

# 음악이 아동 발달에 미치는 영향에 대한 홍콩 부모들의 신념\*

## Hong Kong Parents' Beliefs about the Impact of Music on Children's Development

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**Abstract** The present study investigates Hong Kong parents' beliefs about the impact of music on children's development and the factors that influence parental beliefs. Participants were 197 parents of K2 children from 12 local kindergartens. Parents were surveyed about their personal and family background, their beliefs about the importance of children's education, and children's participation in music-related activities. Data were analyzed using descriptive and correlation analyses with SPSS Statistics 27. A positive correlation was found between parents' and children's preference for music. Moreover, we found that parents' attitudes toward the importance of music varied depending on their level of education and personal experience. Finally, a conflict was revealed between parents' beliefs about the importance of music education and their children's enrollment in music-related activities. These findings highlight the crucial role of parental beliefs in children's musical development and demonstrate that various factors, particularly education level and personal preferences, influence such beliefs in diverse ways.

**Key words:** music education, parental beliefs, childhood development, Hong Kong

**초록** 본 연구는 음악이 자녀의 발달에 미치는 영향에 대한 홍콩 부모들의 신념을 조사하는 것을 목적으로 한다. 연구참여자는 홍콩 12개 지역의 유치원 2학년애 재학중인 자녀를 둔 부모 197명이며, 이들은 개인 및 가족 배경, 자녀 교육의 중요성에 대한 신념, 그리고 음악 활동에 대한 자녀의 참여도에 대해 설문응답 하였다. 수집된 자료는 SPSS 27에 의해 분석되었으며 부모와 자녀의 음악 선호도 사이에는 긍정적인 상관관계가 발견되었다. 음악의 중요성에 대한 부모의 태도는 교육 수준과 개인적 경험에 따라 다르며 음악 교육의 중요성에 대한 부모의 신념과 자녀의 음악 관련 활동 참여 사이에 갈등이 있는 것으로 나타났다. 본 연구결과는 자녀의 음악적 발달에 부모의 신념이 얼마나 중요한 역할을 하는지, 그리고 아동 음악교육에 대한 부모의 참여를 강화하는 것이 바람직함을 보여준다.

**주제어:** 음악 교육, 부모의 신념, 어린 시절 발달, 홍콩

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## I . Literature Review

There is compelling evidence that music education offers a range of benefits for children's development and learning, including improvement in cognitive development (Forgeard et al., 2008), motor skills (Habibi et al., 2014), social skills (Cabedo-Mas et al., 2023) and emotional regulation (Schellenberg & Mankarious, 2012), among other areas. Specifically, music education programs that adopt a holistic and child-centered approach, emphasizing creativity, emotional expression, and social interaction, have been shown to be particularly effective in promoting positive outcomes for children's musical and overall development and learning (Rickard et al., 2012). Children who are exposed to music at a young age are more likely to develop a lifelong love of music and reap the benefits of music education (Ho & Bautista, 2022; Kraus et al., 2012).

Parents play a significant role in promoting their children's lifelong musical development and positive attitudes toward music. Studies conducted in Western countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom have shown that parents who value music education and its importance for children's holistic development are more likely to provide their children with opportunities to participate in music-related activities and support their musical development (Creech et al., 2013; Ilari et al., 2022). Another study conducted in Korea indicated that mothers enrolled their children mainly because they believed that music had positive benefits, even without knowing much about the content of the music program itself (Youn, 2013).

Parental musical experiences and preferences can also positively influence their children's musical development. For example, parents who have musical backgrounds are more likely to expose their children to music and encourage their musical development (Hallam et al., 2022). Additionally, parents' educational background has been shown to constitute a significant predictor of their engagement with children's music education and their beliefs about the benefits of music (Hallam, 2010). However, a lack of time, resources, and knowledge about music education can hinder parents' abilities to support their children's musical development (Mullensiefen et al., 2014).

Understanding the factors that influence parental decisions to enroll their children in music-related activities is critical for promoting greater participation in music education initiatives and reaping the benefits of music for children's overall development. In Hong Kong, parents' beliefs about music education appear to be diverse, ranging from enhancing their children's intellectual and athletic development to supplementing applications to prestigious schools (Choi et al., 2005; Ilari et al., 2022). In a study conducted with 171 low-income Hong Kong parents, Ho et al. (2020) investigated parents' perception of the importance of music training for their children

and found that parents held different views on the value of music and limited their children's music participation due to financial constraints. Despite these existing studies, it is unclear the extent to which parental perceptions of the value of music in children's development and learning are associated with the actual enrollment rate in music-related activities (e.g., courses, programs). Since no research has compared Hong Kong parental beliefs with enrollment rates in music-related activities or identified factors influencing Hong Kong parents' beliefs on music education, our study is highly significant to the literature.

This study aims to investigate Hong Kong parents' beliefs about the impact of music on children's development and the various factors that influence these beliefs. More specifically, we explore the relationship between parental beliefs about music education and their children's participation in music-related activities. Understanding the factors that influence parental decisions regarding enrollment in music-related activities will allow the future development of effective strategies and interventions to promote parental involvement and increase support from social resources.

## II. Method

### 1. Participants

This study was conducted under the scope of a larger research project, which involved 286 children from 15 local kindergartens spread across different districts in Hong Kong (Bautista et al., in press). These parents had children aged between four and five years, at the K2 level. The objective of this larger project was to enhance children's self-regulation skills through the implementation of a classroom musical intervention.

At the beginning of the project, we surveyed all parents on the participating children to gauge their willingness to complete the survey used in the present study. There were 197 parents from 12 kindergartens who showed keen interest and gave their consent to participate. <Table 1> below shows a detailed overview of the background variables of these participants.

<Table 1> Descriptive statistics (frequency and percentage) of participants' background ( $N=197$ )

Background variables	Frequency	Percentage
Age of the mother		
18-24	2	1.0
25-34	80	40.6
34-44	109	55.3
45-54	6	3.0
>55	0	0
The educational background of the mother		
Primary or below	5	2.5
Secondary	117	59.4
Post-secondary	43	21.8
University (Bachelor or higher)	32	16.2
The employment status of the mother		
Employed	92	46.7
Unemployed	101	51.3
Not sure	4	2.0
Age of the father		
18-24	2	1.0
25-34	54	27.4
34-44	104	52.8
45-54	31	15.7
>55	6	3.0
The educational background of the father		
Primary or below	3	1.5
Secondary	120	60.9
Post-secondary	37	18.8
University (Bachelor or higher)	37	18.8
The employment status of the father		
Employed	180	91.4
Unemployed	12	6.1
Not sure	5	2.5
Family financial background		
Severe financial difficulty	7	3.6
Considerable financial difficulty	54	27.4
Minimal financial difficulty	82	41.6
No financial difficulty	54	27.4

## 2. Data collection instrument

A questionnaire survey was utilized to gather information and perspectives from the participants. It consisted of four sections:

- (1) *Parents' personal background.* We used a single-choice question format, where participants were asked to provide information on both parents' (mother and father) ages, education levels, and employment status.
- (2) *Family's financial condition.* By using a Likert scale (1 = *severe difficulty* to 4 = *no financial difficulty*), participants were instructed to select the option that best described their family's housing situation, as well as the option that best matched their family's economic situation from four levels of economic hardship.
- (3) *Children's participation in music-related activities.* This section investigated the specific details of their children's involvement in music-related activities, including the course type, the time occupied, and the duration of participation.
- (4) *Beliefs about the importance of music in children's education.* In the last section, we asked the questions "Does the mother/father like music?", "Do you think your child likes music currently?", "How important do you think music is for the education of your child?", and "In your opinion, what are the areas that can be positively benefited through music?" Participants were instructed to select all options that could possibly benefit their children through music, including *creativity, self-expression and communication, emotional development, language skills, numeracy skills, motor development*, and so on, with an additional *others* option.

### 3. Procedure

To ensure the questionnaire was easy to complete for all participants, we distributed it using paper-and-pencil forms. The research team delivered the questionnaires to the 12 kindergartens, while the principals and teachers would facilitate the distribution of the questionnaires to parents. The completed forms were collected within a two-week period, as planned.

Based on ethical considerations, a consent form was sent to each participant and their signature was obtained prior to the start of the study. Participants were provided with information about the study's purpose, procedures, potential risks, and benefits before providing their consent to participate. To protect participants' privacy, strict confidentiality measures were implemented throughout the study to ensure that their personal information remained secure.

### 4. Research design and data analyses

This study used a descriptive and correlational research design. The variables under investigation

included parents' educational background, parents' beliefs about their children's preference for music, parents' preference for music, perceived importance of music in children's education, and perceived benefits of music on children's developmental areas. The variables were measured using nominal scales, where parents could agree or disagree with the statements presented.

The data was analyzed using descriptive and correlation analyses, utilizing the software tool SPSS Statistics 27. Descriptive statistics were employed to provide a summary of the central tendency, which involves measures such as the mean, median, and mode to identify the center of the data distribution. Correlation analysis was used to examine the relationship between pairs of variables. This involved the calculation of Kendall's tau-b correlation coefficient, a non-parametric measure of association between two ranked variables. This coefficient was employed to ascertain both the strength and direction of the association between ordinal variables. This combination of descriptive and correlational analyses allowed a comprehensive exploration of the data, providing insights into both the individual characteristics of variables and their interrelationships.

### III. Findings

A high percentage of parents (75.6%) believed that their children liked music. Mothers expressed a preference for music at 49.2%, while fathers reported a preference for music at 42.1%. More than 50% of parents believed music was very or fairly important for their children's education. Most parents (74.6%) believed that music had positive benefits on children's development in three or more areas, with most selected in the areas of emotional development (70.6%), language skills (61.4%), and self-expression and communication (57.4%). Very few parents mentioned the area of numeracy skills (12.2%). These results indicated that most parents in this study acknowledged the significant role of music in various areas of their children's development. However, only a small percentage of parents (13.7%) had enrolled their children in music-related activities, and most parents (86.3%) were not participating in any music-related activities at the time of the survey. Please refer to Table 2 for more detailed information.

&lt;Table 2&gt; Descriptive statistics (frequency and percentage) of parents' belief (N=197)

	Frequency	Percentage
Do you think your child likes music currently?		
Yes	149	75.6
Neutral	40	20.3
No	3	1.5
Not sure	5	2.5
Does the mother like music?		
Yes	97	49.2
Neutral	92	46.7
No	5	2.5
Not sure	3	1.5
Does the father like music?		
Yes	83	42.1
Neutral	104	52.8
No	8	4.1
Not sure	2	1.0
Does your child participate in music-related classes?		
Yes	27	13.7
No	170	86.3
How important do you think music is for the education of your child?		
Very important	44	22.3
Fairly important	72	36.5
Medium important	67	34.0
Fairly important	13	6.6
Not at all important	1	0.5
What would you expect your child to improve/ gain from a music program?		
Emotional development		
Yes	139	70.6
No	58	29.4
Language skills		
Yes	121	61.4
No	76	38.6
Self-expression and communication		
Yes	114	57.9
No	83	42.1

<Table 2> Continued

	Frequency	Percentage
Creativity		
Yes	111	56.3
No	86	43.7
Cognitive development (e.g., self-regulation, working memory, problem-solving abilities)		
Yes	81	41.1
No	116	58.9
Motor development		
Yes	82	41.6
No	115	58.4
Character development (e.g., persistence, responsibility, patience)		
Yes	79	40.1
No	118	59.9
Numeracy skills		
Yes	24	12.2
No	173	87.8

Correlations were found between parents' educational background and their beliefs about the importance of music. A significant positive correlation ( $r = .153, p < .05$ ) was found between parents' education level and beliefs about the importance of music. This indicated that parents with higher levels of education placed greater value on music than those parents with lower educational attainment. Specifically, the finding revealed significant correlations between the parents' education level and the perceived benefits of music on three developmental areas in children: emotional development ( $r = .196, p < .01$ ), creativity ( $r = .176, p < .01$ ), and motor development ( $r = .170, p < .05$ ). This result suggested that parent's educational background played a significant role in shaping their perspectives on the value of music. More specifically, higher-educated parents tended to hold a stronger belief than lower-educated parents regarding the positive impact of music on children's development.

The results also revealed a significant positive correlation between the parents' and children's preferences for music. The correlation coefficient value between mothers' and children's preference for music was 0.295 ( $p < .01$ ), while the correlation between fathers' and children's preferences for music was 0.248 ( $p < .01$ ). This means that when parents have a strong preference for music, children are also likely to share those preferences. Parents are therefore playing an influential



role in shaping their children's musical tastes and preferences. Otherwise, no correlation was found between any items of parents' personal background, parents' belief of music's importance, family's economic condition, and their child's participation in music-related activities.

<Table 3> Associations between any two items regarding parents and their children

Item 1	Item 2	Correlation coefficient	P-value
Parents' educational background	Parents' beliefs	0.153	.011*
Parents' educational background	Children's emotional development	0.196	.003*
	Children's creativity	0.176	.007*
	Children's motor development	0.170	.009*
Mothers' preferences for music	Children's preferences for music	0.295	.000**
Fathers' preferences for music	Children's preferences for music	0.248	.000**

Note. \*Correlation significant at  $p < .05$  level (2-tailed). \*\*Correlation significant at  $p < .01$  level (2-tailed).

## IV. Discussion

In this study, we aimed to obtain a better understanding of Hong Kong parents' beliefs about the impact of music on children's development. Three main findings emerged from this study.

### 1. Parents' background and beliefs

Parents' attitudes toward the importance of music were found to vary depending on their educational level and personal experience. We found that parents with higher levels of education placed greater value on the importance of music for early childhood development and held more comprehensive beliefs about the benefits of music. These findings suggest that it is essential for educators and policymakers to prioritize the consideration of parents' education levels and beliefs when designing music education programs for children.

In addition to parents' education level, we found that parents' musical background and experiences were positively associated with their beliefs about the benefits of music for children, which highlights the importance of promoting music education not only for children but also for parents and caregivers (Bautista & Ho, 2022). Previous studies have shown that parents are more likely to support children's music engagement if they have happy memories with music

(Custodero, 2006; Savage, 2015). Therefore, it is important to guide parents and caregivers to develop a deeper understanding and appreciation of music, which can lead them to incorporate music into their daily routines and their interactions with children. By understanding the links between parents' education level, beliefs, and children's musical development, we can develop more effective strategies for promoting children's engagement with music and maximizing the potential benefits of music for their overall development (Cui, 2022).

## 2. Parents' and children's preferences for music

The finding that parental musical preference is positively associated with their children's preferences is consistent with prior research that has established a link between parental musical preferences and their children's preferences (Serbun & Debono, 2010), thereby providing further evidence in support of the important role of parental influences in shaping children's musical preferences. Previous studies have shown that parents' involvement and support in music can enhance children's interest in music and lead children to feel more comfortable in music participation (Sichivitsa, 2007). This shows some practical implications for music educators and professionals that music programs incorporating parental involvement and engagement can promote children's musical development more effectively. For example, parent-child music classes have been shown to promote positive outcomes for children's musical and social development (Kirschner & Tomasello, 2010). Additionally, participating in programs such as story time at local libraries can provide opportunities for parents and caregivers to learn songs, as well as ways to play musically with children if music is included in the program (de Vries, 2015).

However, except for parental influence, children's musical preferences are also shaped by their own experiences and exposure to different types of music. Learning is a complex web in which the different, varied musical styles and genres that children consume gradually shape a broader vision of the musical world around them (Arriaga-Sanz et al., 2017). Therefore, music programs that provide children with diverse musical experiences and opportunities can help broaden their musical horizons and foster a lifelong interest in music.

## 3. Conflict between parents' beliefs and action

While most parents in this study acknowledged the importance of music in childhood development, their beliefs were not reflected in the enrollment rates of music-related activities

since only a few parents had enrolled their children in music-related activities. This conflict might be due to various reasons, including financial constraints, geographical limitations, and transportation issues (Kratus, 2007). Lareau and Davies (2005) stated that urban middle-class parents were more likely to display parenting practices such as actively offering highly organized enrichment activities to support children's skills, interests, and talents, while parenting of working-class and poor families tended to focus more on the accomplishment of growing up naturally. Similarly, Ho et al. (2020) discovered that although low-income parents see the importance of music but believe that it is not a necessity. However, they started to change their perceptions of music training once they perceived positive changes in their children. This might be one of the reasons for our findings, as parents might prioritize other activities over music education since they see music as a supplementary option (Hallam, 2010), or secondary learning area (Ilari et al., 2022), and might focus more on the achievement of natural growth due to financial reasons (Lareau & Davies, 2005).

To address these challenges, teachers and kindergartens can work together with music professionals to develop innovative and engaging music activities that cater to the diverse needs and interests of children at school (Arriaga-Sanz et al., 2017). Furthermore, policymakers and community leaders can collaborate by offering free or low-cost music programs in community centers, providing transportation or logistical support for families who face barriers to participation, and providing hands-on experience and potential information for parents seeking information on music parenting (Teggelove et al., 2019).

## V. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study has shed light on the relationship between parental beliefs about music and their children's participation in music-related activities. The findings suggested that parents with higher levels of education background place greater value on the importance of music for children's development, and hold more comprehensive beliefs about its potential benefits. The significant positive correlation between the parent's and children's preference for music highlights the potential influence of parental music preferences on their children's preferences. However, despite recognizing the positive benefits of music, only a small proportion of parents had enrolled their children in music-related activities.

While most of the studies about parents' beliefs have been conducted in other countries (e.g., Korea, the United Kingdom, and the United States), our study has provided a comprehensive

understanding of Hong Kong parents' beliefs about music and their associated factors. Similar to previous studies, our findings provided further evidence about the importance of parental role in children's music engagement, demonstrating that parents' passion and interest in music have a strong influence on children (Mcpherson, 2009). Despite the competitive school system in Hong Kong (Ilari et al., 2022), our findings were similar to prior studies where parents emphasized the benefits of music in areas related to affective development more than academic development (e.g., Choi et al., 2005). However, music might not be a priority for those who have a financial burden or low education level, which might explain the low enrollment rate in our study.

To address the challenges of parental decisions regarding enrollment in music-related activities, it is important to consider developing innovative and accessible music programs that cater to the diverse needs and interests of children and families. Educators, policymakers, and community leaders can work together to promote positive outcomes for children's overall development by understanding the links between parental beliefs, engagement in music-related activities, and children's musical development (Bautista et al., 2022).

At the social level, there is a need to implement societal awareness campaigns that highlight the significance of music in children's overall development (Brown et al., 2010). By emphasizing the cognitive, emotional, and social benefits of music, these campaigns can help to create a more music-friendly culture that not only appreciates music but also recognizes its instrumental role in child development (Hallam, 2010). Furthermore, it is recommended for community centers to organize more music-based activities for children. These activities should be accessible, engaging, and enjoyable, which can serve as platforms for children to experience music in a communal setting (Custodero, 2005).

At the educational level, the findings illustrate the importance of integrating music into the preschool curriculum (Bautista et al., 2023; Hallam, 2010). Schools are encouraged to organize regular music classes or activities to ensure that all children can benefit from music (Rickard, 2013). To ensure the efficacy of classroom musical activities, it is vital to provide teachers with training emphasizing music's value in children's development. Additionally, teachers should be equipped with practical and effective strategies that enable them to integrate music into their educational activities (Wong et al., 2023). Moreover, schools should encourage collaboration between teachers and parents to promote music education (Baker, 2012). This could include workshops and informational talks where teachers and parents can communicate directly, learn about the benefits of music-related activities, and discuss strategies to support children's musical development at home.

## VI. Limitations

The main limitation of the study is the exclusive use of surveys. While the survey is useful for gathering large amounts of data, it may not capture the depth and complexities that other methodologies can provide. Therefore, the multi-dimensional nature that influences parental decision-making might not have been fully explored. To address this limitation, two suggestions of methodological enhancements are proposed for future research within this field. Firstly, future studies could incorporate qualitative methods, such as in-depth interviews or focus groups, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors that influence parental attitudes, beliefs, and decision-making processes. Secondly, the adoption of a longitudinal design could provide valuable insights to examine changes in parents' attitudes and decisions regarding music-related activities enrollment over time.

In terms of directions for future research, one promising direction would be conducting in-depth investigations into specific factors that influence parents' decisions to enroll their children in music activities. Several variables that could be considered are socio-economic status, cultural beliefs, and access to resources. This would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities associated with promoting music education for all children (Hallam et al., 2022). Additionally, future research could delve deeper into music education and its role in child development, providing parents, educators, and policymakers with strategic recommendations for promoting the holistic development of young children.

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