education sciences

MDPI

Article

Importance Attributed to Music Education by Hong Kong Parents and Prediction of Children's Music Participation

Yingying Pan *, Alfredo Bautista and Siu-hang Kong

Department of Early Childhood Education, Faculty of Education and Human Development, The Education University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong SAR, China; abautista@eduhk.hk (A.B.); shkong@eduhk.hk (S.-h.K.)
* Correspondence: yyingpan@s.eduhk.hk

Abstract: Parents play a crucial role in facilitating their children's participation in extracurricular music activities. Guided by the framework of concerted cultivation, this survey study conducted with Hong Kong parents investigates (1) the types of extracurricular music activities in which their three- to eight-year-old children participate, (2) the importance parents attribute to music education and its correlation with key demographic factors, and (3) the predictive relationship between the importance parents attribute to music education and their children's music participation. A self-designed survey was completed by 430 parents. Descriptive statistics, correlation, and binary logistic regression were conducted. Children's participation rate in extracurricular music activities was found to be low. While younger children tended to engage in collaborative and unstructured activities, older children participated more in individual and guided activities. The importance attributed by parents to music education was relatively high and correlated with their background and family demographics. The higher the parents rated the importance of music education, the more likely they were to have signed up or intended to sign up their children for music activities. This study offers insights into children's extracurricular music participation, highlights parental roles in children's music education, and underscores the necessity of educating parents about the importance of music education.

Keywords: early childhood; concerted cultivation; importance of music; parental views; extracurricular music activities; music participation; prediction; kindergarten children; Hong Kong

check for updates

Academic Editor: Daniel Muijs

Received: 31 December 2024
Revised: 12 February 2025
Accepted: 13 February 2025
Published: 17 February 2025

Citation: Pan, Y., Bautista, A., & Kong, S.-h. (2025). Importance Attributed to Music Education by Hong Kong Parents and Prediction of Children's Music Participation. *Education Sciences*, *15*(2), 250. https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci15020250

Copyright: © 2025 by the authors. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

1. Introduction

The importance of music education is being increasingly recognized by researchers, educators, and policymakers, not only for the joy and happiness music brings to people but also for its positive effects on various developmental domains (Dumont et al., 2017; Ilari, 2020; Rodriguez-Gomez & Talero-Gutiérrez, 2022). Compelling research studies have demonstrated the impact of music on multiple aspects of child development, including cognitive, physical, and socio-emotional development (e.g., Benz et al., 2016; Cabedo-Mas et al., 2023; Hallam, 2010). For these and other reasons, official curriculum frameworks and educational policies—such as the National Association for Music Education (NAfME, 2015) and the Hong Kong Kindergarten Curriculum Guide (CDC, 2017)—have acknowledged the importance of providing young children with high-quality music education opportunities.

This study aimed to investigate the importance parents attribute to music education and its predictive relationship with their children's music participation. This study focused on extracurricular music activities—that is, those that are offered beyond formal education

programs. Parents play a crucial role in supporting their children's participation in such activities (McPherson, 2009). Since young children often participate in extracurricular activities before they attain a sense of personal choice, the decision to participate in music activities is primarily made by parents in most cases (Cho, 2015). Moreover, families from various socioeconomic backgrounds may hold differing decisions in signing up their children to music activities (Albert, 2006; Kong, 2023). Guided by the framework of concerted cultivation (Lareau, 2011), this study fills the existing research gaps concerning (1) young children's participation in extracurricular music activities, (2) the importance parents attribute to music education and how it is linked to key demographic factors, and (3) the extent to which this importance predicts children's music participation, specifically in the context of Hong Kong, China. In the following section, we review the literature related to these three research gaps, which mirror the research goals of this study, with a particular emphasis on Chinese societies.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Children's Participation in Extracurricular Music Activities: Lareau's Framework of Concerted Cultivation

Children may participate in multiple types of extracurricular music activities or programs, which, for example, may involve music appreciation, expressive movement or dancing, playing musical instruments individually or in an ensemble, singing in a choir, or music-making workshops (Vidulin, 2016). However, few studies have investigated the types of extracurricular music activities in which young children (specifically between three and eight years of age) participate. In Western contexts, prior studies have shown that older children often participate in instrumental lessons (Creech, 2010; McPherson, 2009) and singing activities (Barrett & Zhukov, 2023). Likewise, in Hong Kong, instrumental learning in the form of extracurricular music activities has spread among primary and secondary school students over the last few decades (Ho, 2011). Besides instrumental music, older children participate in singing and basic music theory, as Hong Kong parents desire them to attend public music examinations such as those offered by the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM) (Cheung, 2004), which might benefit their further academic achievement and career pathway. In Singapore, the Ministry of Education (MOE, 2022) has recommended various types of extracurricular activities for primary-school-aged children, with performing arts being one of them. These studies focused on certain kinds of extracurricular music activities that older-aged children took part in. In contrast, the present study focuses on younger children, thereby filling an important research gap. Thus, our Goal 1 was to investigate the various types of extracurricular music activities in which three- to eight-year-old children participate in the Hong Kong context.

Children's participation in extracurricular music activities is frequently perceived as a practice primarily associated with middle-class families (Vincent & Ball, 2007). Lareau's (2011) concept of concerted cultivation suggests that urban middle-class parents with higher levels of education and income are more inclined to support their children's music learning than working-class and lower-income parents who typically prioritize "the accomplishment of natural growth (Lareau, 2011, p. 66)"—that is, providing basic needs to their children and allowing them to learn and grow through the experiences in their living environment. One of the key features of concerted cultivation is that middle-class parents tend to actively enroll their children in numerous extracurricular activities (e.g., mathematics, sports, arts, music) to develop their children's skills, social networks, and sense of entitlement (Lareau, 2011). While developed in the United States, the framework of concerted cultivation was well supported by the comparative study conducted by Ilari (2013), who investigated middle-class parental beliefs regarding music education for children and the home musical

experiences in nine countries: Greece, the Netherlands, Denmark, England, Spain, Kenya, China (Taiwan), Israel, and the United States. All the parents in this study demonstrated a high level of interest in supporting their children to engage in music activities and valued the importance of music education for their children's education and development (Ilari, 2013). Kong (2023) found that parents with higher levels of educational attainment and music background in both Beijing and Hong Kong were more likely to facilitate their children's music learning. While Hong Kong has a diverse population that encompasses families from multiple educational and socioeconomic backgrounds (Lau & Rao, 2018), Lareau's (2011) concept of concerted cultivation offers an appropriate framework for understanding the parenting trends that have been identified in prior studies in the Chinese context (Kong, 2023; Lau & Rao, 2018; Tam & Chan, 2009). We thus adopted Lareau's (2011) framework to guide our study.

2.2. Importance Attributed by Parents to Music Education

Parents play an essential role in their children's participation in extracurricular music activities, as parental involvement includes financial support and time commitment (Cho, 2015). Moreover, parental views and attitudes regarding extracurricular music activities significantly impact their music parenting decisions (Koops, 2020), which, in turn, affect their children's music participation. Research suggests that whether children continue with music lessons or practice is largely influenced by their parents' involvement and level of interest in music (Creech & Hallam, 2003; Davidson & Borthwick, 2002). Cho (2015) interviewed 14 middle-class Korean mothers who perceived that attending extracurricular music activities would be valuable for their children. More precisely, they believed that such experiences would promote their children's emotional development, develop their musicianship, and facilitate better academic performances (Cho, 2015). The studies cited above primarily employed qualitative methods. However, limited research has quantified parents' ratings of the importance attributed to music education. The present study addresses this research gap.

Furthermore, little is known about the relationship between the importance Hong Kong parents attribute to music education and the key demographic factors. Based on Lareau's (2011) concerted cultivation theory, it is quite possible that the importance Hong Kong parents attribute to music education might be influenced by different factors, such as their educational background, music background, family income, and culture. Scholars have investigated the relationship between musical parenting behaviors and demographic factors and family characteristics. For example, Hartas (2011) suggested that gender, parental education, family income, and socioeconomic status may be crucial mediating variables for familial activities, particularly in music and literacy learning. Similarly, Custodero et al. (2003) discovered that children's age and birth order, parents' sex, education level, employment status, race/ethnicity, and income are related to how frequently parents sing and play music to their children. According to our framework, these factors may differ in families from various socioeconomic backgrounds, which might influence not only parental behaviors but also parental views on music's importance. Our study fills this literature gap by linking these demographic factors with parental views. Goal 2 of the present study was to investigate Hong Kong parents' ratings of the importance attributed to music education and the correlation with the following demographic factors: parents' characteristics (i.e., relationship with the child, age, education level, family income, music background, race, working status) and children's characteristics (i.e., sex, age, birth order, grade level). We chose these specific demographic factors because they were considered in previous music education studies, as explained above (e.g., Custodero et al., 2003; Hartas, 2011).

2.3. Predictive Relationship Between Importance Attributed to Music and Enrollment Decisions

As mentioned in the previous sections, some studies conducted in Western countries explored parents' views regarding the benefits of music education for their children. Parents often believe that music education can improve their children's musical and academic performances (Rodriguez, 2019), increase their social interactions (Pitt & Hargreaves, 2017), enrich their life experiences (Dai & Schader, 2001), and enhance their happiness (Koops, 2007).

Although the parents in the above studies acknowledged the importance of music education for their children, it remains unclear whether their positive views were formed prior to or following their children's participation in extracurricular music activities. An interview study showed that, after their children started to sing in a choir, the parents reported that enrolling in this activity could not only enhance their children's singing experiences but also boost their motivation, help them cultivate friendships, and promote their cultural understanding (Barrett & Zhukov, 2023). These findings raise the question of whether parents' acknowledgment of the importance of music education led to them enrolling their children in extracurricular music activities, or vice versa. Thus, Goal 3 of this study was to examine this question.

3. Goals

While Lareau's (2011) framework of concerted cultivation was formulated based on older children (10 years and above), the present study contributes to the limited research that has applied this framework to young children. Guided by this framework, our survey study conducted with Hong Kong parents had three specific research goals, which were to investigate (1) the past and current extracurricular music activities in which their children (between three and eight years old) have participated and/or participate; (2) the importance parents attribute to music education and the correlation with demographic factors, including children's characteristics (i.e., sex, age, birth order, grade level) and parent's characteristics (i.e., relationship with the child, age, education level, family income, music background, ethnicity, working status); and (3) the predictive relationship between the importance attributed to music education and children's current and future participation in extracurricular music activities.

4. Materials and Methods

4.1. Participants

The participants were 430 parents from all geographic areas across Hong Kong. All of them had at least one child between three and eight years of age. Most of the parents (93%) were between 31 and 50 years of age and were mainly mothers (86.5%). Table 1 presents their demographic characteristics. By applying simple random sampling, our sample was diverse regarding their level of education, working status, racial groups, family income, and relationship with children. Based on The Population Census of Hong Kong (2021), the demographic characteristics of our participants could be considered representative of Hong Kong parents in terms of education level, racial groups, and family income. However, since our survey on early childhood music education was conducted online, our participant selection could be biased toward those parents who were more interested in the topic or had greater access to digital devices.

Table 1. Demographic background of the responding parent.

Parents' Demographic Background	Frequency	Percent
Relationship with children		
Father	54	12.6
Mother	372	86.5
Others	4	0.9
Parents' age range		
<20	2	0.5
21–30	26	6.0
31–40	269	62.6
41–50	130	30.2
51–60	2	0.5
>61	1	0.2
Highest level of education		
Primary or below	5	1.2
Secondary	135	31.4
Post-secondary (e.g., associate degree/high diploma/vocational education)	90	20.9
Undergraduate degree	112	26.0
Postgraduate (e.g., master/doctoral degree)	88	20.5
Parents' working status		
Full-time	203	47.2
Part-time	64	14.9
Unemployed	163	37.9
Parent's racial group		
Chinese	312	72.6
Filipino	19	4.4
Indonesian	2	0.5
South Asians (e.g., India, Pakistan, Bangladesh)	57	13.3
Caucasian	12	2.8
Mixed	9	2.1
Others	19	4.4
Approx. family income per month (in HKD)		
<30,000	156	36.3
30,000–60,000	155	36.0
60,000–90,000	55	12.8
90,000–120,000	29	6.7
>120,000	35	8.1

In terms of music background, 150 parents (34.9%) played at least one musical instrument, and only 29 (6.7%) had a music occupation. Almost half of the parents had participated in extracurricular music activities in the past, and most of them for more than one year. Table 2 presents more detailed information about the parents' music background.

Table 2. Music background of the responding parent.

Parents' Music Background	Frequency	Percent
Does the parent have a music-related occupation?		
Yes	29	6.7
No	401	93.3
Can the parent play at least one musical instrument?		
Yes	150	34.9
No	280	65.1
Has the parent participated in any extracurricular music activities/programs in the past?		
Yes	213	49.5
No	217	50.5

Table 2. *Cont.*

Parents' Music Background	Frequency	Percent
For those who participated in extracurricular activities in the past, how many years of participation?		
Less than 1 year	54	12.6
1–3 years	71	16.5
4–6 years	25	5.8
7–9 years	15	3.5
More than 10 years	48	11.2

As mentioned, all the parents had at least one three- to eight-year-old child. They were asked to respond to the survey by thinking of one specific child within that age range. The children they chose to base their responses on were mainly the firstborn (64%), with similar proportions in terms of sex (51.4% boys). In Hong Kong, kindergarten services are available to children between three and six years old (Lau & Rao, 2018). Most of the parents in this study (92.8%) based their responses on their children who were attending kindergarten programs. Table 3 presents detailed information about the children's characteristics.

Table 3. Children's characteristics.

Children's Characteristics	Frequency	Percent
Sex		
Boy	221	51.4
Girl	209	48.6
Birth order		
Firstborn	275	64
Latter born	155	36
Grade level		
Kindergarten 1	138	32.1
Kindergarten 2	136	31.6
Kindergarten 3	125	29.1
Primary 1	31	7.2
Children' age		
Mean	5.21	
Standard deviation	1.07	
Minimum	2.90	
Maximum	7.84	

4.2. Instrument

This article is part of a larger survey study. In the following section, we describe the specific items analyzed herein.

At the beginning of the survey, we provided the consent form and information sheet and asked the participants to confirm that they (1) had a child who was between three and eight years of age and (2) lived in Hong Kong. We then collected information on the child's characteristics, including the child's sex, birth order, grade level, and birthday. In terms of children's music participation, we asked the following question: "Is your child currently participating in extracurricular music activities?" This was followed by three response choices: (1) "Yes"; (2) "No, but I plan to sign up my child for extracurricular music activities in the future"; (3) "No, and I do not plan to sign up my child in the future". This was followed by a request: "Please select the activities that your child is currently participating in", and "Please select the activities in which your child had taken part in the past". Seven different music activities were presented to the parents, including singing activities, expressive movement with music, instrumental music, musical theater, music technology, basic music theory, and parent–child music programs. These music activity

types were determined based on a prior scoping review of the literature conducted by two of the authors of this study (Pan & Bautista, under review). For each activity type, visual images were provided to facilitate the parents' understanding.

We also collected information on the importance attributed to music by parents as well as their own musical background (i.e., past music education experiences). We then asked the following question: "In your opinion, how important is music education for your child's development?" A slider was provided for rating from 0 to 100, with 0 meaning "not at all important" and 100 meaning "extremely important." Regarding past music experiences, the following questions were asked: (1) "Do you have a music-related occupation?" (2) "Can you play at least one musical instrument?" (3) "Have you participated in any extracurricular music activities/programs in the past? If yes, how many years have you been engaged in extracurricular music learning/practicing?"

Finally, we gathered information about the demographics of the parents and their families. Questions were asked about the parent's relationship with their child (father vs. mother), the parent's age, the highest education level achieved, work status, race/ethnicity, and approximate monthly family income.

To ensure the reliability and validity of the survey, three experts—who have master's or doctoral degrees in the field of early childhood music education and research experience working with children and parents—reviewed all the items in the preliminary survey protocol. Next, we interviewed 10 parents with young children to ensure that all the items could be easily understood and followed logically. Based on the feedback and suggestions from the 3 experts and the 10 parents, we revised the survey and piloted it with 67 parents to ensure that the survey was rigorous and reliable. After a discussion with all the authors, we produced the final version of the survey.

4.3. Procedure

Ethical approval was obtained from the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) at the authors' university (Reference no. 2023-2024-0399). The survey protocol was uploaded to Qualtrics Online Survey Software http://qualtrics.com/ (accessed on 1 June 2024) for dissemination and data collection. As our aim was to collect a representative sample of the population of Hong Kong parents with young children, we invited all kindergartens (both private and public) in the city to participate in the study. We sent an invitation email to the principals, attaching the information sheet, consent forms, the survey link, and a poster with a Quick Response (QR) code that directed to the survey. The principals were encouraged to forward the materials to all the parents in their respective kindergartens. The survey informed parents that their participation was voluntary and anonymous and that they could withdraw from the study at any time without negative consequences. The survey was available in traditional Chinese and English, and its completion required five to seven minutes. The survey was active for 1.5 months, from mid-June to early August 2024. Two follow-up reminder emails were sent to the principals.

4.4. Data Analysis

Initially, 463 complete survey entries were recorded. During the data-cleaning process, 33 entries were removed for various reasons (e.g., the participants completed the survey inconsistently or randomly, the child's age exceeded eight years old, the time used to complete the survey was excessively low). The data were then converted into numerical values for further analysis, such as dichotomous questions (*no* = 1, *yes* = 2), slider questions (*not at all important* = 0, *neutral* = 50, *extremely important* = 100), demographic questions (e.g., five levels of highest education ranging from *primary or below* = 1 to *postgraduate* = 5).

To address Goal 1, descriptive statistics were conducted to analyze the past and current extracurricular music activities in which children have participated. In the Results section, we present the activities from highest to lowest frequency and organized by age.

To address Goal 2, we first conducted descriptive statistics (means, standard deviation, minimum, and maximum) to provide an account of the importance attributed to music education by Hong Kong parents. We then conducted Pearson correlation coefficient analysis and an independent *t*-test to test the relationship between the importance attributed to music education and demographic factors, including parent characteristics (i.e., relationship with the child, age, education level, family income, music background, race, and working status) and the characteristics of their child (i.e., sex, age, birth order, and grade level). As mentioned above, these demographic factors were considered because they have been examined in prior music education studies (e.g., Custodero et al., 2003; Hartas, 2011). Correlation analysis was applied to continuous variables, and the *t*-test was applied to nominal variables. Only the significant results are presented in the Results section.

To address Goal 3, we selected binary logistic regression for our data analysis, as it effectively models the predictive relationship between a binary dependent variable and independent variables. Guided by the theory of concerted cultivation (Lareau, 2011), we decided to control for the confounding variables of parental education levels and family income in our statistical analyses, as these were conceptually the most significant ones. We first conducted binary logistic regression analysis with two groups of parents: those who had already signed up their children for extracurricular music activities and those who were planning to do so in the future. This analysis was conducted to investigate the predictive relationship between the importance parents attribute to music education and whether parents had already signed up their children for music activities. We then conducted binary logistic regression again with the parents who had already signed up or were planning to sign up their children for music activities vs. those parents who had not signed up and were not planning to do so in the future. This allowed us to examine the predictive relationship between the importance of music education and the parents' intention to sign up their children for extracurricular music activities.

5. Results

5.1. Goal 1 Past and Current Extracurricular Music Activities Participated in by Children

As already explained, parents indicated their children's past and current music participation by choosing from seven different music activities. Among the 430 participants, 42 parents (9.8%) indicated that their children had taken part in extracurricular music activities, and 94 parents (21.9%) indicated that their children were currently participating in extracurricular music activities.

Table 4 presents the different kinds of extracurricular music activities, from highest to lowest frequency, in which children of different age levels had taken part. Overall, parent–child music programs and expressive movement with music occupied the first and second positions, respectively, followed by musical theater. Very few children participated in basic music theory and instrumental music. There were no responses from parents whose children had participated in singing activities and music technology activities.

Table 5 presents the different extracurricular music activities in which children of different age levels participated during the research period. Instrumental music was the most frequent activity, with most children being older than five years old (N = 29). Expressive movement with music came second, with most participants being within the age range of three to six (N = 16). Singing activities, ranking third, had more participants within the age range of five to eight (N = 13). Children of different ages participated in

basic music theory. The final three listed activities were musical theater, parent–child music programs, and music technology.

Table 4. Extracurricular music activities in which children participated in the past.

Past Extracurricular Music Activities	Frequency	Total Percent	Age Range				
			3–4 Years	4–5 Years	5–6 Years	6–7 Years	7–8 Years
My child previously took part in							
Parent–child music programs	20	4.7	3	7	5	4	1
Expressive movement with music	10	2.3	1	3	3	2	1
Musical theater	5	1.2	0	0	1	3	1
Basic music theory	4	0.9	0	1	1	2	0
Instrumental music	3	0.7	0	2	0	1	0
[a] Singing activities	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
[a] Music technology	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Note. [a] The two items shared the same frequency and percentage.

Table 5. Extracurricular music activities in which children are currently participating.

Current Extracurricular Music Activities	Frequency	Total Percent	Age Range				
			3–4 Years	4–5 Years	5–6 Years	6–7 Years	7–8 Years
My child is currently participating in							
Instrumental music	38	8.8	1	8	12	10	7
Expressive movement with music	22	5.1	3	4	9	3	3
Singing activities	14	3.3	1	0	4	4	5
Basic music theory	10	2.3	2	2	2	1	3
[a] Musical theater	4	0.9	1	0	0	2	1
[a] Parent–child music programs	4	0.9	0	1	0	1	2
Music technology	2	0.5	0	0	0	1	1

Note. [a] The two items shared the same frequency and percentage.

Interesting differences could be observed when comparing the past and present music activities. While instrumental music ranked first among current activities, it was ranked at the bottom when the children were younger. Similarly, while singing was ranked third in the current activities, it was the least chosen past activity. Expressive movement with music was the only activity that ranked second in both current activities and past activities. In contrast, parent–child music programs and musical theater were more common when the children were younger. Music technology was the last choice for both current and past activities.

5.2. Goal 2 Importance Attributed to Music Education and Correlation with Key Demographic Factors

The results showed that the importance attributed to music education rated by parents was, on average, relatively high (M = 80.52, SD = 16.092). The highest score given was 100, and the lowest was 26. Pearson correlation coefficient analysis and an independent t-test were conducted to test the relationship between the importance attributed to music education and demographic factors. Table 6 shows the significant results of correlation for continuous variables.

As can be observed, several demographic factors were significantly correlated with the importance parents attribute to music education. First, the parents' age was significantly correlated with the ratings of importance, indicating that the parents who were older were more likely to assign higher scores to the importance of music education. Similarly, parents with a higher education level were more likely to rate the importance of music education higher. Finally, families with higher incomes were likely to rate the importance of music education higher.

Table 6. Pearson correlation between the importance attributed to music education and demographic factors.

Importance Attributed to Music Education	Demographic Factors	Correlation Coefficient	*p*-Value
In your opinion, how important is music education for your child's development?	Parents' age range	0.148 **	0.002
	Parents' education level	0.209 **	<0.001
	Family income	0.151 **	0.002

Note. **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 7 shows the significant results of the *t*-test for the nominal variables. In terms of whether parents had a music occupation, the *t*-test revealed a significant difference between the two groups (t (428) = −3.796, $p < 0.001$), indicating that the parents who had a music occupation were associated with higher scores in the importance rating. In terms of whether the parents played at least one musical instrument, the *t*-test revealed a significant result, showing that the parents who played an instrument were associated with higher scores in the importance rating (t (428) = −3.122, $p = 0.002$). Finally, the *t*-test revealed that having past extracurricular music experiences was associated with higher scores of importance (t (428) = −4.552, $p < 0.001$).

Table 7. Independent *t*-test between the importance attributed to music education with parents' music background.

Importance Attributed to Music Education	Yes		No		*df*	*t*	*p* (Two-Sided)	Cohen's *d*
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*				
Parents' music occupation	91.31	17.14	79.74	15.75	428	−3.796	<0.001	15.846
Parents playing one musical instrument	83.80	15.78	78.77	16.01	428	−3.122	0.002	15.930
Parents' past extracurricular music experiences	84.01	14.81	77.10	16.59	428	−4.552	<0.001	15.734

5.3. Goal 3 Predictive Relationship of Importance Attributed to Music Education and Children's Music Participation

Binary logistic regression was conducted to investigate the predictive relationship between the importance parents attribute to music education and whether their children had already participated in music activities. The results revealed that the odds of signing up for music activities in the future decreased by 29.3% (AOR = 0.707, 95% CI [0.58, 0.86], $p < 0.001$) for each additional score attributed to the importance of music education, after adjusting for parental education levels and family income. In other words, regardless of their educational attainment and family income, the parents who rated the importance of music education highly were those who had already signed up their children for extracurricular music activities and not those who were planning to do so in the future but had not yet enrolled their children.

Binary logistic regression was conducted to examine whether the importance of music education predicted the parents' intention to sign up their children for extracurricular music activities. Results showed that the odds of signing up for music activities increased by 38% (AOR = 1.38, 95% CI [1.141, 1.669], $p < 0.001$) for each additional score attributed to the importance of music education, after controlling for parental education levels and family income. This means that the higher the parents rated the importance of music education, the higher the chance that these were the parents who had already signed their children up or intended to sign their children up for extracurricular music activities in the future, regardless of their education level and family income. In other words, parents who had already signed up children for music activities were those who rated higher compared to parents who planned to but had not yet done so. Moreover, parents who

rated the importance of music education higher were not only parents who had already signed up but also those who intended to sign their children up for music in the future, compared to parents who did not sign up and had no intention to sign up their children for extracurricular music activities. These relationships were independent of parental educational background and family income.

6. Discussion and Conclusions

Goal 1 was to investigate the past and current extracurricular music activities in which young children in Hong Kong have participated and are participating. Our findings show that participation in extracurricular music activities is relatively low for children between three and eight years of age. Despite the diverse backgrounds of the participating parents, it is noteworthy that most of the participants had undergraduate or lower education levels, limited past music experiences, and relatively low family income. It is, therefore, possible that the children's low music participation was strongly influenced by their family background, which is well aligned with our framework of concerted cultivation. Lareau (2011) indicated that, while parents from various socioeconomic backgrounds desire the best for their children, they differ in their ability to provide resources, opportunities, time, and financial support. Parents from disadvantaged backgrounds, lacking music-related experiences, are likely to adhere to standard school arrangements, ensuring that their children complete their required schoolwork rather than risk enrolling them in unfamiliar extracurricular activities, including music (Lareau, 2011; Vincent & Ball, 2007). Furthermore, cultural differences may explain this finding. While parents in the United States tend to support their children's learning based on their interests, talents, and abilities (Lareau, 2011), parents in Asian societies may make decisions by thinking about future academic and/or professional benefits (e.g., Ho et al., 2020; Tai et al., 2018; Youm, 2013). In fact, music is often a lower-priority choice for extracurricular activities compared to other academic subjects, such as language and mathematics, due to the increasing academic pressure on Hong Kong children (Choi et al., 2005).

We also found that younger children were more likely to participate in parent–child music programs, expressive movement with music, and musical theater, whereas older children were more likely to sign up for instrumental music and singing activities. These differences suggest that music participation is influenced by age. Consistent with the prior literature (Campbell, 2010; McPherson & Davidson, 2002; Rodriguez, 2019), the parents' choices of extracurricular music activities seem to be determined by beliefs regarding their children's fine motor skills and vocal development, attention span, and the need for parental presence. Younger children in Hong Kong engage more commonly in activities that require interaction with others (e.g., parents), free movement, and expressive participation, whereas older children engage in activities that require greater self-control, including sitting independently, the acquisition of musical technical skills, and sustained concentration. In sum, children's music participation varies across ages and seems to be guided by their parents' understanding of the benefits and value of the music activity at hand.

In line with previous studies, Hong Kong parents seem to be more concerned with the development of social skills when their children are younger, enrolling them in collaborative activities that not only strengthen the bonds between children and parents but also allow them to interact with peers and foster socialization (Rodriguez, 2019; Savage, 2015; Youm, 2013). In contrast, parents seem to emphasize the development of cognition and technical skills when children are older and choose formal music activities, such as instrumental music, to support general educational goals, enhance self-regulation, and improve musical techniques (Dai & Schader, 2002; McPherson & Renwick, 2001). Additionally, Hong Kong parents may pursue academic-related benefits linked with certain music activities, which is

supported by prior research (Kong, 2023). In particular, playing one or two instruments and/or knowing how to sing are basic admission requirements in certain elite primary schools within the territory (Choi et al., 2005; Tai et al., 2018).

Goal 2 was to investigate the importance parents attribute to music education and its correlation with key demographic factors. Overall, we found that Hong Kong parents rate the importance of music education relatively high. This aligns with the findings concerning parents from other countries and jurisdictions who acknowledge the importance of music education in terms of enhancing their children's development, helping them gain knowledge and skills, and letting them experience happiness (e.g., Cho, 2015; Custodero & Johnson-Green, 2003; Rodriguez, 2019). Moreover, we found that parents' ratings were positively correlated with parents' age, education level, music background, and family income. These findings are consistent with the framework of concerted cultivation (Lareau, 2011) and other prior studies (e.g., Custodero et al., 2003; Hartas, 2011; Lau & Rao, 2018). Regarding parents' education level, studies have indicated that parents with higher education levels are more likely to perceive the value of music education and its positive impact on children's development (e.g., Ilari, 2013; Kong, 2023). In terms of family income, a study conducted in Hong Kong revealed that low-income parents, despite acknowledging the benefits of music education, still perceive music education as nonessential and limit their children's participation due to financial constraints (Ho et al., 2020).

Parents with prior music experiences seem to proactively support their children's music education, as they may seek similar opportunities for their children (e.g., Custodero, 2006; Savage, 2015; Youm, 2013). In the United States, Custodero and Johnson-Green (2003) found that parents' musical experiences were highly associated with parenting behaviors such as singing and playing music to children, which nurture a home environment conducive to children's music engagement. Rodriguez (2019) interviewed a mother who reflected on her past music experience: being the daughter of a music educator facilitated her own early exposure to music, which, in turn, inspired her to support her own child's music participation. A relevant finding not reported in the prior literature is that the level of importance attributed by parents to music education is associated with their own age. Furthermore, in contrast to previous studies (Custodero et al., 2003; Ilari, 2005; Wills, 2011), we could not identify a correlation between the parents' ratings of importance with their working status and ethnicity. One possible reason might be the homogenous background of our participants due to the predominance of Chinese ethnicity in Hong Kong (Lau & Rao, 2018). As most of our participants were Chinese, it was difficult to apply a correlation with race/ethnicity. Future studies should be conducted in diverse geographical locations and incorporate participants from a wide range of socioeconomic, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds.

Goal 3 was to investigate the predictive relationship between the importance parents attribute to music education and children's participation in extracurricular music activities. One of our findings shows that parents whose children were participating in extracurricular music activities rated the importance of music education higher regardless of parental education background and family income. In previous studies, researchers often interviewed parents after their children had participated in music activities, resulting in positive responses regarding the importance of music education (Barrett & Zhukov, 2023; Cho, 2015; Koops, 2007; Pitt & Hargreaves, 2017). This highlights the importance of providing young children with music education opportunities: when parents recognize the positive impact of music education, they are more likely to continue to provide their children with such opportunities in the future. Based on the logistic regression test, another finding revealed that, when parents rated the importance of music higher, regardless of their education levels and family income, they were also more likely to enroll their children

in extracurricular music activities. This aligns with our theoretical framework (Lareau, 2011), which posits that parents with higher education attainment and music experiences are more likely to recognize the importance of music education and, consequently, sign up their children for extracurricular music activities. Researchers have thus suggested educating parents on the knowledge related to the content of music programs to support children's music involvement (Wan et al., 2023; Youm, 2013).

6.1. Conclusions

Guided by the framework of concerted cultivation (Lareau, 2011), our study contributes to the limited parental studies on kindergarten-aged children's extracurricular music participation, providing more evidence on this topic in the Hong Kong context. Our first conclusion is that, while Hong Kong parents rate the importance of music education relatively high, the overall extracurricular music participation of young children is rather low. This disconnection is supported by the concerted cultivation framework (Lareau, 2011), which suggests that parents from various socioeconomic backgrounds may have different priorities or preferences regarding their children's education. For the few parents whose children participated in extracurricular music activities, the parental choices of music activities seem to be influenced by their children's age and the perceived benefits associated with each music activity.

Our second conclusion is that the importance Hong Kong parents attribute to music education is positively correlated with their personal background and family demographics. This finding mirrors the trends observed by Lareau (2011), indicating the relevance of providing various music opportunities for families of different backgrounds to support young children's music education.

Finally, our third conclusion is that children's extracurricular music participation is associated with their parents' ratings of the importance of music education. This highlights the necessity of opportunities for children to engage in extracurricular music activities and the significance of educating parents in supporting their children's music education.

6.2. Limitations and Future Research

This study has some limitations that should be overcome in future research. First, the parents were asked about the importance of music in general. Future studies should investigate their beliefs about the benefits of specific types of music activities instead of addressing music as a general construct. Doing so would offer clearer insights into parents' intuitive understanding of the impact of different music activities. Second, while the use of surveys as a data collection method allowed us to include a large number of participants, it limited the depth of our findings. Relying exclusively on parental self-reported data may introduce bias, and additional methodological approaches are thus necessary. Qualitative data would provide a more holistic understanding of the underlying reasons for parental choices of extracurricular music activities for children, the importance parents attribute to music education, and the parental decisions concerning children's music enrollment. Lastly, because our research was conducted with parents in a single city (Hong Kong), it is essential to expand this investigation to other cultures, regions, and countries with diverse participant backgrounds. Future research should consider cross-cultural comparisons to determine whether our findings hold true in other educational and cultural contexts.

6.3. Implications

In addition to the implications for researchers mentioned above, our study has significant implications for music education providers, parents, and educational policymakers. Our study highlights the various extracurricular music activities in which children in Hong Kong participate at different age levels, allowing music education providers to better

understand their target participants and recommend age-appropriate programs to parents. By reaching out to families from low socioeconomic status and offering parental workshops, parents' knowledge about the benefits and importance of music education would be enhanced. Providing free or low-cost music activities would demonstrate the benefits of music education to parents and encourage sustained parental involvement in children's music education.

For educational policymakers, this study underscores the need to promote the importance of music education through workshops, lectures, and media campaigns, such as television and poster advertisements. It would also be essential to encourage collaboration between companies, communities, music education providers, and non-profit institutions to create accessible community music resources, facilities, and events, including free instrumental rental programs, online music education resources, and charity performances. Furthermore, as the Hong Kong Kindergarten Curriculum Guide (CDC, 2017) has highlighted the use of music in kindergartens, children in Hong Kong will be able to receive music instruction as part of their standard education regardless of their socioeconomic backgrounds. This policy should be further supported by recruiting music specialists or providing more music training for general educators, especially in low-income areas, to ensure high-quality music education for all children. Finally, providing subsidies or vouchers for families from low socioeconomic backgrounds would ensure more equitable access to music education and foster inclusive environments that support children's music education.

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, Y.P., A.B. and S.-h.K.; methodology, Y.P. and A.B.; software, Y.P.; formal analysis, Y.P.; data curation, Y.P.; writing—original draft, Y.P.; writing—review and editing, Y.P., A.B. and S.-h.K.; supervision, A.B. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: This study was funded by the Hong Kong PhD Fellowship Scheme (HKPFS) under the University Grants Committee. The views expressed in this paper are the authors' and do not necessarily represent the views of their institutions.

Institutional Review Board Statement: The study was approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the Education University of Hong Kong (Ref. no. 2023-2024-0399; 28 March 2024).

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement: The data presented in this study are available on request from the corresponding author due to privacy and ethical restrictions.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used in this manuscript:

NAfME	The National Association for Music Education
ABRSM	The Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music
MOE	The Ministry of Education
QR	Quick Response

References

Albert, D. J. (2006). Socioeconomic status and instrumental music: What does the research say about the relationship and its implications? *UPDATE: Applications of Research in Music Education*, *25*(1), 39–45. [CrossRef]

Barrett, M. S., & Zhukov, K. (2023). Choral flourishing: Parent and child perspectives on the benefits of participation in an excellent youth choir. *Research Studies in Music Education*, *45*(3), 525–538. [CrossRef]

Benz, S., Sellaro, R., Hommel, B., & Colzato, L. S. (2016). Music makes the world go round: The impact of musical training on non-musical cognitive functions—A review. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *6*, 2023. [CrossRef]

Cabedo-Mas, A., Moliner-Miravet, L., Campayo-Muñoz, E., Macián-González, R., & Arriaga-Sanz, C. (2023). Impact of group music-making on social development: A scoping review. *Journal for the Study of Education and Development*, *46*(2), 352–384. [CrossRef]

Campbell, P. S. (2010). *Songs in their heads: Music and its meaning in children's lives* (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press.

Cheung, J. (2004). Mapping music education research in Hong Kong. *Psychology of Music*, *32*(3), 343–356. [CrossRef]

Cho, E. (2015). What do mothers say? Korean mothers' perceptions of children's participation in extra-curricular musical activities. *Music Education Research*, *17*(2), 162–178. [CrossRef]

Choi, A. L. Y., Tse, J. C. Y., So, C. S. N., & Yeung, A. S. (2005). Hong Kong parents' perceptions of benefits of music to their children. *New Horizons in Education*, *51*, 111–123.

Creech, A. (2010). Learning a musical instrument: The case for parental support. *Music Education Research*, *12*(1), 13–32. [CrossRef]

Creech, A., & Hallam, S. (2003). Parent-teacher-pupil interactions in instrumental music tuition: A literature review. *British Journal of Music Education*, *20*(1), 29–44. [CrossRef]

Curriculum Development Council (CDC). (2017). *Kindergarten education curriculum guide: Joyful learning through play, balanced development all the way*. Available online: https://www.edb.gov.hk/attachment/en/curriculum-development/major-level-of-edu/preprimary/ENG_KGECG_2017.pdf (accessed on 1 November 2024).

Custodero, L. A. (2006). Singing practices in 10 families with young children. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, *54*(1), 37–56. [CrossRef]

Custodero, L. A., & Johnson-Green, E. A. (2003). Passing the cultural torch: Musical experience and musical parenting of infants. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, *51*(2), 102–114. [CrossRef]

Custodero, L. A., Rebello Britto, P., & Brooks-Gunn, J. (2003). Musical lives: A collective portrait of American parents and their young children. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, *24*(5), 553–572. [CrossRef]

Dai, D. Y., & Schader, R. (2001). Parents' reasons and motivations for supporting their child's music training. *Roeper Review*, *24*(1), 23–26. [CrossRef]

Dai, D. Y., & Schader, R. M. (2002). Decisions regarding music training: Parental beliefs and values. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, *46*(2), 135–144. [CrossRef]

Davidson, J. W., & Borthwick, S. J. (2002). Family dynamics and family scripts: A case study of musical development. *Psychology of Music*, *30*(1), 121–136. [CrossRef]

Dumont, E., Syurina, E. V., Feron, F. J. M., & van Hooren, S. (2017). Music interventions and child development: A critical review and further directions. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *8*, 1694. [CrossRef] [PubMed]

Hallam, S. (2010). The power of music: Its impact on the intellectual, social and personal development of children and young people. *International Journal of Music Education*, *28*(3), 269–289. [CrossRef]

Hartas, D. (2011). Families' social backgrounds matter: Socio-economic factors, home learning and young children's language, literacy and social outcomes. *British Educational Research Journal*, *37*(6), 893–914. [CrossRef]

Ho, L. L. K., Li, W. H. C., Cheung, A. T., Xia, W., Ho, K. Y., & Chung, J. O. K. (2020). Low-income parents' perceptions of the importance of a musical training programme for their children: A qualitative study. *BMC Public Health*, *20*(1), 1454. [CrossRef]

Ho, W.-C. (2011). Parental support and student learning of musical instruments in Hong Kong. *Visions of Research in Music Education*, *19*(1), 5.

Ilari, B. (2005). On musical parenting of young children: Musical beliefs and behaviors of mothers and infants. *Early Child Development and Care*, *175*(7–8), 647–660. [CrossRef]

Ilari, B. (2013). Concerted cultivation and music learning: Global issues and local variations. *Research Studies in Music Education*, *35*(2), 179–196. [CrossRef]

Ilari, B. (2020). Longitudinal research on music education and child development: Contributions and challenges. *Music & Science*, *3*. [CrossRef]

Kong, S.-h. (2023). *Cultural capital and parental involvement: A comparison of students' music participation between Beijing and Hong Kong*. Springer Nature.

Koops, L. H. (2007). Perceptions of current and desired involvement in early childhood music instruction. *Visions of Research in Music Education*, *17*(1), 5.

Koops, L. H. (2020). *Parenting musically*. Oxford University Press.

Lareau, A. (2011). *Unequal childhoods: Class, race, and family life* (2nd ed.). University of California Press.

Lau, C., & Rao, N. (2018). Early childhood education in Hong Kong. In *Handbook of international perspectives on early childhood education* (pp. 149–161). Routledge.

McPherson, G. E. (2009). The role of parents in children's musical development. *Psychology of Music*, *37*(1), 91–110. [CrossRef]

McPherson, G. E., & Davidson, J. W. (2002). Musical practice: Mother and child interactions during the first year of learning an instrument. *Music Education Research*, *4*(1), 141–156. [CrossRef]

McPherson, G. E., & Renwick, J. M. (2001). A longitudinal study of self-regulation in children's musical practice. *Music Education Research*, *3*(2), 169–186. [CrossRef]

Ministry of Education (MOE). (2022). *Overview of Co-Curricular Activities (CCAs)*. Available online: https://www.moe.gov.sg/education-in-sg (accessed on 1 November 2024).

Pan, Y., & Bautista, A. (Under review). Early childhood music interventions with positive child outcomes: A scoping review of experimental studies.

Pitt, J., & Hargreaves, D. (2017). Exploring the rationale for group music activities for parents and young children: Parents' and practitioners' perspectives. *Research Studies in Music Education*, *39*(2), 177–194. [CrossRef]

Rodriguez, A. M. (2019). Parents' perceptions of early childhood music participation. *International Journal of Community Music*, *12*(1), 95–110. [CrossRef]

Rodriguez-Gomez, D. A., & Talero-Gutiérrez, C. (2022). Effects of music training in executive function performance in children: A systematic review. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *13*, 968144. [CrossRef] [PubMed]

Savage, S. (2015). Understanding mothers' perspectives on early childhood music programmes. *Australian Journal of Music Education*, *(2)*, 127–139.

Tai, D. M., Phillipson, S. N., & Phillipson, S. (2018). Hong Kong parents and their children's music training: Measurement properties of the Parental Involvement in Music Training Questionnaire. *Educational Psychology*, *38*(5), 633–647. [CrossRef]

Tam, V. C., & Chan, R. M. (2009). Parental involvement in primary children's homework in Hong Kong. *School Community Journal*, *19*(2), 81–100.

The National Association for Music Education (NAfME). (2015). *Opportunity-to-learn standards for music instruction: Grades PreK-12*. Available online: https://nafme.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/NAfME-Opportunity-to-Learn-Standards-2020.pdf (accessed on 1 November 2024).

The Population Census of Hong Kong. (2021). Available online: https://www.census2021.gov.hk/en/snapshot_short_article.html (accessed on 15 November 2024).

Vidulin, S. (2016). Extracurricular musical activities in primary school from the teachers' point of view. In M. Sedláček (Ed.), *Music-Education-Terra Cognita?* (pp. 6–12) Masarykova Univerzita.

Vincent, C., & Ball, S. J. (2007). 'Making up' the middle-class child: Families, activities and class dispositions. *Sociology*, *41*(6), 1061–1077. [CrossRef]

Wan, Y.-Y., Pan, Y., Ng, S.-P., & Bautista, A. (2023). Hong Kong parents' beliefs about the impact of music on children's development. *Korean Journal of Research in Music Education*, *52*(4), 121–136. [CrossRef]

Wills, A. (2011). *Relationships among musical home environment, parental involvement, demographic characteristics, and early childhood music participation*. (Doctoral Dissertation). Available online: http://scholarlyrepository.miami.edu/oa_theses/243/ (accessed on 1 October 2024).

Youm, H. K. (2013). Parents' goals, knowledge, practices, and needs regarding music education for their young children in South Korea. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, *61*(3), 280–302. [CrossRef]

Disclaimer/Publisher's Note: The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of MDPI and/or the editor(s). MDPI and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.