$

where r_{it} denotes the realized daily stock return and $E[r_{it}|X_t]$ denotes the expected return conditional on the information set X_t.

Numerous studies estimate firm *i*'s sensitivity to the market index using the Capital Asset Pricing Model (CAPM) (i.e., X_t is the market return) and then use the predicted individual return as the expected return $E[r_{it}|X_t]$ (Sam and Zhang, 2020; Cook and Zhang, 2023; Gokkaya et al., 2023). Accordingly, the firm's daily return is expressed as:

$$r_{it} = \alpha_i + \beta_i r_{mt} + \varepsilon_{it} \tag{6}$$

where r_{mt} denotes the return on the market portfolio comprising all stocks on trading day t. After estimating $\hat{\alpha}_i$ and $\hat{\beta}_i$, the abnormal return derived from the CAPM is simply given by:

$$AR_{it} = r_{it} - (\hat{\alpha}_i + \hat{\beta}_i r_{mt}) \tag{7}$$

Unlike the CAPM, which relies solely on market returns to forecast individual stock returns, the Fama and French (1993) three-factor model augments the CAPM with the size factor (SMB) and the value factor (HML). Consequently, a firm's daily return, along with the resulting abnormal return, under the three-factor specification is expressed as:

$$r_{it} = \alpha_i + \beta_i r_{mt} + s_i SMB_t + h_i HML_t + \varepsilon_{it} \tag{8}$$

$$AR_{it} = r_{it} - (\hat{\alpha}_i + \hat{\beta}_i r_{mt} + s_i SMB_t + h_i HML_t) \tag{9}$$

However, in event study designs over short windows, failure to control for the book-to-market and size factors can induce specification biases (Allen and Wahid, 2024). This study therefore estimates abnormal returns using the Fama–French three-factor model and, in robustness checks, reestimates them with the CAPM and Fama–French five-factor model to verify that the results are robust to the choice of factor specification. Relative to the three-factor model, the five-factor model proposed by Fama and French (2015) additionally incorporates the profitability factor (RMW) and the investment factor (CMA).

In practice, we designate 13 September 2024, the announcement date of the delayed retirement policy, as the event day. The estimation window comprises the 250 trading days ending 50 trading days before the event, i.e., [−250, −50]. After computing the daily abnormal returns AR_{it} using equations (8) and (9), we calculate each firm's CARs over the event window $[t_1, t_2]$ as:

$$CAR_i[t_1, t_2] = \sum_{t=t_1}^{t_2} AR_{it} \tag{10}$$

where t_1 denotes the first day and t_2 the last day of the event window. $CAR_i[t_1, t_2]$ captures the cumulative abnormal return change experienced by firm i over the interval $[t_1, t_2]$ due to the policy shock.

4.2 Regression Model

Beyond measuring the stock market's response to the delayed retirement policy, we are particularly interested in whether investors accurately discriminate among firms based on firm characteristics when estimating expected profits under the policy. Guided by the theoretical discussion above, we rely on the OLS specification presented in equation (11) to examine how wages at the firm level and managerial age shape investors' profit expectations.

$$\begin{aligned} CAR_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Wage\ Managerial_i + \beta_2 Wage\ RankFile_i \\ + \beta_3 Age\ Managerial_i + \beta_4 \sum Controls + \sigma_j + \varepsilon_i \end{aligned} \tag{11}$$

In equation (11), CAR_i denotes the cumulative abnormal return for firm i. In the baseline specification, we employ the [0, 5] event window, i.e., $CAR_i[0,5]$, as the primary dependent variable; alternative windows are used for robustness checks. $Wage\ Managerial_i$ and

$Wage\ RankFile_i$ represent the average 2023 wages of management teams and of rank-and-file employees in firm i, respectively. Consistent with the theoretical discussion above, we hypothesize that both managerial and rank-and-file wages negatively affect CARs: $\beta_1, \beta_2 < 0$ and $\beta_3 > 0$.

We acknowledge that using managerial age as a proxy for the age structure of the whole workforce has important limitations. First, management team members are typically older than rank-and-file employees, so this measure is likely to overstate the average age of all workers in the firm. Second, differences in managerial age across firms may also reflect differences in promotion systems and selection into senior positions, which could directly affect firm value. Since we cannot observe the age distribution of rank-and-file employees at the firm level, we cannot implement sharper robustness checks based on workforce age. Our main interest, however, is the relationship between workforce age and firm value, rather than the precise level of a firm's average employee age.

[Insert Table 3 here]

Following Sam and Zhang (2020) and Shen et al. (2023), we control for firm size, leverage, book-to-market ratio, return on assets, institutional ownership, earnings per share, and revenue growth. Industry fixed effects at the two digit SIC level σ_j are also included. Standard errors are clustered at the firm level, and ε_i denotes the residual. Variable definitions are provided in Table 3.

4.3 Sample and Data

Our initial sample consists of all A share firms listed on the Shanghai and Shenzhen Stock Exchanges in 2023, the year preceding the policy announcement. We exclude the following firms from the sample: (1) financial firms, because they are subject to distinct accounting and regulatory standards; (2) firms designated as ST or *ST, which indicates financial distress; and (3) firms domiciled outside Mainland China, to ensure uniform applicability of the delayed retirement policy. The final sample consists of 4,700 firms. All variables are obtained from the *China Stock Market & Accounting Research (CSMAR)* database. To mitigate outlier effects, we

winsorize continuous variables at the 1st and 99th percentiles. Table 4 presents the primary descriptive statistics used in our regressions.

[Insert Table 4 here]

5. Empirical Results

This section first documents the overall stock market reaction following the delayed retirement policy announcement. Using CARs as the dependent variable, we then show that firms with higher average managerial and rank-and-file wages and with younger management teams experience larger cost shocks from the policy. Finally, we conduct a series of robustness tests to corroborate these findings.

5.1 Overall Market Reaction

Figure 2 plots the CARs around the announcement of China's delayed retirement policy, based on our event study estimates. Consistent with theoretical predictions, the policy announcement exerted a widespread negative impact on equity valuations. The policy was released on 13 September, after which markets closed for the Mid-Autumn holiday until 18 September. This interlude allowed investors to reassess the policy's implications for expected profits, and CARs began to decline sharply from the second trading day after the announcement. By the fifth trading day after the announcement, the cumulative effect on market value had reached −1.69%. Following Krüger (2015), the CAR over five trading days implies a decline in firm value of about RMB 192.57 million, or approximately USD 27.04 million, when evaluated at the mean total market capitalization of sample firms on the trading day prior to the announcement (RMB 11.4 billion × 1.69%). However, there is a modest upward trend in CARs before the announcement, implying that our estimates likely understate the true impact of the policy and should be interpreted as a conservative lower bound on its negative effect on firm value.

[Insert Figure 2 here]

To motivate the subsequent empirical analyses, we split the sample at the median of firms' managerial wages, rank-and-file wages, and managerial age and plot the corresponding stock price reactions to the policy announcement in Figures 3 to 5. Figure 3 reveals that firms with high managerial wages experienced a larger decline in firm value, while the return patterns of the two groups before the announcement are indistinguishable. This suggests investors anticipated a stronger profit shock for firms with higher managerial wages, as these firms must bear heavier labor cost burdens under the delayed retirement policy.

[Insert Figure 3 here]

Figure 4 compares the evolution of CARs around the delayed retirement announcement between firms with high versus low rank-and-file wages. Although both groups experience value declines after the announcement, the raw split suggests a somewhat larger drop among firms with lower rank-and-file wages. We examine this relationship more formally in the next section.

[Insert Figure 4 here]

Figure 5 presents the aggregate market reaction across subsamples divided by managerial age. Firms with older management teams exhibit a markedly smaller decline in market value after the announcement. Consistent with the theoretical discussion, this pattern reflects the phased nature of China's delayed retirement policy: cohorts currently closer to the statutory retirement age face shorter mandatory extensions, thereby imposing lower incremental labor costs on their firms. Consequently, firms with younger management teams face larger expected extensions of managers' working lives, greater exposure to the reform, and a more pronounced cost shock (Proposition 3).

[Insert Figure 5 here]

5.2 Regression Analysis

Table 5 presents the results of a multiple regression analysis whose dependent variable is estimated with the Fama–French three-factor model over the [0,5] event window. Columns (1)–(3) report the separate effects of managerial wages, rank-and-file wages, and managerial age on $CAR_i[0,5]$, while column (4) includes all three variables together with the full set of controls.

[Insert Table 5 here]

The results show that both $Wage\ Managerial_i$ and $Wage\ RankFile_i$ carry negative coefficients. Specifically, the coefficient on managerial wages is statistically significant at the 5% level in both columns (1) and (4). In contrast, the coefficient on rank-and-file employee wages is significant at the 10% level in column (2) but loses statistical significance in column

(4). In terms of magnitude, column (4) implies that a 10% rise in managerial wages is associated with a 0.0305% decline in firm value, whereas a 10% rise in rank-and-file wages is linked to a 0.0214% decline but statistically insignificant. These findings accord with our theoretical predictions and indicate that investors treat both managerial and employee compensation levels as informative signals of the labor cost shock imposed by the delayed retirement policy.

Moreover, managerial wages exert both a larger economic effect and greater statistical significance than rank-and-file wages. This may reflect not only the substantially higher absolute level of managerial pay, which renders investors more sensitive to its incremental cost, but also the perception that firms can more flexibly adjust the employment and remuneration of rank-and-file employees, thereby mitigating future cost increases. At the same time, firms with higher managerial wages may be perceived by investors as suffering from more severe agency problems. Specifically, high managerial wages can signal weaker internal governance, greater managerial power and more room for rent extraction (Core et al., 1999; Bebchuk and Fried, 2003). Under this interpretation, after the delayed retirement policy is announced, investors may worry that such firms will find it difficult to absorb the expected cost burden through timely and effective internal adjustments and therefore demand a higher risk premium. This would also show up as a stronger negative relationship between managerial wages and CARs.

However, we do not believe that this mechanism can fully explain the stronger impact of managerial wages. First, our regressions already control for institutional ownership and a state-owned enterprise indicator, two variables that the literature has treated as important determinants of agency problems and governance quality (Gillan and Starks, 2000; Hartzell and Starks, 2003; Lin et al., 2020). These controls should absorb part of the variation in internal governance. Second, the heterogeneity analysis in Section 6.1 indicates that valuation losses related to wages are attenuated in family firms relative to non-family firms. If higher wages simply proxy for rent extraction or weak governance, the associated valuation penalty should be stronger, not weaker, in family firms, which are often viewed as more susceptible to minority

shareholder expropriation and agency problems related to control (La Porta et al., 1999; Burkart et al., 2003). This pattern is therefore difficult to reconcile with a pure governance interpretation.

Finally, consistent with the theoretical predictions, the coefficient on managerial age is positive and statistically significant at the 5% level, reflecting that the delayed retirement policy exerts a smaller (or even negligible) effect on older executives nearing retirement, thereby implying a smaller expected profit loss for their firms.[5]

These regression results provide direct support for the core mechanism highlighted in the theoretical analysis. Because older workers are often paid above their marginal product and firms must retain them for longer under the delayed retirement reform, investors interpret the policy as an adverse labor cost shock and revise downward their expectations of future profits. However, the negative relationship between average wages and CARs may capture not only direct wage costs but also higher social insurance contributions and a greater expected regulatory burden. For example, after the reform investors may anticipate stricter employment protection for older workers and more intensive compliance inspections. Data limitations prevent us from disentangling these channels empirically. Within our theoretical framework, however, they can all be viewed as different manifestations of the same underlying labor cost shock, which is the central mechanism of interest.

5.3 Robustness Checks

5.3.1 Alternative CARs Measures

First, we verify robustness by reestimating CARs over alternative event windows. Precisely identifying when the policy reached market participants is essential for causal inference (Henderson, 1990); any information leakage before the announcement would bias our estimates.

[5] One possible concern is that the effect of managerial age may be nonlinear. In particular, for younger managers, the additional labor cost induced by delayed retirement would be realized further in the future and may therefore be discounted more heavily by the market. To assess this possibility, we augment the specification by including a squared term of log managerial age. The estimates on log managerial age and its squared term are both statistically insignificant, providing no empirical support for this interpretation.

We therefore redefine the dependent variable as the CARs over the [−1, 5] window. Column (1) of Table 6 shows that the results remain consistent with the baseline. [6]

[Insert Table 6 here]

Second, we recompute expected normal returns $E[r_{it}|X_t]$ using alternative asset pricing models. Whereas the baseline employs the Fama–French three-factor model, we now estimate $E[r_{it}|X_t]$ via the CAPM and the Fama–French five-factor model (adding the RMW profitability and CMA investment factors). Table 7 indicates that the baseline cross-sectional relationships are broadly robust to alternative asset pricing models, although the precision of some estimates declines across specifications.

[Insert Table 7 here]

5.3.2 Excluding Contemporaneous Confounding Events

To ensure that our estimates are not driven by concurrent noisy events, we exclude firms experiencing any of the following within two trading days before or after the delayed retirement announcement: IPOs, periodic reports, seasoned equity offerings, rights issues, convertible bond issuances, other financings, equity changes or M&As, operating transactions, shareholder meetings, share pledges or freezes, litigation/arbitration, board or supervisory board events, sudden incidents, violations, changes in directors/supervisors/senior officers, donations, and other corporate events. The resulting sample comprises 2,570 firms.

Table 8 reports the results. The negative relation between CARs and managerial wages, and the positive relation between CARs and managerial age, remain robust. Although the coefficient on rank-and-file wages is no longer statistically significant, its sign remains negative. Overall, these findings indicate that our results are unlikely to be driven by contemporaneous events other than the delayed retirement policy announcement.

[6] We further examine CARs calculated over shorter windows, namely [0,1], [0,2], [0,3], and [0,4], with results reported in Appendix Table A1. Across these windows, the coefficient on managerial age remains significant and increases monotonically, indicating that the market progressively incorporates the age effect into valuations. By contrast, although the negative coefficients on managerial and rank-and-file wages also grow in magnitude, they do not become statistically significant until the fifth trading day. This suggests that investors incorporate the age effect relatively quickly, whereas the negative wage effects emerge more gradually and become statistically visible only over longer windows.

[Insert Table 8 here]

Another concern is that the Chinese government may have announced other important policies or information at the same time as the delayed retirement decision, which could drive the observed decline in firm value. The decision on delayed retirement was adopted at the eleventh session of the Standing Committee of the Fourteenth National People's Congress on 13 September 2024. At this meeting, in addition to the decision on delayed retirement, the legislature also adopted revisions to the National Defense Education Law and the Statistics Law and released a number of items related to foreign affairs and personnel appointments. We see no clear reason why these other legal revisions and announcements would systematically depress the valuations of listed firms or generate the heterogeneity patterns based on wages and age documented in our analysis. It is therefore unlikely that they drive our main findings.[7]

5.3.3 Alternative Event Date

As shown in Figure 1, the Baidu Search Index for "delayed retirement" began to edge upward before 13 September 2024. This uptick coincided with the 10 September session of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, which deliberated but did not formally adopt the State Council's draft decision on gradually raising the statutory retirement age; the final policy details were officially released only on 13 September. To address potential bias arising from an incorrectly specified event day, we replicate the regressions in Table 5 using 10 September as the event date. Table 9 shows that the cross-sectional patterns become much weaker when 10 September is used as the event date. Additionally, appendix Figure A3 also reports no significant abnormal returns or CARs around that date, supporting our choice of 13 September as the event day.

[Insert Table 9 here]

5.3.4 Addressing omitted variable bias

[7] https://english.www.gov.cn/news/202409/13/content_WS66e3fa50c6d0868f4e8eaee1.html

(1) Propensity Score Matching. Although we have controlled for numerous factors that may drive market reactions, omitted variables and selection could still generate spurious correlations between firm value and the average wages of management teams, rank-and-file employees, or managerial age. To further assess whether the results are driven by observable firm characteristics, we employ propensity score matching proposed by Rosenbaum and Rubin (1983) as a robustness check.

[Insert Table 10 here]

Specifically, because the three core explanatory variables are continuous, we create binary indicators equal to one if managerial wages, rank-and-file wages, or managerial age exceeds the sample median. For managerial wages, we define $High_Wage_Managerial$, which equals one when managerial pay is above the median. Using this indicator as the treatment variable and the baseline controls as matching covariates, we estimate the propensity scores via a logit model. The resulting propensity scores are used as weights in a weighted least squares replication of equation (11). We repeat this procedure for rank-and-file wages and managerial age. The results after matching in Table 10 are broadly consistent with those in Table 5.

(2) Alternative Fixed Effects. Although propensity score matching can substantially mitigate concerns about omitted variables, firms with high wages or older workforces may still differ in unobserved dimensions at the city level such as local innovation intensity or employment protection policy. To further address this concern, Table 11 reports regressions that add city fixed effects, which absorb unobserved heterogeneity at the city level that is constant over time. The wage coefficients continue to be negative, although the estimate for managerial wages becomes less precise in the fully controlled specification, while the coefficient on rank-and-file wages remains negative and statistically significant. Hence, the results with city fixed effects leave the main pattern of the baseline results intact.

[Insert Table 11 here]

5.4 Alternative channels and interpretation

In the above analysis, we attribute the decline in firm value to the increase in labor costs induced by the announcement of delayed retirement policy. We acknowledge, however, that other mechanisms and alternative explanations may also play a role. In this subsection we discuss these possibilities.

5.4.1 "Disappointment" Interpretation

An alternative explanation is that markets anticipated a reform favorable to firms and were disappointed by the actual announcement, leading to negative overall market returns. We argue that this interpretation is not supported in our setting. On the one hand, in Section 2.2, we show that the reform was unlikely to have been anticipated, so the observed valuation changes are unlikely to reflect expectations that had already been priced in. On the other hand, our cross-sectional regressions are more consistent with the cost channel than with a disappointment channel. We find that firms with higher wage levels experience larger valuation declines, while firms with older management teams experience smaller declines. Under a pure disappointment story, it is difficult to explain why these firms would have been viewed ex ante as the primary beneficiaries.

Moreover, as discussed in the introduction, China's reform is implemented on a relatively compressed schedule relative to reforms in other countries. It is therefore unlikely that investors expected a much stronger reform in favor of firms and then perceived the actual announcement as a disappointment. Overall, we view the disappointment channel as an implausible main explanation for the decline in firm value.

5.4.2 Investor Sentiment[8]

A further possible mechanism is that the decline in firm value following the announcement of the delayed retirement reform reflects changes in investor sentiment rather than a rational reassessment of expected profits. For example, some investors may interpret the reform as a signal of more severe population aging, or demographic pessimism, or as an indication of

[8] Baker and Wurgler (2006) define investor sentiment as "uninformed, speculative demand that varies across firms due to subjective valuations and limits to arbitrage."

weaker fiscal conditions and lower growth prospects in the long run. Others may see the reform as a sign of greater policy uncertainty. Any of these interpretations could raise the required rate of return on equities and depress stock prices even if expected cash flows and profits were unchanged.

From a conceptual perspective, however, we regard this sentiment channel as unlikely to be the dominant mechanism. As Section 2 describes, debates on population aging and the need to raise retirement ages have featured prominently in official documents and public discussions for many years, so the market has long been aware of China's demographic and pension challenges. The announcement mainly disclosed the detailed schedule and implementation path of the reform rather than revealing China's aging or fiscal pressures for the first time. It is therefore difficult to argue that the announcement triggered a fundamental reassessment of China's macroeconomic prospects in the long run.

Empirically, although we cannot cleanly decompose the observed CARs into a "rational cash flow component" and a "sentiment component," we can test whether firms that are more sensitive to shifts in investor sentiment experience larger valuation losses. Baker and Wurgler (2006) show that investor sentiment has stronger effects on securities whose valuations are highly subjective and difficult to arbitrage, such as small stocks, young stocks, stocks with high volatility, unprofitable stocks, stocks that do not pay dividends, extreme growth stocks, and distressed stocks.

Guided by this framework, we use the *CSMAR* database to construct variables that capture exposure to investor sentiment based on firms' characteristics prior to the reform: the log of free float market capitalization in 2023, the log of firm age, an indicator for firms with high volatility (return volatility above the sample mean, estimated from daily log returns over the 250 trading days before 13 September 2024), an indicator for negative net profit in 2023, an indicator for whether the firm paid any cash dividends between 1 January 2024 and the event date, and the book-to-market ratio and its square. We then regress CARs on these proxies for sentiment exposure together with standard controls. If the sentiment mechanism were the main

driver of the valuation losses, we would expect more negative CARs for firms that are smaller and younger, more volatile, unprofitable, do not pay dividends, and are located in the extreme tails of the book-to-market distribution. The results are reported in Table 12.

[Insert Table 12 here]

The regression results run counter to the predictions of a sentiment explanation. Firms with high volatility or losses, which are typically regarded as most sensitive to sentiment, do not experience larger valuation declines. The loss dummy is positively related to CARs, which implies that unprofitable firms, if anything, suffer smaller valuation losses, inconsistent with a sentiment mechanism. Firms that pay dividends show more negative CARs than firms that do not pay dividends, whereas a sentiment channel would predict stronger reactions among firms without dividend payments. Free float market capitalization is either unrelated to or positively associated with CARs, in contrast to Baker and Wurgler's (2006) emphasis on small stocks as more affected by sentiment. Institutional ownership is not significantly related to CARs, again opposite to the idea that stocks with low institutional ownership are more sensitive to sentiment. Finally, although book-to-market enters the regression in quadratic form, the estimated relationship is insignificant, which is the opposite of the U shaped pattern documented by Baker and Wurgler (2006).

Only firm age enters with a positive coefficient that could be read as weakly consistent with a sentiment channel. This pattern is also consistent with our cost mechanism. Older firms are more likely to employ older workers, for whom the incremental extension of working life is smaller under the gradual implementation schedule, so the effective cost shock from the reform is attenuated.

Taken together, these results suggest that while we cannot completely rule out that an investor sentiment mechanism played some role, the sentiment channel is unlikely to be the primary driver of the observed valuation losses.

6. Heterogeneity Analysis

Building on the established relationships between managerial wages, rank-and-file wages, managerial age, and cumulative abnormal returns, this section conducts heterogeneity analyses to identify firm characteristics that amplify these effects on firm value. Specifically, we examine whether the impact of the delayed retirement announcement on firm value differs systematically (i) between family and non-family firms, (ii) between high tech and low tech firms, and (iii) across firm sizes. First, family versus non-family firms capture differences in ownership concentration and corporate governance: family firms typically have more concentrated control rights and greater scope for internal coordination, which may affect their ability to absorb a given cost shock at a given wage and age structure.[9] Second, high tech versus low tech firms reflect differences in technology intensity and labor intensity, so that the labor cost shock from delayed retirement may have different implications across sectors. Finally, larger versus smaller firms capture differences in financing constraints and scale economies: larger firms generally have better access to external finance and more flexible internal organization, which may provide greater scope to buffer the same wage and age shock.

[Insert Table 13 here]

6.1 Family firms vs non-family firms

Family firms are widespread in China and have significantly contributed to the country's rapid economic growth. Unlike those in developed countries, which have existed for over a century, Chinese family firms have emerged only since the 1980s. Most have been managed by their founders since inception, and these founders are now approaching retirement age (Chen et al., 2021). Hence, distinguishing the effects of delayed retirement on family versus non-family firms is crucial. In this study, family firms are identified using the Chinese Family Firm Research Database (CFFD), which defines a family firm as one meeting three criteria: (1) the ultimate controller is a natural person or a family linked by blood or marriage; (2) this person or family is directly or indirectly the largest shareholder of the listed firm; and (3) at least two family members hold shares or positions in the listed or affiliated firms.

[9] We do not further examine heterogeneity between state-owned firms and firms without state ownership, because in China a large share of firms without state ownership are family firms.

We interact a family firm dummy with managerial wages, rank-and-file wages, and managerial age, and include these interaction terms in the regression. Column (1) of Table 13 shows that the family firm dummy carries a negative and statistically significant coefficient, indicating that family firms, on average, experience a larger decline in firm value following the delayed retirement announcement. Once we account for these interaction terms, the negative association between wages and firm value is stronger in non-family firms than in family firms. The interaction term involving rank-and-file wages is larger in magnitude and statistically significant, while the interaction term involving managerial wages is positive but estimated less precisely. This difference likely reflects divergent corporate governance structures. Compared with non-family firms, family firms typically exhibit more concentrated ownership and control (Berle and Means, 1932), which may facilitate internal coordination and organizational adjustments to anticipated labor cost pressures, particularly those related to rank-and-file employees. As a result, investors appear to perceive cost shocks related to wages as less harmful to firm value in family firms, thereby attenuating the negative valuation impact associated with higher compensation levels.

Moreover, the coefficient on managerial age is more positive in family firms, although the interaction term is not statistically significant. On one hand, this reflects the greater stability of executive teams in family firms; on the other hand, founders in family firms typically pass control to designated heirs or other family members upon retirement (Burkart et al., 2003; Cao et al., 2015). Consequently, the current managerial age structure serves as a more reliable predictor of future age composition in these firms.[10]

[10] Notably, the vast majority of private enterprises in China are family firms (Xu et al., 2024), implying that the observed heterogeneity may also stem from differences in ownership type. On the one hand, personnel decisions in state-owned enterprises are often made by central or local governments, so adjustments in response to the delayed retirement policy are not necessarily aligned with objectives of profit maximization (Bai and Xu, 2005; Chang and Wong, 2009), leading to a larger impact of compensation levels on firm value. On the other hand, because managerial appointments in SOEs are primarily determined by the government, managerial age conveys a weaker signal.

6.2 High tech vs low tech industries

Further, to reveal variation across industries in the social costs imposed by the delayed retirement policy, we examine whether the effects of managerial wages, rank-and-file wages, and managerial age on firm value differ significantly between high tech firms and other firms.

Following the National Bureau of Statistics' "Classification of High Technology Industries (Manufacturing), 2017," we classify firms operating in pharmaceutical manufacturing; aircraft, spacecraft, and related equipment; electronic and communication equipment; computers and office equipment; medical devices and measuring instruments; and information chemicals as high tech firms, and firms outside these industries as low tech firms. We then interact a high tech dummy with managerial wages, rank-and-file wages, and managerial age and include these terms in the regression; the results are reported in column (2) of Table 13.

Regarding managerial characteristics, the regression shows that the effect of managerial wages on firm value does not differ significantly between high tech and low tech firms. The interaction term is negative, and its magnitude is more than an order of magnitude smaller than the corresponding interaction for rank-and-file wages, which suggests that investors view the incremental cost burden associated with managerial pay under delayed retirement as relatively universal across industries. By contrast, the positive effect of managerial age is amplified in low tech firms. High tech firms face fiercer technological competition and must pursue continuous innovation for survival (Schilling and Hill, 1998); hence, investors may place greater value on managerial expertise and adaptability in these firms and impose extra penalties for cognitive decline related to age and reduced adaptability to new technologies (Salthouse, 2019). This partially offsets the buffering effect of shorter delayed retirement durations among older cohorts.

Finally, the negative effect of rank-and-file wages on firm value is significantly larger in low tech industry firms. This aligns with the capital and technology intensive nature of high tech sectors. Relative to high tech firms, low tech firms exhibit higher labor intensity and allocate substantial resources not only to wages but also to employee training and developmental

infrastructure (Mbanyele et al., 2024). Consequently, the delayed retirement policy imposes greater cost pressure on low tech industries, where labor costs already account for a larger share of total expenses and where investments in workforce management and development are substantial.

6.3 Heterogeneity by firm size

Smaller firms, lacking collateral and credit history, typically face more severe financing constraints, commonly termed "scale discrimination" (Berger and Udell, 2006; Beck et al., 2011; Cull et al., 2015). This phenomenon is particularly pronounced in China's relatively underdeveloped financial markets, where a highly concentrated banking system dominated by large state-owned banks is inherently poorly suited to serving small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) (Shi et al., 2023). Consequently, smaller firms possess weaker capacity to alleviate cost shocks through external financing.

Column (3) of Table 13 shows that firm size is negatively associated with CARs on average, suggesting that larger firms experience a greater drop in firm value following the delayed retirement announcement. This is consistent with the notion that larger firms employ more workers and are therefore exposed to a larger absolute labor cost shock. Turning to the interaction terms, we find that the negative impact of managerial wages on firm value is attenuated in larger firms, which is consistent with a buffering effect related to scale. At the same time, the positive association between managerial age and firm value becomes stronger among larger firms. By contrast, the interaction involving rank-and-file wages is small in magnitude, negative, and statistically insignificant, indicating that the valuation effect of rank-and-file wages does not differ meaningfully across firm sizes. Overall, these results suggest that investors are particularly concerned about cost pressures related to managerial wages for SMEs, whereas they do not impose additional penalties that depend on firm size for high rank-and-file wages. One plausible explanation is that rank-and-file labor costs can be adjusted more flexibly through internal reallocation and workforce management regardless of firm size. Managerial compensation, by contrast, is more rigid and therefore more likely to be cushioned in large firms through better financing capacity and more diversified operations.

7. Conclusion

With declining birth rates and rising life expectancy, China is rapidly aging, experiencing a shrinking working-age population and mounting pressure on its public pension system. Since the retirement rules established in the 1950s have remained essentially unchanged, they have become markedly out of step with current demographic and economic realities. After more than a decade of deliberation, China announced on 13 September 2024 that the statutory retirement age will be progressively raised beginning 1 January 2025. Although the policy aims to enhance the sustainability of the public social security system and expand labor supply, it is likely to generate a series of unintended economic consequences for firms.

Using an event study methodology, this paper analyzes the impact of China's delayed retirement policy announcement on firms' stock market value. Empirical results show, first, that stock market value, measured by cumulative abnormal returns (CARs), declined after the announcement, reaching −1.69% by the fifth trading day. This corresponds to an average loss of roughly RMB 192.57 million (USD 27.04 million) per firm. Second, firms with higher average managerial and rank-and-file wages experienced larger CARs declines, indicating that investors expect these firms to incur greater future labor costs and face higher profit reduction risk.

Additionally, managerial age is positively and significantly associated with CARs, likely because China's progressive delayed retirement policy imposes shorter retirement extensions on older individuals, thereby reducing firms' incremental costs. Robustness checks using alternative CARs calculations, exclusion of contemporaneous events, alternative event days, and propensity score matching all yield consistent results.

Further heterogeneity analyses reveal the following. First, partitioning on family ownership shows that the negative effects of managerial and rank-and-file wages are larger in non-family firms, whereas the positive effect of managerial age is amplified in family firms. Second, classifying firms by high tech status indicates that firm value declines are more sensitive to rank-and-file wages in low tech firms, while the effect of managerial wages does not differ

significantly between the two. Moreover, the positive impact of managerial age is also stronger in low tech firms. Finally, tests based on firm size demonstrate that as firm size increases, the negative influence of managerial wages weakens and the positive influence of managerial age strengthens.

From a policy perspective, these patterns suggest that future reforms which raise statutory retirement ages should treat corporate spillovers as heterogeneous rather than uniform and pay particular attention to those types of firms that exhibit the largest stock market losses in our data. Instead of a uniform implementation, policymakers may need to combine a common reform path with carefully designed transition arrangements or complementary measures targeted at more exposed firms, while applying more standard schemes to firms that appear less affected. Since our evidence is based on listed firms, these policy implications should be regarded as indicative rather than prescriptive, but they highlight that delayed retirement reforms can redistribute costs across different segments of the corporate sector.

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Figures

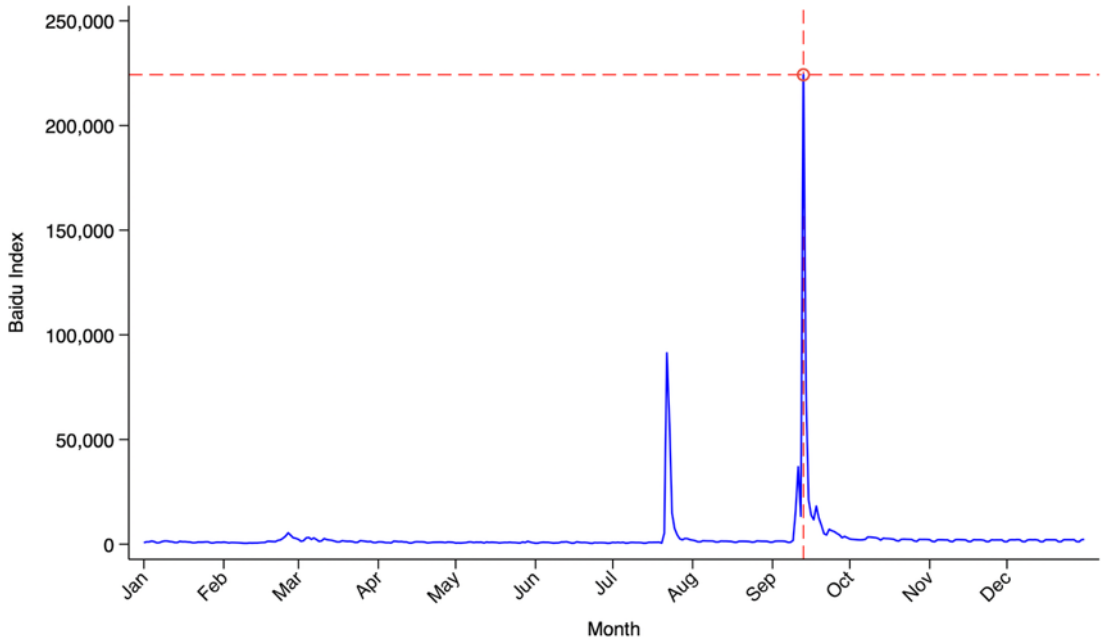


Figure 1 Baidu Search Index for delayed retirement

Note: Figure 1 presents 2024 daily Baidu Search Index (analogous to Google Trends) for the keyword "延迟退休" (delayed retirement).

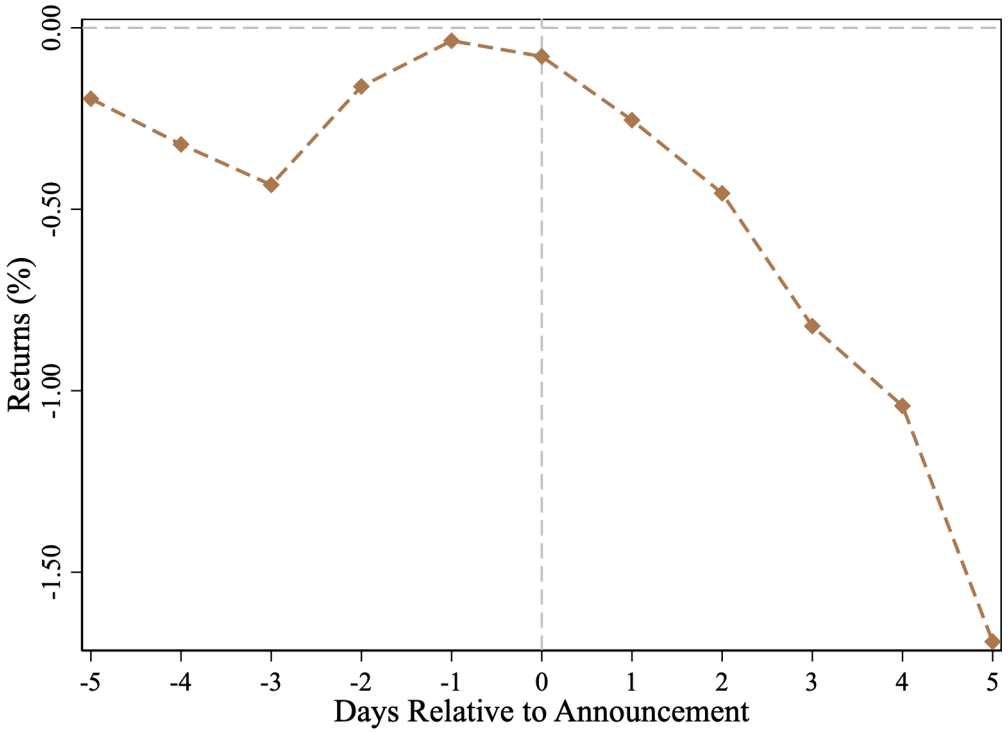


Figure 2 Overall market reaction

Note: Figure 2 presents the overall market reaction as cumulative abnormal returns around the announcement of China's delayed retirement policy.

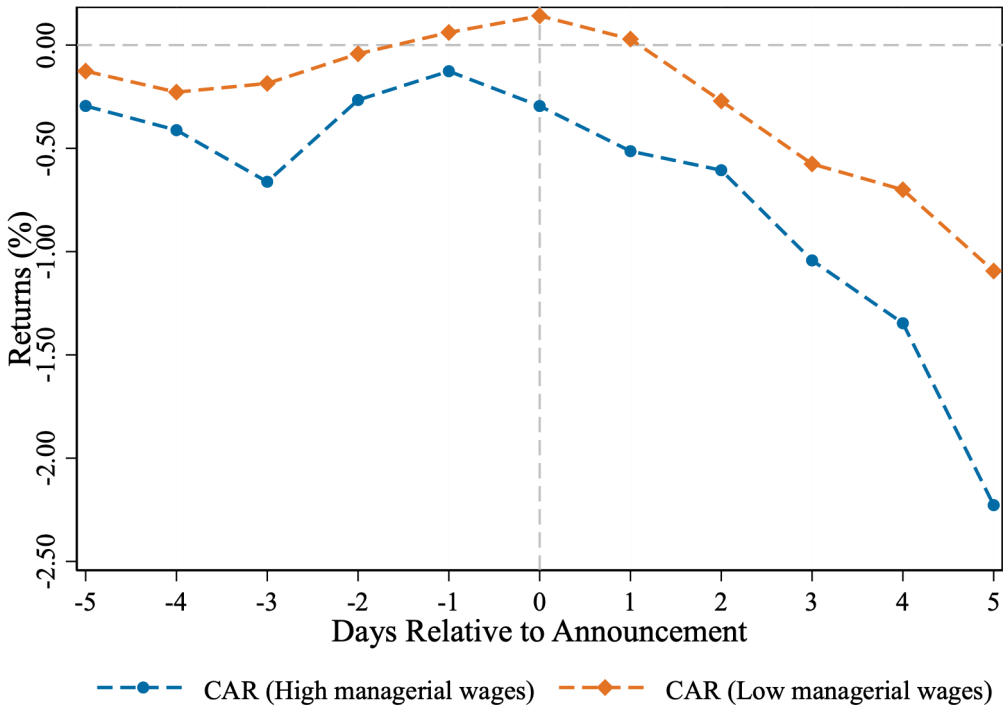


Figure 3 Overall market reaction (high vs low managerial wage firms)

Note: Figure 3 presents the overall market reaction as cumulative abnormal returns around the announcement of China's delayed retirement policy, comparing firms with high versus low managerial wages.

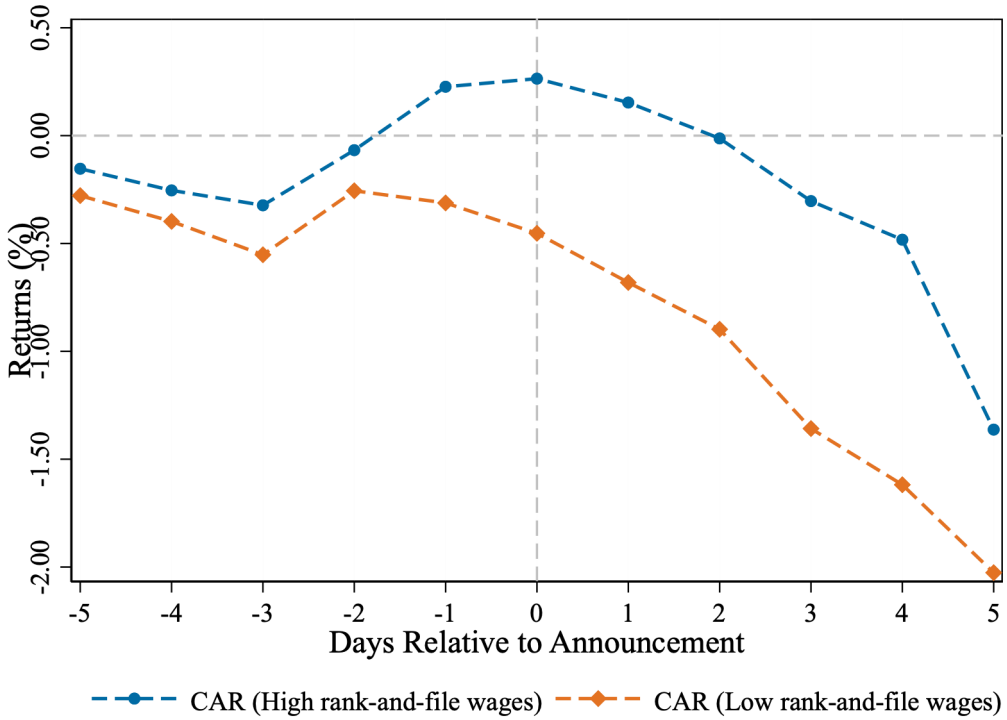


Figure 4 Overall market reaction (high vs low rank-and-file wage firms)

Note: Figure 4 presents the overall market reaction as cumulative abnormal returns around the announcement of China's delayed retirement policy, comparing firms with high versus low rank-and-file wages.

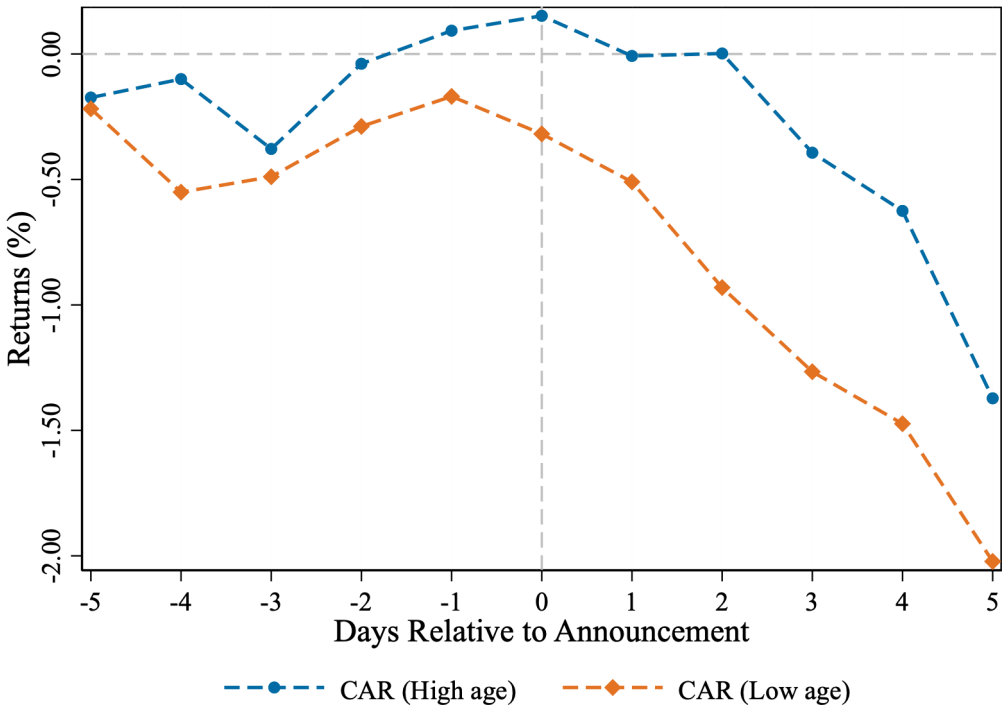


Figure 5 Overall market reaction (high vs low managerial age firms)

Note: Figure 5 presents the overall market reaction as cumulative abnormal returns around the announcement of China's delayed retirement policy, comparing firms with high versus low managerial age.

Tables

Table 1 Selected retirement age reforms across countries

Country	Implementation period	Age change	Pace of increase
United States	Legislated in 1983; phased in by birth cohort	65 to 67	About 2 months per affected birth cohort year
United Kingdom	2010–2028	Women: 60 to 65; then men and women: 65 to 67	Phased increases: women 60 to 65 in 2010–2018; then men and women 65 to 66 in 2018–2020 and 66 to 67 in 2026–2028
Germany	2012–2031	65 to 67	About 1 month initially, then 2 months per cohort year
France	2023 reform; phased in by birth cohort	62 to 64	3 month steps by birth cohort
Italy	2012–2019	Women: 62 to 66 years and 7 months by 2018; then all workers: 66 years and 7 months to 67 in 2019	Women's retirement age was gradually raised from 62 in 2012 to 66 years and 7 months in 2018; the retirement age for all workers then rose from 66 years and 7 months to 67 in 2019.
Netherlands	2013–2024	65 to 67	Phased increases from 65 in 2012 to 66 in 2018, 66 years and 4 months in 2019–2021, and 67 in 2024.
Japan	2006–2013	Mandatory retirement age remains at 60, but employers must secure employment up to 65	The required employable age was raised from 62 in 2006 to 65 in 2013.

Notes: Table 1 summarizes selected retirement age reforms in the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, France, Italy, the Netherlands and Japan. U.S. information is from the Social Security Administration. U.K. information is from the U.K. government and the House of Commons Library. German information is from BMAS and Deutsche Rentenversicherung. French information is from official government sources and SSA International Update. Italian information is from the European Commission country fiche. Dutch information is based on the Algemene Ouderdomswet. Japanese information is from the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare.

Table 2 Summary of studies on the economic consequences of delayed retirement reforms

Author	Country / Reform	Journal	Identification	Summary of Findings
Chino (2025)	Japan; 2012 employment protection reform for older workers	*Journal of Corporate Finance*	Event study + DID	Higher exposure to the reform lowered abnormal returns and Tobin's Q, increased labor costs and wages, and reduced patenting, with stronger effects for financially weaker firms.
Rabaté et al. (2024)	Netherlands; statutory retirement age increases, 2012–2019	*American Economic Journal: Economic Policy*	RD	The reform substantially reduced retirement and increased employment, with sizable substitution toward other social insurance programs.
Hut (2024)	Netherlands; 2005 reform restricting early retirement	*Journal of Human Resources*	RD+ DID	The reform increased the retention of older workers. For each additional retained worker, firms employed about 0.6 fewer younger workers and reduced investment in machines and equipment.
Deshpande et al. (2024)	United States; 1983 reform raising the full retirement age from 65 to 67	*Review of Economics and Statistics*	Cohort analysis + RD	Higher full retirement ages shifted claiming behavior, but retirement remained sticky at age 65, with little effect on labor supply around ages 65–66.
Etgeton et al. (2023)	Germany; 1999 reform raising women's early retirement age from 60 to 63	*Journal of Public Economics*	RD-DD	The reform reduced household saving, especially among married women, consistent with expectations of higher lifetime income from longer employment.
Geyer and Welteke (2021)	Germany; 1999 reform raising women's early retirement age from 60 to 63	*Journal of Human Resources*	RD	The reform increased employment among women aged 60–62, while also raising unemployment and inactivity mainly through passive substitution.
Lindeboom and Montizaan (2020)	Netherlands; 2006 public sector pension reform	*Journal of Public Economics*	RD	The reform delayed expected and actual retirement and increased private saving, although most adjustment occurred through later retirement rather than full savings offset.
Rabaté (2019)	France; 2003 reform raising the mandatory retirement age from 60 to 65	*Journal of Public Economics*	DID+DDD	Mandatory retirement increased labor force exit, especially for high earners and workers with steeper wage profiles, and accounted for part of retirement bunching.
Bertoni et al. (2018)	Italy; 2004 pension reform raising the minimum retirement age	*Journal of Health Economics*	DID	A longer working horizon increased exercise, reduced obesity, and improved self-reported health, with little effect on drinking or diet.
Atalay and Barrett (2015)	Australia; 1993 reform raising women's age pension eligibility age from 60 to 65	*Review of Economics and Statistics*	DID	Higher pension eligibility ages reduced retirement and induced substantial substitution toward disability and other programs.
Staubli and Zweimüller (2013)	Austria; early retirement age reforms, 2000 and 2003	*Journal of Public Economics*	DID	The reform delayed retirement and increased employment, but also raised unemployment through spillovers; disability effects were limited, and net fiscal savings were substantial.
Grip and Montizaan (2012)	Netherlands; 2006 public sector pension reform	*The Economic Journal*	RD	The reform worsened mental health prior to actual retirement, with stronger effects for workers facing larger pension losses.
Behaghel and Blau (2012)	United States; 1983 reform raising the full retirement age from 65 to 66	*American Economic Journal: Economic Policy*	Cohort analysis + DID	The reform shifted the spike in Social Security benefit claiming from age 65 along with the full retirement age, with weaker and less systematic effects on employment exit and self-reported retirement.

Notes: Table 2 summarizes studies on the economic consequences of delayed retirement reforms.

Table 3 Definition of variables

Variable	Definition
Panel A. Variable used in event study	
r_{it}	Daily stock return rate: Measured using the daily stock return rate with cash dividends reinvested.
r_{mt}	Market risk premium factor, measured as the difference between the daily market return, calculated using market capitalization adjusted for float and with cash dividends reinvested, and the daily risk-free rate, derived from the central bank's published benchmark rate for three month time deposits.
SMB_t	Size factor, measured as the difference in returns between a portfolio of small stocks and a portfolio of large stocks. The portfolios are constructed based on the Fama–French 2×3 portfolio sorting methodology. Daily portfolio returns are calculated using market capitalization adjusted for float.
HML_t	Value factor, measured as the difference in returns between a portfolio of stocks with high book-to-market ratios and a portfolio of stocks with low book-to-market ratios. The portfolios are constructed based on the Fama–French 2×3 portfolio sorting methodology. Portfolio returns are calculated using market capitalization adjusted for float.
Panel B. Variable used in regression model	
CAR_i	Cumulative abnormal return around the event date, estimated using the Fama–French three factor model.
$Wage\ Managerial_i$	Average managerial wage, measured as the natural logarithm of total annual compensation paid to directors, supervisors, and senior executives divided by the size of the management team. The size of the management team is calculated as the number of directors, senior executives, and supervisors, excluding independent directors and directors, supervisors, or senior executives who did not receive compensation.
$Wage\ RankFile_i$	Average wage of rank-and-file employees, measured as the natural logarithm of the following ratio: current year employee compensation payable minus previous year employee compensation payable, plus cash paid to and on behalf of employees from the cash flow statement, minus total annual compensation paid to directors, supervisors, and senior executives, divided by the number of nonmanagement employees.
$Age\ Managerial_i$	Average age of the management team, measured as the natural logarithm of its value.
$Firm\ Size_i$	Total assets, measured as the natural logarithm.
$Leverage_i$	Ratio of total liabilities to total assets.
BM_i	Ratio of the book value of equity to the market value of equity.
ROA_i	Ratio of net income to total average assets.
EPS_i	Earnings per share.
$Instown_i$	Percentage of total shares held by institutional investors.
$Growth_i$	Revenue growth rate.
SOE_i	Dummy variable indicating the nature of the firm's ownership, coded as 1 for state-owned enterprises and 0 for others.

Notes: Table 3 presents the notation and definitions of the main variables used in this paper.

Table 4 Descriptive statistics

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
$CAR_i[0,5]$	4,674	-0.017	0.046	-0.151	0.14
$Wage\ Managerial_i$	4,649	13.199	0.562	11.946	14.908
$Wage\ RankFile_i$	4,655	12.053	0.432	11.152	13.239
$Age\ Managerial_i$	4,678	3.911	0.065	3.75	4.056
$Firm\ Size_i$	4,678	22.375	1.269	20.273	26.457
$Leverage_i$	4,678	0.398	0.203	0.049	0.886
BM_i	4,655	0.654	0.247	0.156	1.258
ROA_i	4,678	0.027	0.058	-0.197	0.169
EPS_i	4,678	0.477	0.933	-1.994	4.859
$Growth_i$	4,661	0.216	0.627	-0.662	3.902
$Instown_i$	4,678	0.419	0.249	0.012	0.926
SOE_i	4,678	0.273	0.446	0	1

Notes: Table 4 presents the number of observations, mean, standard deviation, minimum, and maximum of the main variables in our sample. $CAR_i[0,5]$ is estimated using an event study approach, and all other variables are obtained from the CSMAR database.

Table 5 Regression estimates of CARs

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
$Dep.Var$	$CAR_i[0,5]$			
$Wage\ Managerial_i$	-0.00347**			-0.00305**
	(0.001)			(0.001)
$Wage\ RankFile_i$		-0.00336*		-0.00214
		(0.002)		(0.002)
$Age\ Managerial_i$			0.0276***	0.0268**
			(0.010)	(0.010)
$Firm\ Size_i$	-0.00221**	-0.00273***	-0.00365***	-0.00249***
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
$Leverage_i$	0.0102**	0.00959**	0.0106**	0.00948**
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)
BM_i	-0.00529	-0.00550	-0.00417	-0.00572
	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)
ROA_i	-0.0988***	-0.102***	-0.102***	-0.105***
	(0.020)	(0.020)	(0.020)	(0.020)
EPS_i	0.00103	0.000797	0.00113	0.00126
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
$Growth_i$	0.000519	0.000703	0.000667	0.000655
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
$Instown_i$	-0.00171	-0.00189	-0.00248	-0.00174
	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)
SOE_i	0.0110***	0.0121***	0.0112***	0.0109***
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
$Constant$	0.0781***	0.0848***	-0.0441	0.000351
	(0.019)	(0.023)	(0.041)	(0.045)
$Industry\ FE$	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
N	4612	4618	4641	4612
$Adj.R^2$	0.150	0.150	0.148	0.151

Notes: Table 5 reports the OLS estimates from the regression model of Eq. (11). Standard errors clustered at the firm level are reported in parentheses.*p < 0.1, **p < 0.05, ***p < 0.01.

Table 6 Robustness checks: alternative event window

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
$Dep.Var$:	$CAR_i[-1,5]$			
$Wage\ Managerial_i$	-0.00406***			-0.00371**
	(0.001)			(0.002)
$Wage\ RankFile_i$		-0.00326[a]		-0.00179
		(0.002)		(0.002)
$Age\ Managerial_i$			0.0257**	0.0241**
			(0.012)	(0.012)
$Firm\ Size_i$	-0.0000529	-0.000753	-0.00165*	-0.000310
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
$Leverage_i$	0.00879*	0.00840	0.00912*	0.00817
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)
BM_i	-0.00826**	-0.00818**	-0.00660*	-0.00861**
	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)
ROA_i	-0.130***	-0.133***	-0.132***	-0.135***
	(0.021)	(0.021)	(0.021)	(0.021)
EPS_i	0.000417	0.000140	0.000454	0.000624
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
$Growth_i$	0.00173	0.00191	0.00191	0.00185
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
$Instown_i$	-0.00462	-0.00498	-0.00548*	-0.00466
	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)
SOE_i	0.0142***	0.0154***	0.0147***	0.0141***
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
$Constant$	0.0425**	0.0440*	-0.0769*	-0.0286
	(0.021)	(0.026)	(0.045)	(0.050)
$Industry\ FE$	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
N	4612	4618	4641	4612
$Adj.R^2$	0.158	0.157	0.155	0.158

Notes: Table 6 reports regression results using alternative event windows. Standard errors clustered at the firm level are reported in parentheses.*p < 0.1, **p < 0.05, ***p < 0.01, [a]p<0.15.

Table 7 Robustness checks: alternative asset pricing models

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
$Dep.Var{:}CAR_i[0,5]$	CAPM				Fama–French five-factor model			
$Wage\ Managerial_i$	-0.00291**			-0.00250*	-0.00264**			-0.00186
	(0.001)			(0.001)	(0.001)			(0.001)
$Wage\ RankFile_i$		-0.00353*		-0.00241		-0.00448**		-0.00369**
		(0.002)		(0.002)		(0.002)		(0.002)
$Age\ Managerial_i$			0.0510***	0.0510***			0.0198*	0.0194*
			(0.011)	(0.011)			(0.010)	(0.010)
$Firm\ Size_i$	0.0112***	0.0108***	0.00962***	0.0105***	-0.00321***	-0.00340***	-0.00422***	-0.00330***
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
$Leverage_i$	0.00289	0.00202	0.00382	0.00211	0.0135***	0.0121***	0.0143***	0.0121***
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)
BM_i	-0.0144***	-0.0148***	-0.0133***	-0.0147***	0.00103	0.000271	0.00190	0.000182
	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.004)
ROA_i	0.00973	0.00615	0.00214	-0.000706	-0.0383**	-0.0430**	-0.0412**	-0.0453**
	(0.020)	(0.020)	(0.021)	(0.021)	(0.019)	(0.019)	(0.019)	(0.019)
EPS_i	0.00183	0.00165	0.00205	0.00229*	0.00263**	0.00249**	0.00261**	0.00280**
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
$Growth_i$	0.00128	0.00146	0.00143	0.00149	0.000158	0.000369	0.000236	0.000356
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
$Instown_i$	0.00329	0.00329	0.00210	0.00300	0.00310	0.00327	0.00228	0.00331
	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)
SOE_i	0.0188***	0.0198***	0.0187***	0.0184***	0.00611***	0.00716***	0.00641***	0.00641***
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
$Constant$	-0.271***	-0.258***	-0.475***	-0.432***	0.0833***	0.108***	-0.00686	0.0447
	(0.019)	(0.024)	(0.042)	(0.046)	(0.018)	(0.023)	(0.040)	(0.044)
$Industry\ FE$	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
N	4612	4618	4618	4612	4612	4618	4618	4612
$Adj.R^2$	0.299	0.299	0.302	0.303	0.0824	0.0830	0.0824	0.0836

Notes: Table 7 reports regression results using alternative asset pricing models. Standard errors clustered at the firm level are reported in parentheses.*p < 0.1, **p < 0.05, ***p < 0.01.

Table 8 Robustness checks: excluding contemporaneous confounding events

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
$Dep.Var$	$CAR_i[0,5]$			
$Wage\ Managerial_i$	-0.00390**			-0.00379**
	(0.002)			(0.002)
$Wage\ RankFile_i$		-0.00195		-0.000482
		(0.002)		(0.003)
$Age\ Managerial_i$			0.0427***	0.0422***
			(0.014)	(0.014)
$Firm\ Size_i$	-0.00200*	-0.00282**	-0.00371***	-0.00262**
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
$Leverage_i$	0.0144**	0.0142**	0.0152***	0.0144**
	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)
BM_i	-0.00685	-0.00642	-0.00564	-0.00689
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)
ROA_i	-0.102***	-0.103***	-0.108***	-0.108***
	(0.026)	(0.026)	(0.026)	(0.026)
EPS_i	0.00212	0.00181	0.00223	0.00256
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
$Growth_i$	-0.000106	-0.00000718	0.00000852	0.00000599
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
$Instown_i$	-0.00622	-0.00652*	-0.00726*	-0.00663*
	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)
SOE_i	0.00959***	0.0105***	0.00958***	0.00899***
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
$Constant$	0.0816***	0.0719**	-0.0992*	-0.0651
	(0.025)	(0.031)	(0.054)	(0.060)
$Industry\ FE$	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
N	2534	2539	2539	2534
$Adj.R^2$	0.166	0.164	0.167	0.168

Notes: Table 8 reports regression results excluding contemporaneous confounding events. Standard errors clustered at the firm level are reported in parentheses.*p < 0.1, **p < 0.05, ***p < 0.01.

Table 9 Robustness checks: alternative event date

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
$Dep.Var$	$CAR_i[0,5]$			
$Wage\ Managerial_i$	-0.00000190			-0.000656
	(0.001)			(0.001)
$Wage\ RankFile_i$		0.00252		0.00279
		(0.002)		(0.002)
$Age\ Managerial_i$			0.0163	0.0166*
			(0.010)	(0.010)
$Firm\ Size_i$	0.00166*	0.00140*	0.00144*	0.00127
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
$Leverage_i$	0.00674	0.00780*	0.00672	0.00786*
	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)
BM_i	-0.0101***	-0.00930***	-0.0100***	-0.00930***
	(0.003)	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.004)
ROA_i	-0.0521***	-0.0491***	-0.0542***	-0.0517***
	(0.019)	(0.019)	(0.019)	(0.019)
EPS_i	0.00122	0.00117	0.00134	0.00138
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
$Growth_i$	0.00311***	0.00302***	0.00314***	0.00303***
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
$Instown_i$	-0.00595**	-0.00635**	-0.00610**	-0.00648**
	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)
SOE_i	0.0161***	0.0159***	0.0160***	0.0155***
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
$Constant$	-0.0359**	-0.0611***	-0.0945**	-0.118***
	(0.018)	(0.023)	(0.038)	(0.043)
$Industry\ FE$	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
N	4610	4616	4616	4610
$Adj.R^2$	0.138	0.139	0.139	0.139

Notes: Table 9 reports regression results using alternative event date. Standard errors clustered at the firm level are reported in parentheses.*p < 0.1, **p < 0.05, ***p < 0.01.

Table 10 Robustness checks: propensity score matching

	(1)	(2)	(3)
$Dep.Var$		$CAR_i[0,5]$	
$Wage\ Managerial_i$	-0.00272*		
	(0.002)		
$Wage\ RankFile_i$		-0.00459**	
		(0.002)	
$Age\ Managerial_i$			0.0381***
			(0.011)
$Firm\ Size_i$	-0.00134	-0.00230**	-0.00435***
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
$Leverage_i$	0.00893	0.00952	0.0132***
	(0.005)	(0.006)	(0.005)
BM_i	-0.000341	-0.00476	-0.00367
	(0.004)	(0.005)	(0.004)
ROA_i	-0.0563*	-0.108***	-0.101***
	(0.031)	(0.022)	(0.020)
EPS_i	-0.00131	0.00224	0.00186
	(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.001)
$Growth_i$	-0.000826	0.00321*	0.000956
	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.001)
$Instown_i$	-0.00233	-0.00206	-0.00271
	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.003)
SOE_i	0.00741***	0.0120***	0.00889***
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
$Constant$	0.0467**	0.0894***	-0.0704
	(0.021)	(0.027)	(0.043)
$Industry\ FE$	Yes	Yes	Yes
N	4609	4589	4584
$Adj.R^2$	0.163	0.164	0.162

Notes: Table 10 reports regression results using propensity score matching. Standard errors clustered at the firm level are reported in parentheses.*p < 0.1, **p < 0.05, ***p < 0.01.

Table 11 Robustness checks: regressions with city fixed effects

	(1)	(2)
$Dep.Var$	$CAR_i[0,5]$	
$Wage\ Managerial_i$	-0.00697***	-0.00207
	(0.001)	(0.002)
$Wage\ RankFile_i$	-0.00152	-0.00363*
	(0.002)	(0.002)
$Age\ Managerial_i$	0.0240**	0.0244**
	(0.011)	(0.011)
$Firm\ Size_i$		-0.00241**
		(0.001)
$Leverage_i$		0.00851*
		(0.005)
BM_i		-0.00662*
		(0.004)
ROA_i		-0.100***
		(0.021)
EPS_i		0.000980
		(0.001)
$Growth_i$		0.000864
		(0.001)
$Instown_i$		-0.00216
		(0.003)
SOE_i		0.0106***
		(0.002)
$Constant$	-0.000199	0.0139
	(0.047)	(0.049)
$Controls$	No	Yes
$Industry\ FE$	Yes	Yes
$City\ FE$	Yes	Yes
N	4645	4612
$Adj.R^2$	0.136	0.157

Notes: Table 11 reports regression results using city fixed effects. Standard errors clustered at the firm level are reported in parentheses.*p < 0.1, **p < 0.05, ***p < 0.01.

Table 12 Test for investor sentiment channel

	(1)	(2)
$Dep.Var$	$CAR_i[0,5]$	
$High\ volatility$	-0.00154	-0.00176
	(0.002)	(0.002)
$Is\ loss_i$	0.00734***	0.00599**
	(0.002)	(0.003)
$Is\ dividends_i$	-0.0126***	-0.0107***
	(0.002)	(0.002)
$log(Market\ capitalization)$	-0.00276***	0.00165
	(0.001)	(0.002)
$Firm\ age_i$	0.0140***	0.0105***
	(0.002)	(0.002)
$Instown_i$	0.00384	0.000790
	(0.003)	(0.003)
BM_i	-0.0302**	-0.0105
	(0.014)	(0.016)
BM_i^2	0.0188*	0.0135
	(0.010)	(0.010)
$Constant$	0.00147	0.0595***
	(0.015)	(0.023)
$Controls$	No	Yes
$Industry\ FE$	Yes	Yes
N	4651	4638
$Adj.R^2$	0.157	0.162

Notes: Table 12 reports regression results regressing CARs on proxies for sentiment exposure. Standard errors clustered at the firm level are reported in parentheses.*p < 0.1, **p < 0.05, ***p < 0.01.

Table 13 Heterogeneity analysis

	(1)	(2)	(3)
$Dep.Var$		$CAR_i[0,5]$	
$Wage\ Managerial_i \times Family_i$	0.00292		
	(0.003)		
$Wage\ RankFile_i \times Family_i$	0.00785**		
	(0.004)		
$Age\ Managerial_i \times Family_i$	0.0278		
	(0.020)		
$Wage\ Managerial_i \times High_tech_i$		-0.000173	
		(0.003)	
$Wage\ RankFile_i \times High_tech_i$		0.00979**	
		(0.004)	
$Age\ Managerial_i \times High_tech_i$		-0.0414*	
		(0.021)	
$Wage\ Managerial_i \times Firm\ Size_i$			0.00408***
			(0.001)
$Wage\ RankFile_i \times Firm\ Size_i$			-0.00143
			(0.001)
$Age\ Managerial_i \times Firm\ Size_i$			0.0165**
			(0.008)
$Wage\ Managerial_i$	-0.00455***	-0.00309*	-0.0968***
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.019)
$Wage\ RankFile_i$	-0.00503**	-0.00539**	0.0269
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.028)
$Age\ Managerial_i$	0.0148	0.0396***	-0.340*
	(0.014)	(0.013)	(0.181)
$Family_i$	-0.244***		
	(0.089)		
$Firm\ Size_i$	-0.00231**	-0.00248***	-0.105***
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.032)
$Leverage_i$	0.00841*	0.0101**	0.0120***
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.004)
BM_i	-0.00484	-0.00569	-0.000138
	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)
ROA_i	-0.105***	-0.102***	-0.0875***
	(0.020)	(0.020)	(0.021)
EPS_i	0.00141	0.00117	0.000897
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
$Growth_i$	0.000644	0.000508	-0.000353
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
$Instown_i$	-0.00182	-0.00185	0.00193
	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)
SOE_i	0.00975***	0.0111***	0.0109***
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
$Constant$	0.0993*	0.00284	2.337***
	(0.059)	(0.045)	(0.712)
$Industry\ FE$	Yes	Yes	Yes
N	4612	4612	4612
$Adj.R^2$	0.153	0.153	0.100

Notes: Table 13 reports results from heterogeneity analyses. Standard errors clustered at the firm level are reported in parentheses.*p < 0.1, **p < 0.05, ***p < 0.01.

Appendix

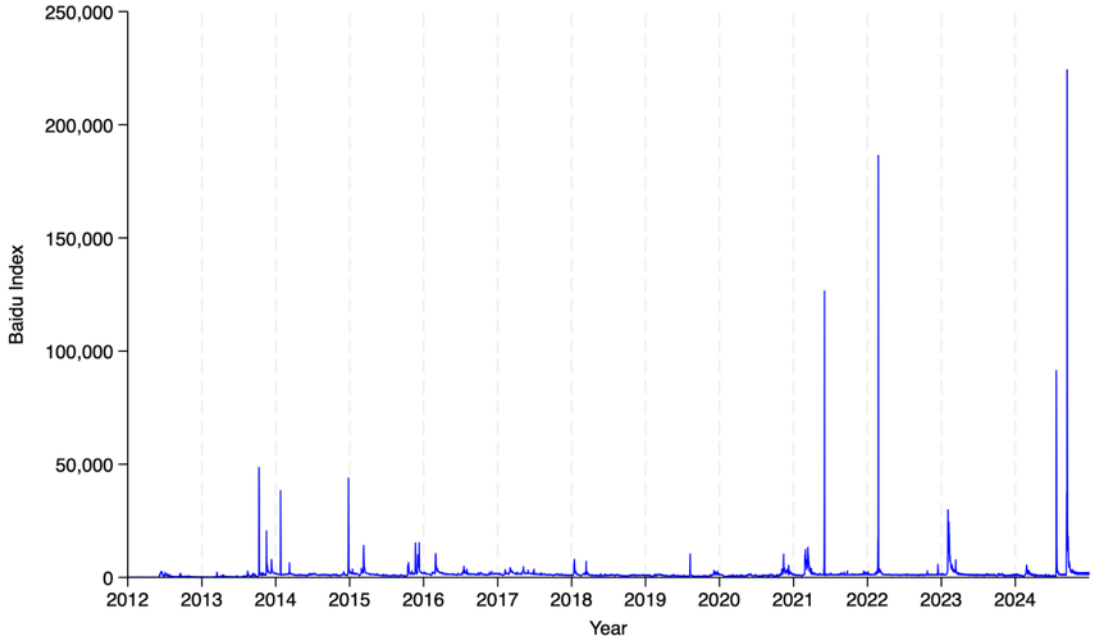


Figure A1 2012–2024 Baidu Search Index for delayed retirement

Note: Figure A1 presents the 2012–2024 Baidu Search Index (analogous to Google Trends) for the keyword “延迟退休” (delayed retirement).

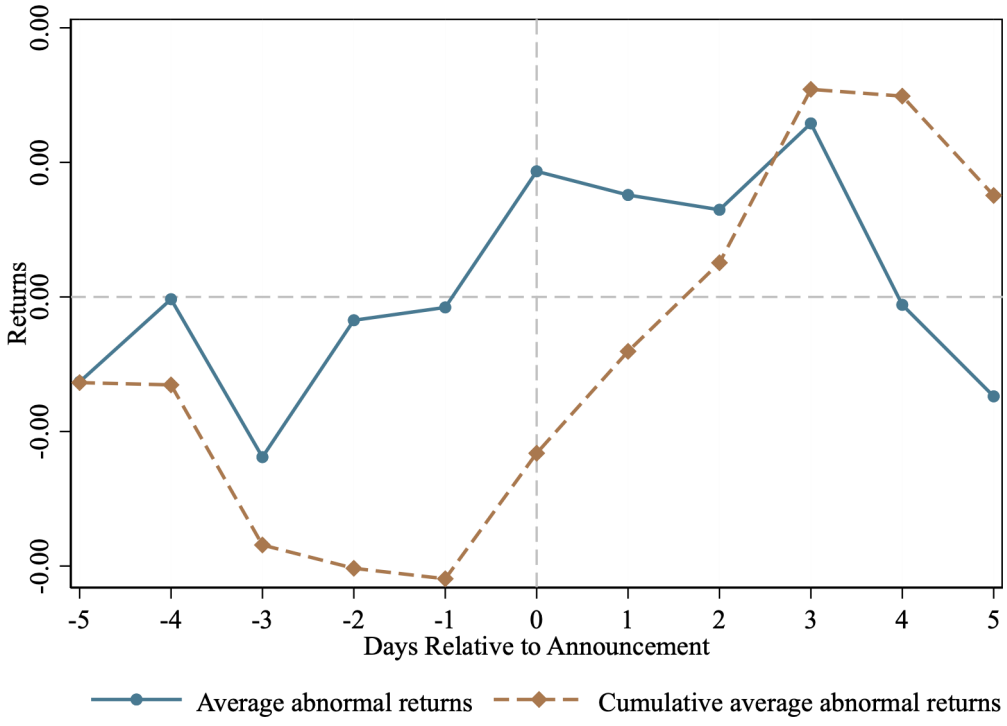


Figure A2 Overall market reaction with July 21 as the event date

Note: Figure A2 presents the overall market reaction, measured by average abnormal returns and cumulative average abnormal returns, using July 21 as the event date.

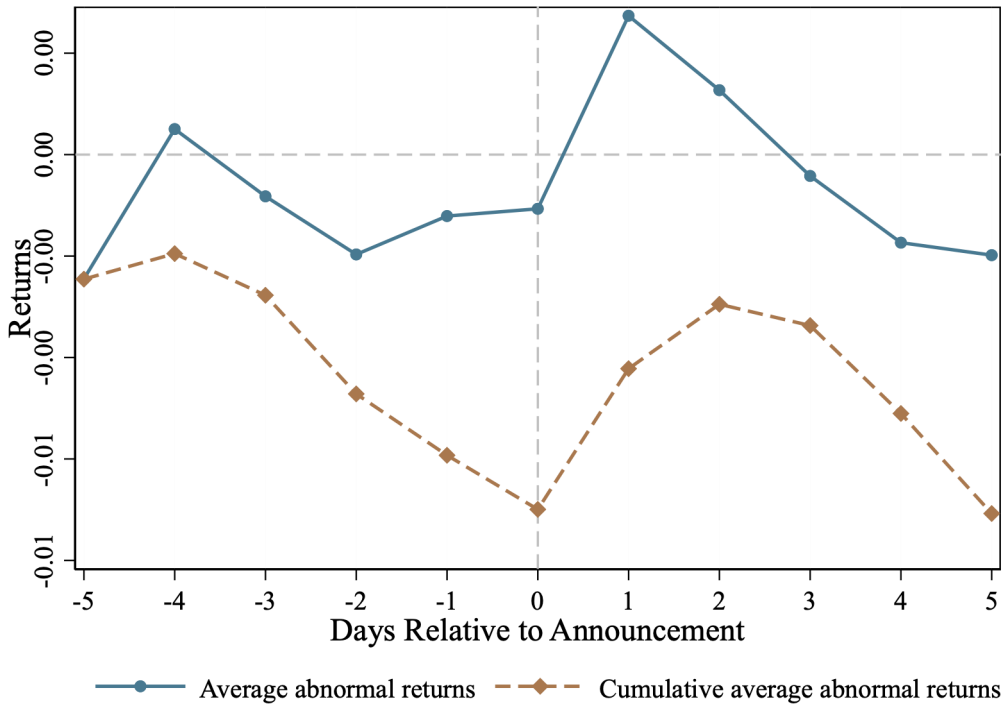


Figure A3 Overall market reaction with September 10 as the event date

Note: Figure A3 presents the overall market reaction, measured by average abnormal returns and cumulative average abnormal returns, using September 10 as the event date.

Table A1 Robustness checks: alternative event windows

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
$Dep.Var$:	$CAR_i[0,1]$	$CAR_i[0,2]$	$CAR_i[0,3]$	$CAR_i[0,4]$
$Wage\ Managerial_i$	-0.000952	-0.000695	-0.000861	-0.00171
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
$Wage\ RankFile_i$	0.00203*	0.000645	-0.000960	-0.00193
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.002)
$Age\ Managerial_i$	0.0258***	0.0273***	0.0355***	0.0431***
	(0.006)	(0.007)	(0.009)	(0.010)
$Firm\ Size_i$	-0.00312***	0.000647	0.0000771	-0.000667
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
$Leverage_i$	0.00554**	0.00560*	0.0101***	0.0115***
	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.004)	(0.004)
BM_i	-0.00471**	-0.00960***	-0.00848***	-0.00746**
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.003)
ROA_i	-0.0221*	-0.00451	-0.0183	-0.0449**
	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.015)	(0.019)
EPS_i	-0.0000961	-0.00104	-0.000665	-0.00147
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
$Growth_i$	0.00167**	0.00121	0.00189**	0.00164
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
$Instown_i$	-0.000138	-0.000684	-0.00681***	-0.0106***
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.003)
SOE_i	0.00993***	0.0125***	0.0161***	0.0184***
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.002)
$Constant$	-0.0464*	-0.123***	-0.125***	-0.117***
	(0.027)	(0.028)	(0.037)	(0.042)
$Industry\ FE$	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
N	4611	4611	4610	4611
$Adj.R^2$	0.112	0.153	0.182	0.184

Notes: Table A1 reports regression results using alternative event windows. Standard errors clustered at the firm level are reported in parentheses.*p < 0.1, **p < 0.05, ***p < 0.01.