

**The Determinants of Children's Motivation in Musical Learning –
An Exploration in China**

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道阻且长，行则将至，惜取此时心。

Abstract

Motivation plays a crucial role in children's musical learning, fostering sustained interest, perseverance and resilience in the face of challenges and setbacks (Schmidt et al., 2006; Smith, 2011). This study provides an investigation of the determinants of Chinese children's motivation to learn music. It explores a range of influencing factors, beginning with internal determinants, including age, gender, expertise level and personality traits, and extending to external determinants within the learning environment. Building on existing literature, the study offers new insights for families, educators, and policymakers seeking to enhance children's long-term musical engagement.

A mixed-methods approach was employed. Quantitative data were collected through a questionnaire that captured participants' demographic characteristics, expertise level, personality traits and musical motivation. A total of 464 children completed the survey. The findings revealed that age, gender and personality traits significantly influence both musical motivation and expertise level. Older children demonstrated higher motivation levels, and girls were found to be more motivated than boys. Gender differences also emerged across personality traits: girls scored higher in conscientiousness and neuroticism, whereas boys scored higher in extraversion, openness, and agreeableness. Moreover, the relationship between personality and musical motivation was moderated by gender, with extraversion, conscientiousness, openness, and neuroticism emerging as the strongest predictors of motivation.

Qualitative data were gathered from open-ended questionnaire responses and semi-structured interviews with 13 participants (five children, five parents, and three teachers). Using a combination of interpretative phenomenological analysis and thematic analysis, six environmental influencing factors were identified: the national college entrance examination, school music education, private tutoring, graded music examinations, music teachers, and parents. Drawing on these findings and Yan's (2017) framework, a new perspective on Chinese music education is proposed, comprising four interrelated learning environments: governmental, school, familial, and a wider learning environment, which is consistent with Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory (1977). Together, these environments were found to coexist and interact dynamically, collectively shaping children's musical motivation.

By integrating quantitative and qualitative findings, this research advances understanding of the complex interplay between internal and external determinants of musical motivation in

China. It concludes by offering practical recommendations for policymakers, educators, and families on how to cultivate supportive, inclusive and motivating learning environments for children's musical development.

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Abbreviations

ABRSM	Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music
AGT	Achievement Goal Theory
BPS	British Psychological Society
CCOM	Central Conservatory of Music
CR	Cultural Revolution
EVT	Expectancy-value Theory
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
GME	Graded Music Examination
IPA	Interpretative Phenomenology Analysis
MUSIC Inventory	MUSIC Model of Academic Motivation Inventory
MLM Model	Motivation for Learning Music Questionnaire
MoE	Ministry of Education
MPA	Music Performance Anxiety
NCEE	National-joint College Entrance Examination
PPTQ-C	Pictorial Personality Traits Questionnaire for Children
PRC	People's Republic of China
SES	Socioeconomic Status
SHCM	Shanghai Conservatory of Music
SCT	Social Cognitive Theory
SDT	Self-determination Theory
TA	Thematic Analysis

Glossary of Terms

Term	Explanation
Western	In this thesis, ‘Western’ refers to countries and societies shaped by European intellectual, cultural, and institutional traditions, including much of Europe and North America, as well as regions such as Australia and New Zealand. In broad cultural terms, Western societies are often characterised by a strong emphasis on individualism, valuing personal autonomy, self-expression, independence, and individual rights, and by social and political ideals associated with liberal democracy. While acknowledging variation within and across Western countries, this definition is used to contrast cultural contexts in which individual goals and self-directed choices are prioritised over collective obligations (Hofstede, 1999; Nisbett, 2010; Triandis, 1995).
East-Asian	In this thesis, ‘East Asian’ refers to the geographical region encompassing countries and territories in East Asia, including China, Japan, South Korea, North Korea, Taiwan, Mongolia, and Hong Kong. Culturally, it signifies shared traditions and values influenced by Confucianism, collectivism, respect for authority, and a strong emphasis on education and academic achievement. Historically, it also represents the unique historical, social, and economic interactions within this region (Huang & Gove, 2015b; Hofstede, 1999; Nisbett, 2010; Shek & Sun, 2014; Triandis, 1995).
Learning Environment	In this thesis, ‘Learning Environment’ refers to the physical, instructional, relational, and socio-cultural conditions in which children learn music. It encompasses resources and settings, teaching and assessment practices, interactions with teachers, peers and parents, and the wider cultural and institutional expectations that shape children’s motivation to engage and persist in music learning (Dell et al., 2014; Liu & Bray, 2022; Sichivitsa, 2007; Smit et al., 2014).
Chinese Context	In this thesis, ‘Chinese context’ refers to the distinctive social, cultural, historical, and educational conditions specific to China, with a particular emphasis on its collectivist orientation. It reflects the influence of Confucian traditions and wider socio-political and economic systems that

prioritise collective harmony, interdependence, respect for authority, and the maintenance of social order. Within this context, children's learning is often understood not only as an individual pursuit but also as a family- and society-relevant endeavour, shaped by strong parental involvement, role obligations, and concerns for family reputation and educational mobility. Educational practices are further structured by national policies and an exam-oriented system in which academic achievement is highly valued and frequently positioned as a key route to opportunity. This context also involves specific challenges and opportunities, including large class sizes, regional disparities in educational provision, and the influential role of high-stakes national examinations in shaping curriculum priorities and learning experiences (Huang & Gove, 2015a, 2015b; Hofstede, 1999; Triandis, 1995).

Traditional	In this thesis, 'traditional' refers to practices, beliefs, or approaches that are rooted in long-standing cultural norms and transmitted across generations. In education and parenting, the term denotes orientations that prioritise established customs and role expectations, such as respect for authority, discipline, conformity to social norms, and achievement defined through socially recognised standards, rather than approaches centred on individual choice or child-led development (Ho et al., 2012; Huang & Gove, 2015a, 2015b; Hwang, 2013; Shek & Sun, 2014).
Mainland China	Mainland China refers to the territorial area under the direct jurisdiction of the People's Republic of China (PRC), excluding the Special Administrative Regions of Hong Kong and Macau, as well as Taiwan. In legal and governmental usage, Mainland China denotes the main contiguous landmass governed by the PRC and which is subject to its constitution and laws, distinguishing it from regions that maintain separate legal and administrative systems. (Oxford University Press, 2024; The State Council of the PRC, 2023).

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1: Introduction

Music education in China follows a pyramidal structure, with progressively fewer students studying music as they advance from primary to secondary to tertiary levels. All students in primary and middle schools learn music as a compulsory subject. Many high-school students then continue their music training through private tuition, but only a small number persist in studying music at undergraduate level (Leung & McPherson, 2011). This pyramid structure suggests that while Chinese students often begin learning music in early childhood, many discontinue their musical education as they grow older. Understanding the key determinants that influence children's motivation to learn music is essential for addressing this high withdrawal rate and promoting long-term musical engagement.

Research in music education has highlighted a range of key determinants that shape musical motivation. Demographic and psychological determinants, such as age, gender and personality traits, have been shown to play a critical role in students' musical motivation (Ferberda et al., 2017; Hallam et al., 2017; Judge & Ilies, 2002; Kopacz, 2005; MacIntyre et al., 2018; McPherson & O'Neill, 2010; Ritchie & Williamon, 2011a, 2011b). Beyond these demographic and psychological determinants, external determinants, primarily within the learning environment¹, play a pivotal role in shaping children's musical motivation. Studies have investigated the influence of parents (Creech, 2010; Davidson et al., 1996; Suk, 2014; Zdzinski, 2021), teachers (Carey & Grant, 2015; Dwyer, 2015; Gaunt, 2008), peers (Sichivitsa, 2007), and the interaction between these groups (Ang et al., 2020, 2021; Creech, 2009; Creech & Hallam, 2003; Pitt & Hargreaves, 2017). Despite these contributions, studies focusing specifically on Chinese children's musical motivation are comparatively scarce. This gap indicates the need for further investigation into how demographic, psychological and environmental determinants shape children's engagement with musical learning in China.

¹ 'Learning Environment' refers to the physical, instructional, relational, and socio-cultural conditions in which children learn music. It encompasses resources and settings, teaching and assessment practices, interactions with teachers, peers and parents, and the wider cultural and institutional expectations that shape children's motivation to engage and persist in music learning (Dell et al., 2014; Liu & Bray, 2022; Sichivitsa, 2007; Smit et al., 2014).

The present study aims to explore the key determinants of young children's motivation to learn music, with a focus on demographic, psychological and environmental determinants. It further seeks to examine the dynamic interaction among these determinants to capture the complexity of musical motivation in contemporary China. By addressing this gap, the study aims to advance understanding of how to support sustained musical engagement and inform strategies for strengthening motivation within Chinese music education.

1.2: Rationale for the Research

As a pianist, my own experiences have deeply motivated me to undertake this research project. When I was six years old, I began learning the piano and quickly discovered the joy of making music and connecting with others, forming meaningful friendships through shared musical experiences. However, as I grew older, I observed many of my peers, who had initially been passionate about music, eventually abandoning it. This phenomenon puzzled me and led me to question what key determinants influenced their motivation to continue or discontinue learning music.

Being born and raised in China, I have firsthand experience of how cultural values and societal expectations shape children's education and extracurricular activities. Music learning was an integral part of my upbringing, yet it was positioned within the broader framework of academic achievement. While I was fortunate to maintain my passion for music, I often felt the pressure of balancing my musical pursuits with academic demands. Structured and exam-oriented approaches to learning were deeply embedded in my education, which at times made music feel more like an obligation than an intrinsic passion.

Reflecting on my own journey, I began to suspect that cultural values, such as the prioritisation of academic excellence and the structured nature of music education in China, may significantly influence children's motivation to continue or discontinue musical learning. For example, as a child, I often found myself torn between a deep passion for music and the pressure to meet external expectations, a struggle that many young musicians in China likely experience. This personal insight has fuelled my curiosity about how children develop and sustain musical motivation within this unique cultural environment. Furthermore, I am interested in understanding the factors that contribute to students either continuing or discontinuing their

musical learning. What influences their decision to persist, and what moments or circumstances lead them to give up?

My initial exploration of this topic began during my Master's study at the Royal College of Music, where I investigated strategies for motivating children to practise. Through discussions with friends and colleagues, I realised that this subject could be extended into a PhD project to examine children's musical motivation in the unique Chinese context² more comprehensively. In 2019, I embarked on my PhD journey, focusing first on the role of the learning environment in shaping children's musical motivation. During the PhD transfer viva, the examiners suggested expanding my research to include the influence of demographic and psychological determinants, adding another critical dimension to my study.

This thesis builds upon previous research by investigating the key determinants influencing Chinese children's musical motivation. Additionally, it aims to provide a deeper understanding of the dynamics that shape children's engagement with music within the Chinese cultural context.

1.3: Structure of the Thesis

Following this introductory chapter, Chapter 2 considers the Chinese social and cultural background, providing the contextual foundations necessary to understand the determinants of children's musical motivation. Chapter 3 provides a review of the literature, beginning with an overview of major motivational theories and their relevance to music education. It then critically analyses how previous studies have explored the key determinants influencing children's

² In this thesis, the 'Chinese context' refers to the distinctive social, cultural, historical, and educational conditions specific to China, with a particular emphasis on its collectivist orientation. It reflects the influence of Confucian traditions and wider socio-political and economic systems that prioritise collective harmony, interdependence, respect for authority, and the maintenance of social order. Within this context, children's learning is often understood not only as an individual pursuit but also as a family- and society-relevant endeavour, shaped by strong parental involvement, role obligations, and concerns for family reputation and educational mobility. Educational practices are further structured by national policies and an exam-oriented system in which academic achievement is highly valued and frequently positioned as a key route to opportunity. This context also involves specific challenges and opportunities, including large class sizes, regional disparities in educational provision, and the influential role of high-stakes national examinations in shaping curriculum priorities and learning experiences (Huang & Gove, 2015a, 2015b; Hofstede, 1999; Triandis, 1995).

musical learning, thereby identifying gaps and establishing the rationale for investigating musical motivation within the Chinese context.

Chapter 4 outlines the methodological considerations of this study. It begins by presenting the research aims: to determine key determinants of Chinese children's musical motivation, and the corresponding sub-research questions. It then justifies the geographical focus selected for data collection and explicates the philosophical foundations informing the research design. The chapter subsequently details the materials used, participant recruitment procedures and sampling strategies. Furthermore, it outlines the data collection procedures, the analytical methods employed, and the ethical approval process undertaken to ensure the study's integrity and compliance with research standards.

Chapters 5, 6, and 7 present and discuss the study's key findings. Chapter 5 reports the quantitative results in relation to the sub-research question 1: *How do demographic and psychological determinants influence Chinese children's motivation to learn music?* Chapter 6 presents the qualitative findings, offering an in-depth examination of the sub-research question 2: *How do learning environment influence children's musical motivation?* Building on the evidence from both chapters, Chapter 7 synthesises the quantitative and qualitative strands to examine sub-research question 3: *How do these determinants interact with each other?* It situates the findings within the broader educational ecosystem and proposes strategies for fostering learning environments that strengthen children's motivation to engage in music learning.

Finally, Chapter 8 concludes the thesis by summarising the main findings, critically evaluating the research methodology, and identifying its limitations. It also outlines the implications for future research and offers final reflections on the study's contributions to understanding the determinants of Chinese children's musical motivation.

Chapter 2: Research Background

Situated in the educational landscape of contemporary China³, this study requires an understanding of the nation's historical, cultural and political context. This chapter offers that foundation, presenting a concise overview of the key historical developments, cultural traditions, and political factors that inform the research.

2.1: Historical and Governmental Background

The following discussion highlights important historical events and national policies that have had a lasting impact on music education in China.

2.1.1: Cultural Revolution

The Cultural Revolution (CR, 1966–1976) was a sociopolitical movement launched by Chairman Mao Zedong to consolidate Chinese Communism and eradicate perceived feudal and capitalist influences (Clark, 2008; Landsberger, 2002). The movement proved to be highly disruptive, severely undermining economic development and cultural life (Clark, 2008; Deng & Treiman, 1997). It profoundly altered music education in China.

The education system was among the hardest hit. Universities closed for a decade because leaders believed the existing system reinforced elitist and capitalist ideals (Clark, 2008; Deng & Treiman, 1997). Admissions were based on political recommendations rather than academic merit, and formal music education opportunities largely disappeared until national college entrance examinations were reinstated in 1977 under Deng Xiaoping (Li, 2001). This interruption weakened the professional pipeline for music teachers and limited children's exposure to structured music learning.

³ The term 'Contemporary China' refers to the socio-political landscape of China since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949. It encompasses the ongoing era of rapid economic growth, technological advancement, globalisation and significant political, social and environmental transformations (Clark, 2008; Ho et al., 2012).

Both Chinese and Western⁴ musical traditions suffered extensive damage. Campaigns to destroy the ‘four olds’ (old culture, ideology, customs, and habits) resulted in the loss of manuscripts, research materials, and much folk and minority music (Lu, 2004; Zhou & Hou, 1999). Many scholars and musicians were persecuted and sent to rural labour camps for ‘re-education’, severing intergenerational links that would normally sustain children’s access to diverse musical practices (Giles et al., 2019).

Music that survived the CR was reshaped into political propaganda. Western repertoire was banned, and all music education was required to promote Marxist-Leninist-Maoist ideology and loyalty to the Communist Party (Ho & Law, 2004). Revolutionary songs such as *The East Is Red* and *We Are Chairman Mao’s Red Guards* were celebrated for their “redness, brightness, and luminosity⁵,” (Ho & Law, 2004), qualities intended to inspire collective fervour (Ho, 2010a, 2010b; Kraus, 2012). Children’s musical experiences were therefore largely confined to state-approved repertoire that emphasised obedience and nationalism over personal expression or creativity.

The CR left a lasting imprint on Chinese children’s musical learning. The destruction of traditional resources reduced opportunities for cultural continuity; the politicisation of music narrowed the repertoire and framed music primarily as a civic duty; and the decimation of formal music education weakened teacher preparation for decades. Contemporary attitudes toward music learning, parental caution about career prospects, lingering associations with political propaganda, and uneven access to quality instruction, can all be traced in part to this era’s legacy.

⁴ In this thesis, ‘Western’ refers to countries and societies shaped by European intellectual, cultural, and institutional traditions, including much of Europe and North America, as well as regions such as Australia and New Zealand. In broad cultural terms, Western societies are often characterised by a strong emphasis on individualism, valuing personal autonomy, self-expression, independence, and individual rights, and by social and political ideals associated with liberal democracy. While acknowledging variation within and across Western countries, this definition is used to contrast cultural contexts in which individual goals and self-directed choices are prioritised over collective obligations (Hofstede, 1999; Nisbett, 2010; Triandis, 1995).

⁵ Redness emphasised its allegiance to Communist ideology and the revolutionary causes; Brightness emphasised the uplifting and optimistic tone of revolutionary music, which was intended to inspire and motivate people to support the Communist Party; and luminosity was to symbolise revolutionary music’s perceived radiance or brilliance, suggesting its transformative power to illuminate and enlighten the masses and thereby spreading revolutionary consciousness and solidarity.

2.1.2: The “Reform and Opening Up”

China’s economic reform, known as “Reform and Opening Up”, began in 1978 and marked a decisive shift from a state-planned economy to a market-oriented system (Lin et al., 1997). While key sectors such as banking and petroleum remained under government control, private enterprise expanded rapidly and fuelled sustained economic growth (Chow, 2004; Lin et al., 1997). The new openness brought not only a new economic chapter but also a revitalised era for arts and culture.

These reforms profoundly influenced the environment in which children developed musical motivation. Increased prosperity gave families more disposable income to invest in cultural activities, including private music lessons and instruments, creating opportunities that were unavailable during the CR. At the same time, unprecedented musical and educational exchange with the wider world broadened young learners’ horizons. The Chinese Musicians’ Association joined the International Musicological Society, and foreign performers and educators introduced new pedagogies and performance practices (Wong, 2002). Increasing numbers of Chinese students studied abroad and returned with advanced training and innovative ideas, further elevating expectations for music education at home (Ministry of Education, PRC, 2025).

This cross-cultural dialogue enriched both sides. For example, Chinese composers adopted avant-garde techniques from figures such as George Crumb and Chou Wen-Chung, while Western educators gained insights into Chinese instruments and aesthetics (Ho & Law, 2004). Projects like Yo-Yo Ma’s Silk Road Project (2000) and institutional collaborations such as the Juilliard School’s Tianjin campus exemplify the reciprocal exchange that has influenced conservatory curricula worldwide (Nietzel, 2021).

The Chinese government reinforced these developments by expanding music education. For example, some leading universities, including Beijing and Wuhan, established music programmes, and the Ministry of Education (MoE) sponsored national music camps and exchanges (Mu et al., 1994). Furthermore, events such as Tsinghua University⁶’s inaugural music camp, where students performed Western repertoires such as Handel’s Hallelujah Chorus,

⁶ Tsinghua University is a public research university located in Haidian District, Beijing, China, and is widely recognised as one of the country’s top two universities. Founded in 1911, it currently consists of 21 schools and 59 departments, spanning a broad range of disciplines including science, engineering, humanities, law, education, and the arts (Yang & Welch, 2012).

signalled an official commitment to ‘quality-oriented education’⁷ (Mu et al., 1994; Ho & Law, 2004).

Overall, the post-1978 reforms created economic capacity, cultural openness, and institutional support that continue to shape the determinants of Chinese children’s musical motivation. Greater family resources, wider musical horizons, and a government agenda promoting cultural sophistication have all combined to make music education both more accessible and more aspirational for Chinese children.

2.1.3: One-child Policy

China’s one-child policy was a nationwide mandate limiting most urban couples to a single child, which remained in place for 36 years before its gradual repeal in 2015 (Feng et al., 2014; Li et al., 2011; Wang et al., 2016). Introduced in 1979 to curb rapid population growth and avert a predicted Malthusian crisis⁸, the policy ultimately reshaped family dynamics and gender norms across China (Chen & Tan, 2021; Huang et al., 2021; McElroy & Yang, 2000).

Growing up as the sole focus of parental attention and resources, many children, especially girls, benefited from concentrated investments in education, healthcare, and personal development (Li et al., 2011; Rosenzweig & Zhang, 2009). Research further indicates that women from the one-child generation often continue to prefer small families, reflecting both economic realities and the normalisation of a single-child household (Wang & Zhang, 2022).

The policy also altered the landscape for music education. With only one child to support, families were more willing and able to provide high-quality extracurricular training, including music lessons, regardless of gender. Declining preference for sons reduced long-standing

⁷ ‘Quality-oriented education’ refers to an educational philosophy and reform movement aimed at enhancing individuals’ overall quality of life while emphasising innovation and practical skills. This initiative seeks to cultivate a high standard of ideological, moral, and cultural development, ensuring that the new generation is well-disciplined and intellectually and physically equipped to continue building socialism. (MoE, PRC, 2001). Since 1999, formal education in China has undergone significant transformation due to the nationwide implementation of quality-oriented education, which has been realised across four key domains: moral, intellectual, physical, and aesthetic education (Yang & Welch, 2023).

⁸ The concept of the ‘Malthusian crisis’, introduced by Thomas Malthus, proposes that unchecked population growth would exceed food production, ultimately resulting in widespread famine and societal collapse (Bashford et al., 2020).

barriers for girls, enabling broader access to formal music education and greater gender balance in conservatories and professional careers (Fong, 2002; Lee, 2012; Rosenzweig & Zhang, 2009). Research further indicates that single-child households devote more financial and emotional resources to enrichment activities than households with multiple children (Feng et al., 2014).

While this concentration of support fostered opportunities and motivation for artistic achievement, it also brought new pressures. Only children were often expected to excel academically and artistically, intensifying parental expectations and, at times, heightening performance anxiety (Dong & Xu, 2016). These dynamics continue to influence contemporary patterns of children's musical motivation in China, combining enhanced access and encouragement with the challenge of elevated parental demands.

2.1.4: Compulsory Education Law

China's education system is divided into two stages: compulsory and post-compulsory. Compulsory education consists of six years of primary schooling followed by three years of lower secondary education, while post-compulsory education includes senior secondary schooling and higher education.

Enacted in 1986, the Compulsory Education Law guarantees nine years of free schooling for all children (Congress, 1986). The national curriculum includes Chinese literature, English, mathematics, music, art, science, history, and moral education, with an emphasis on patriotism and collective values (Ho, 2010a, 2010b). By 2019, primary school attendance had reached 99.95%, a rate comparable to developed nations such as the United States, Japan, and Germany (Global Education Monitoring Report by UNESCO, 2023). Fang et al. (2012) suggest the law increased Chinese overall educational attainment by nearly ten months of schooling.

This law has had direct implications for children's musical development. Universal access ensures that every child, regardless of gender or socioeconomic background, receives at least a basic level of music education as part of the national curriculum. The requirement for music instruction normalises musical participation, allowing children to experience music not as an elite pursuit but as an integral component of general education.

This law also strengthened the teaching profession, indirectly improving music instruction. Mandated government funding⁹ raised teacher salaries, offered rural subsidies, and aligned educators' pay with other public-sector roles, improving recruitment and retention (Song et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2020). Standardised training and certification requirements increased the proportion of teachers with higher education qualifications (at least a bachelor's degree) from 35.4% in 2010 to over 50% by 2019 (Gao, 2005; MoE, Educational Statistics, 2019; MoE, PRC, 2021). These measures elevated the quality of music educators, ensuring more consistent and inspiring classroom experiences.

In general, the Compulsory Education Law not only raised China's general educational standards but also created the conditions for widespread musical engagement. By guaranteeing access, improving teacher quality, and supporting specialised pathways, it has become an important influencing factor which may influence children's musical motivation.

2.1.5: National College Entrance Examination (NCEE)

The National College Entrance Examination (NCEE) represents the cornerstone of China's higher-education admissions system and a defining moment in most students' educational trajectories (Guo et al., 2019; Pires & Duarte, 2019; Zhang, 2016). Because admission to prestigious universities is largely determined by NCEE scores, the examination is widely regarded as a key gateway to social mobility and professional success (Cai et al., 2019; Zhang, 2016). High performance in the NCEE not only opens access to elite universities but is also

⁹ In 2013, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Finance jointly issued the "Notice on Implementing the 2013 Central Document No. 1," which mandated living subsidies for rural teachers working in poverty-stricken areas (Policy Number [2013] 106). Also known as the Rural Teacher Living Subsidy Policy, it was initially piloted in 14 poverty-stricken rural areas in Western China. The local government is responsible for implementing and funding the subsidy, while the central government provides financial support through rewards and supplemental funding. The implementation details, including the scope and subsidy amount, are determined at the local level. Generally, the subsidy amount is based on the degree of hardship experienced by rural teachers, with higher subsidies allocated to those working in village schools and areas with particularly challenging living conditions. The subsidy is discontinued when teachers resign from rural schools or retire from teaching. In 2015, the China General Office of the State Council introduced the Rural Teacher Support Plan (2015–2020), which expanded the scope of the Rural Teacher Living Subsidy Policy. This plan introduced additional measures to encourage young professionals to teach in rural schools, including tuition fee compensation for college graduates and student loan reimbursement for newly graduated teachers who accepted teaching positions in rural schools.

associated with long-term advantages in employment opportunities, income levels, and social status. Consequently, families often place intense pressure on students to perform well in the examination (Chan & Zhang, 2021).

This competition is further intensified by national initiatives such as the “211 Project”¹⁰, which directs government funding to approximately 100 elite universities, reinforcing their symbolic status as markers of academic excellence (Li et al., 2013). Under these conditions, many students devote extraordinary amounts of time to exam preparation. Some studies report that students may spend more than twelve hours per day studying, while parents invest heavily in supplementary tutoring in order to secure competitive advantages (Li, 2009; Zhao, 2014). The pressure associated with examination preparation is not limited to senior secondary education; even primary and lower secondary school students frequently experience heavy academic workloads and extensive homework demands (Sun et al., 2012; Zhang et al., 2023).

Beyond its role as an academic assessment, the NCEE has far-reaching implications for students’ psychological well-being and life trajectories (Hesketh et al., 2010; Pires & Duarte, 2019; Zhao et al., 2015). For example, Hesketh et al. (2010), in a study of 2,191 Chinese children aged 9–12, found that 81% reported worrying “a lot” about examinations, while 73% indicated that they feared parental punishment for poor performance. Similarly, a large-scale survey conducted by the China Youth and Children Research Center involving 2,400 students across six Chinese cities found that 76.2% of respondents reported negative emotional states resulting from academic pressure and high parental expectations, and 9.1% reported feelings of despair (Zhao et al., 2015). These findings suggest that exam-related pressure is already deeply embedded in students’ educational experiences long before they reach the stage of sitting the NCEE.

Recognising these pressures, the Chinese government introduced the Double Reduction Policy¹¹ in 2021 to limit homework and curb the private tutoring industry (Li et al., 2022; Wang

¹⁰ 211 Project is a government initiative launched in 1995 to enhance the quality of higher education in China. This programme aimed to develop approximately 100 key universities and disciplines to prepare the country for the demands of the twenty-first century. As part of the project, only 112 of the 2,305 higher education institutions in China were selected to receive substantial government funding to improve infrastructure, attract distinguished faculty staff, and strengthen research capabilities (Li et al., 2013).

¹¹ In an effort to enhance educational equality and reduce excessive competition related to the NCEE, the Chinese government introduced the Double Reduction Policy in July 2021. The policy specifically aimed to curb the rapid growth of private tutoring and alleviate the academic burden on primary and secondary school students (Li et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2022; Yu et al., 2022). The term “Double Reduction” refers to the two key targets of the policy: reducing both the amount of homework assigned to

et al., 2022; Yu et al., 2022). However, emerging evidence indicates that parental anxiety and academic competition remain strong. Rather than reducing competition, some families have shifted towards more expensive one-to-one tutoring in order to maintain perceived advantages for their children (Jin & Sun, 2022).

The dominance of the NCEE also strongly shapes children's engagement with music. Because music is not examined, families often shift attention away from musical study during secondary school to focus on examined subjects. Many students reduce or abandon musical training altogether in the critical high-school years (Xie & Leung, 2011). At the same time, the examination system can also create indirect incentives for continued musical engagement. High-level graded music examinations (see Section 3.3.4.2 for a further discussion of graded music examinations) may qualify students as "special-skill" candidates, enabling them to apply to universities with lower NCEE score requirements or to gain admission to music programmes through alternative recruitment pathways (Xie & Leung, 2011; Yan, 2017).

These contrasting dynamics illustrate the complex role of the NCEE in shaping musical engagement. On the one hand, the exam system encourages many students to abandon music in favour of academic subjects. On the other hand, it can motivate some families to invest strategically in music learning as a means of gaining admission advantages. In this sense, the NCEE functions simultaneously as both a constraint and a catalyst for children's musical motivation. For some families, music becomes a pragmatic investment in university admission; for others, it is sacrificed to the demands of intense academic competition.

2.2: Chinese Cultural Values

Chinese cultural values, deeply rooted in Confucian philosophy, continue to shape family life and education, thereby influencing children's motivation to learn music. Confucian values emphasise social harmony, hierarchical relationships, filial piety, and the moral purpose of

students and the scale of after-school tutoring programmes. Schools were encouraged to regulate and limit homework loads, while public school teachers were explicitly forbidden from engaging in private tutoring. Additionally, strict restrictions were imposed on the operation and development of private tutoring institutions, including a ban on for-profit tutoring in core academic subjects.

education (Bahtilla & Xu, 2021; Littlejohn, 2010). This section aims to introduce Confucian philosophy from three perspectives: (a) the origins of Confucian thinking and its impact on music education, (b) the hierarchy of Confucianism, and (c) parents' expectations shaped by Confucian values.

2.2.1: The Origins of Confucian Thinking and Its Impact to Music Education

Confucianism originates in the teachings of Confucius (551–479 BCE), recorded in *The Analects*, a collection of dialogues between the philosopher and his disciples. Central to these teachings are virtues such as kindness, benevolence, and moral self-cultivation, as well as guidance on proper conduct towards family, friends, and rulers (Huang & Gove, 2015a; Leung et al., 2010).

Education occupies a prominent place in Confucian philosophy. Confucius advocated equal access to learning, arguing that education should be offered to all regardless of social status (Bahtilla & Xu, 2021; Li, 2012). He also emphasised the value of long-term, deliberate study, an idea that continues to influence Chinese educational practice (Bray & Lykins, 2012).

To cultivate well-rounded individuals, Confucius outlined the “six arts”: rites, music, archery, charioteering, calligraphy, and mathematics (Littlejohn, 2010). Among these, music held a special role as a metaphor for social harmony and moral order (Thrasher, 1981). During the Zhou Dynasty (1045–256 BCE), for example, aristocratic rank determined the composition of court ensembles, reflecting the connection between music and societal hierarchy. Yet music was valued less as a professional pursuit than as a path to spiritual refinement. Ho (2018) notes that traditional Chinese culture regarded music primarily as a means of personal fulfilment, and professional street musicians, often blind or impoverished, were accorded low social status.

This legacy continues to shape contemporary attitudes toward music education in China. The longstanding belief that music serves as a means of aesthetic refinement and moral cultivation, rather than a pathway to material or professional success, has been transmitted across generations. A growing body of research suggests that these Confucian values continue to influence parental attitudes toward their children's education (e.g., Chen, 2016; Chen & Ho, 2012; Huang & Gove, 2015a; Pires & Duarte, 2019). As discussed further in Section 2.2.3, such

values play a significant role in shaping children's motivation to learn music in contemporary China.

2.2.2: The Hierarchy of Confucianism

The five fundamental human relationships identified by Confucianism are father-son, emperor-subject, husband-wife, elder-younger, and friend-friend, and these provide the social hierarchy in China (Huang & Gove, 2015a, 2015b). The roles and responsibilities of each person are well-defined (Huang & Gove, 2015a, 2015b), and Chinese social and family systems are based on these roles and responsibilities, which are the critical concepts in Confucianism (Huang & Gove, 2015a; Leung et al., 2010).

Family interactions and relationships are important because three of the five fundamental human relationships occur within the family (Chang & Holt, 1991). Filial piety, the bond between parents and children, is regarded as one of the important family hierarchies. Children show filial piety, which means they respect their parents and the elderly. Dong and Xu (2016) suggest that filial piety is beneficial for developing a child's moral character. Furthermore, families' daily educational practices are entwined with the virtue of filial piety. For example, Leung et al. (2010) argue that children should respect their parents and follow their instructions, this is a sign of filial piety. Furthermore, Leung and his colleagues point out that disobedience to parental authority is unacceptable and will have dire consequences. It was illegal to be unfilial in traditional Chinese societies and families, where the penalty could even be death (Dong & Xu, 2016; Ho et al., 2012).

Filial piety provides a philosophical basis and structure for Chinese parenting. It determines in part the expectations and anticipated reactions associated with parent-child interactions. Parents are expected to be responsible and experienced instructors when delivering cultural norms, values, and life experiences, while children are expected to be obedient and respectful (Chen, 2014; Ho et al., 2012). Therefore, traditional Chinese parents tend to adopt an authoritarian and controlling parenting style (Baumrind, 1966).

There are various types of parenting theories, but the most popular and influential, and one that has been used as a reference in recent decades, is Diana Baumrind's parenting style (Fadlilah & Fauziah, 2022). According to Baumrind, there are four parenting styles, namely

authoritative, authoritarian, permissive and neglecting (Baumrind, 1966). Section 3.3.2.2.1 provides a further explanation of Diana Baumrind's parenting styles.

Existing research on Chinese parenting style has applied Baumrind's parenting classifications, such as authoritative and authoritarian, but has further refined them with descriptors like "authoritative and psychologically controlling" (Chan et al., 2009, p. 849). Chao (1994, 1995) supposes that both authoritative and authoritarian parenting styles are intertwined within the Chinese value system, and both are expressed to varying degrees based on a family's particular circumstances. Chao (1995) further explains that Chinese parents have high academic and behavioural expectations while providing warmth and emotional support. These characteristics reflect a blend of authoritative and authoritarian parenting styles, which are deeply embedded within the Confucian value system. The impact of this parenting approach can be both positive and negative (Peng et al., 2024). On the one hand, it can motivate children to achieve academic excellence and develop strong self-discipline (Gonzalez-DeHass et al., 2005; Macmillan, 2004). On the other hand, it may also lead to heightened stress, anxiety, and reduced autonomy, as children often feel intense pressure to meet their parents' expectations (Dong & Xu, 2016; Zhao et al., 2015).

According to Chua (2011), the term "tiger parenting" has become increasingly popular for describing the Asian parenting style, particularly when describing Chinese parents. This approach is characterised by a culturally embedded blend of both authoritative and authoritarian parenting traits, where parents exhibit high expectations and strict discipline while also providing support and guidance (Chao, 1995; Xie & Li, 2019). In practice, this means that parents enforce rigorous academic and behavioural standards, closely monitor their children's progress, and prioritise educational success above other aspects of development. Huang and Gove (2015b), drawing from empirical research on Chinese parenting norms, argue that children are generally expected to adhere strictly to parental instructions and meet high expectations, with rebellion or defiance often being socially discouraged. Their findings indicate that this parental control is rooted in Confucian traditions, where filial piety and respect for authority are fundamental values. While this approach can foster academic achievement and discipline, it may also lead to heightened stress and reduced autonomy among children.

The same hierarchical values extend to the teacher–student relationship. Teachers are traditionally revered as moral exemplars responsible for shaping students' intellectual and ethical development (Hwang, 2013; Shim, 2008; Tan, 2015). Students are expected to show deference and lifelong respect, reinforcing a power dynamic that mirrors the parent–child bond.

Although contemporary scholars advocate more reciprocal teacher–student relationships to enhance collaboration (Chien et al., 2024; Dong et al., 2021), the Confucian value of the teacher as a respected authority remains influential.

Gender hierarchy has historically been another feature of Confucian society, with women expected to obey fathers and husbands and often denied formal education (Tan, 2019). Modern policies such as the Compulsory Education Law (see Section 2.1.4) and the one-child policy (see Section 2.1.3) have weakened these norms, expanding educational opportunities for girls and helping to redress long-standing gender imbalances (Chen & Tan, 2021; Huang et al., 2021; McElroy and Yang, 2000).

These hierarchical traditions continue to shape children’s motivation for music learning. High parental expectations and the cultural value placed on obedience can drive sustained practice and achievement in music, yet the same pressures may also create anxiety or limit self-directed engagement. The enduring respect for teachers means that music educators often hold significant influence, both as role models and as gatekeepers of musical opportunities, reinforcing the interplay between Confucian values and children’s musical development.

2.2.3: Parents’ Expectations Shaped by Confucian Values

Confucian values continue to influence Chinese parenting and moral expectations (Kelly & Tseng, 1992; Shek & Chan, 1999; Shek & Sun, 2014; Wu, 1996; Zhao et al., 2015). In this tradition, an exemplary child demonstrates self-control, moral integrity, and appropriate conduct (Shek & Chan, 1999; Shek & Sun, 2014). A Shanghai survey of 600 households found that parents most often described an “excellent” child as one with good character, intelligence and obedience (Wu, 1996). Parents therefore prioritise teaching behaviours that align with family and societal norms (Kelly & Tseng, 1992).

Core traits such as self-discipline, filial piety, mutual reliance, and group harmony reflect Confucian emphasis on hierarchical relationships and collective well-being. Parenting norms are closely tied to educational achievement and family honour, distinguishing Chinese expectations from many Western values that emphasise independence and self-expression (Shek & Chan, 1999).

Academic success occupies a central place in this framework. Historically, scholars have been regarded as members of an elite social class, and education is widely seen as the primary route to improved social standing, employment opportunities, and even marriage prospects (Chen, 2016; Chen et al., 2012; Huang & Gove, 2015a; Pires and Duarte, 2019). Parents therefore expect children to work diligently and even take pleasure in their studies, viewing educational accomplishment as both a personal and a family achievement.

This conviction places responsibility squarely on parents. Many parents believe they have failed if their children do not excel academically, and they invest considerable time and resources to ensure success (Huang & Gove, 2015b). Private tutoring has become a common strategy, especially among middle- and upper-class families seeking to secure strong school performance (Zhang, 2020).

In general, these values have clear implications for Chinese children's musical learning. Because music is not seen as a direct path to academic advancement, parents may perceive it as secondary to examinable subjects unless it contributes to educational credentials, such as special-skill pathways to university admission. At the same time, Confucian values of discipline, perseverance, and respect for teachers can positively influence children's motivation to practise and excel in music when parents view it as a means of cultivating character.

2.3: Chapter Summary

This chapter firstly outlined the historical and political context shaping music education in China. It highlighted the central role of the Chinese government, which since the founding of the People's Republic has used music to foster collective identity and promote both traditional values and Communist ideology (Ho, 2010a, 2010b). It examined key events and policies to show how state initiatives have influenced the development of music education.

The chapter also demonstrated how Confucianism remains a dominant philosophical framework, shaping politics, ethics, education, and interpersonal relationships. Confucian values thus provide an essential cultural foundation for understanding the contemporary determinants of children's musical motivation.

Together, these historical, political, and cultural perspectives establish the background for the analyses presented in Chapters 6, 7, and 8.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

This study focuses on musical motivation among Chinese children. This chapter begins by establishing a general understanding of motivation, first by defining the concept and then by examining key theoretical perspectives, with particular attention to its role in education and learning. It then reviews the literature on the key demographic and psychological and external determinants influencing children's musical development and motivation, drawing on both psychological and educational research. Collectively, this discussion provides an overview of existing literature and highlights the gaps that the present study seeks to address.

3.1: Understanding Motivation

This section begins by defining musical motivation and then reviews key motivational theories that offer complementary perspectives for understanding students' engagement with music. Motivation is widely recognised as central to explaining why learners initiate, sustain, or discontinue musical study, yet no single theory fully captures its complexity. The review therefore examines multiple theoretical approaches that illuminate the cognitive, emotional, social, and cultural dimensions of musical learning. At the same time, it highlights contradictions among existing findings, the predominance of Western-based research, and the persistent gaps in understanding how these theories operate within the Chinese educational context.

3.1.1 Definition of Music Motivation

The term "motivation" originates from the Latin word *movere*, meaning "to move". It can be described as the drive within a human being which stimulates individuals to act and behave in particular ways. Bigge and Hunt (1980) explain that this drive can originate from within the person, from the surrounding environments, or from an interaction between the two. Motivation has been consistently linked to persistence and achievement and it is widely regarded as beneficial for sustaining children's learning over time (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Schmidt et al.,

2006). Within the context music, motivation refers to an individual's enduring interest and sustained engagement in musical activities. It reflects the interaction of internal and external factors that shape enthusiasm, persistence, and commitment to learning and participating in music (Deci, 2014; Evans, 2015; Hallam, 2002, 2009; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Smith, 2011).

Musical motivation plays an important role in determining the extent to which individuals invest effort in practice, develop their musical abilities, and pursue long-term musical experiences (Eccles & Wigfield, 2020; Hallam, 2002, 2009; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Therefore, motivation is a central focus for researchers and practitioners in music education, as it plays an essential role in understanding why individuals choose to learn music, how they sustain learning through challenges, and what determines their success or their decision to give up.

Abundant studies in psychology have argued that motivation can be considered in terms of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation (Bénabou & Tirole, 2003; Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Researchers describe intrinsic motivators as those that inspire us to act out of an internal interest in an activity, such as the enjoyment one may experience from hearing a moving musical performance or viewing a compelling work of visual art (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Harter, 1981; Lepper, 1988; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Conversely, external motivators inspire us in the learning environment, such as receiving a reward (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Harter, 1983; Lepper, 1988). While both forms of motivation contribute to learning, research suggests that intrinsic motivation leads to deeper engagement and sustained enjoyment, whereas an overemphasis on external rewards can diminish long-term interest (Bénabou & Tirole, 2003; Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2017).

To better understand these processes, multiple theories have contributed to the understanding of motivation in general, and musical motivation in particular (Evans, 2015; Hallam, 2002; Hendricks, 2016; O'Neill & McPherson, 2002; Renwick & McPherson, 2002; Sichivitsa, 2007). The following subsections review these theories and outline their key principles, applications in music education and insights into children's motivation.

3.1.2: Motivation Theories

A wide range of motivational theories has been applied to music education research. These include, but are not limited to, Self-Determination Theory (Evans, 2015; Silva et al., 2014),

Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986; 1989, 2023), Self-Efficacy Theory (Asmus, 2021; Hendricks, 2016; Ritchie & Williamon, 2007, 2011a, 2011b), Achievement Goal Theory (Miksza et al., 2021; Ng, 2017; Schmidt, 2005; Schmidt et al., 2006), Expectancy-Value Theory (Freer & Evans, 2018; Juvonen, 2019; Kingsford-Smith & Evans, 2021; Parkes & Jones, 2011, 2012; Sichivitsa, 2007) and Interest Theory (Patall et al., 2008; Renwick & McPherson, 2002; Reynold & Symons, 2001), among many others. Each provides distinct insights into how and why children engage with music, while also highlighting the multiple dimensions, such as cognitive, emotional, social, and cultural, that underpin musical motivation.

3.1.2.1: Self-Determination Theory (SDT)

Self-Determination Theory (SDT), developed by Ryan and Deci (1985, 2000, 2017), is one of the most influential frameworks for understanding human motivation and well-being. It conceptualises motivation as a continuum ranging from amotivation (a lack of intention), through extrinsic motivation (behaviour driven by external rewards or pressures), to intrinsic motivation (engagement driven by personal interest and enjoyment). Importantly, SDT emphasises not only the quantity of motivation but also its quality, highlighting the extent to which behaviour is self-endorsed and aligned with an individual's sense of self.

At the heart of SDT are three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness, which are considered essential for engagement, persistence, and psychological well-being (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Autonomy is the feeling of independent control associated with congruence and integrity (Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2017; Vallerand, 2000). Competence pertains to capability and effectiveness in achieving goals and is regarded as the core element in motivated actions (Bandura, 1989). Relatedness concerns the need for social connection, belonging, and meaningful relationships with others (Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2017). Ryan and Deci (2000) argue that individuals are more inclined to feel internally motivated when these three psychological needs are satisfied. Conversely, when these needs are frustrated, motivation declines, often leading to disengagement or burnout (Bonneville-Rossy & Evans, 2025; Vallerand, 2000).

Applied to music education, SDT offers a valuable lens through which to understand how social and instructional contexts shape students' motivation. Autonomy may be fostered when

learners can make choices in repertoire selection, practice strategies, or creative expression (Evans, 2015). By contrast, exam-driven instruction or parental pressure may reduce intrinsic motivation by undermining autonomy (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Competence is reinforced when students perceive steady progress and mastery of musical skills, often supported by constructive feedback and appropriately challenging tasks (Bandura, 1989; Evans, 2015). Conversely, feelings of failure, lack of progress, or excessive criticism can diminish competence (MacIntyre et al., 2018; Reeve et al., 2004). Relatedness is particularly salient in music, which is frequently a collective endeavour involving teachers, peers, and family members. Supportive relationships have been shown to enhance motivation, whereas highly competitive or socially isolating environments may undermine it (Ricard & Pelletier, 2016; Sichivitsa, 2007).

SDT has been widely applied across diverse fields, including workplace learning (Gagné & Deci, 2005), sports and physical education (Standage et al., 2012), healthcare (Ng et al., 2012), social relationships (La Guardia & Patrick, 2008), and education (Reeve, 2002; Ryan & Niemiec, 2009). Its explanatory breadth makes it a valuable framework for understanding a wide range of behaviours, including those related to motivation in music learning. In a review of SDT, Evans (2015) observes that, “there is little doubt that a systematic programme of research within this perspective is a productive and important endeavour for researchers interested in understanding motivation for music learning” (p. 78).

Despite its strong explanatory power, contradictions exist in how SDT is interpreted across different cultural and educational contexts. In Western music education, autonomy is often equated with personal choice and independence, and studies consistently find that greater learner autonomy enhances intrinsic motivation (Evans, 2015; Renwick & McPherson, 2002). However, research in East Asian settings, including China, suggests that autonomy is often experienced through fulfilling responsibilities and meeting expectations set by parents or teachers rather than through individual choice (Guo et al., 2020; Long & Pang, 2016; Ren & Pope Edwards, 2015). This indicates that SDT’s conceptualisation of autonomy may not fully capture motivational dynamics in collectivist cultures. Moreover, while some studies emphasise the positive role of examination systems in fostering persistence (Stoeber & Eismann, 2007; Tse, 2024), others argue that exam-driven environments suppress intrinsic interest (Hesketh et al., 2010; Meng-ying, 2021; Pires & Duarte, 2019; Zhao et al., 2015), highlighting tensions in the literature. Finally, there remains a notable gap in longitudinal and cross-cultural studies that systematically investigate how the needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness interact in shaping persistence in Chinese music education. Future research addressing these contradictions

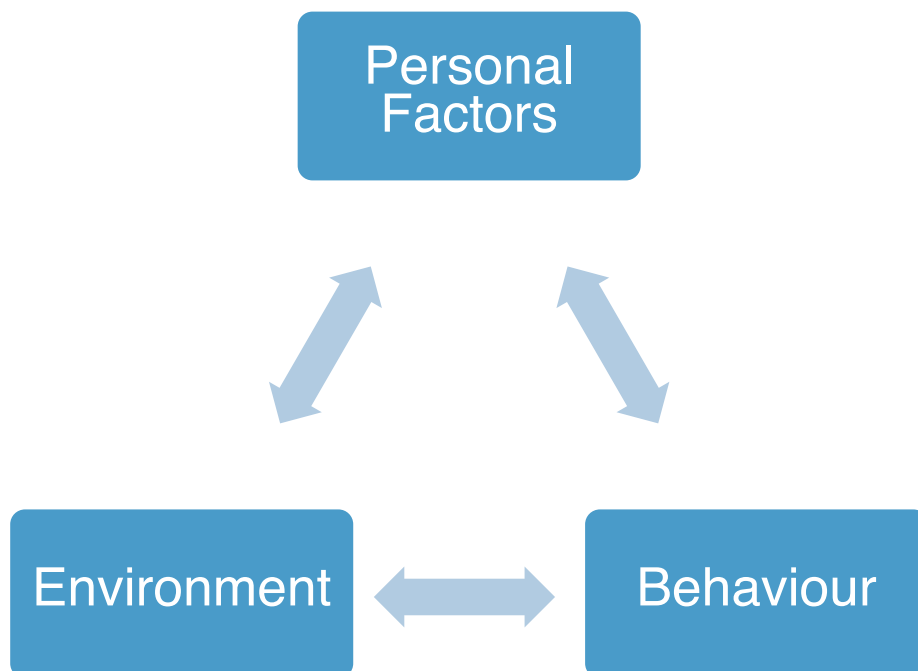
would help clarify whether SDT is universally applicable or requires cultural adaptation in music education research.

3.1.2.2: Social Cognitive Theory (SCT)

Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), developed by Bandura (1986, 1989, 2023), highlights the reciprocal interplay between personal, behavioural, and environmental influences on motivation (see Figure 1). A central construct is self-efficacy, individuals' beliefs in their ability to organise and execute actions to achieve specific goals (Bandura, 1989). These beliefs are shaped by mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and physiological states, and in turn affect goal-setting, persistence, and resilience (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2016, 2020, 2021; Schunk & Usher, 2012).

Figure 1

Model of Reciprocal Interactions



Note. Developed by the author based on Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory.

In music education, SCT has been widely applied to explain how self-efficacy influences students' practice habits and willingness to persist through challenges (Hendricks, 2016; O'Neill & McPherson, 2002; Ritchie & Williamon, 2007, 2011a, 2011b). Mastery experiences, such as successful performances, consistently predict stronger self-efficacy, while peer modelling and teacher feedback also play important roles (Hendricks, 2016). However, findings regarding social comparison are mixed. While some research suggests that observing peers' successes can enhance motivation, others caution that competitive ranking systems in music can exacerbate anxiety and diminish self-efficacy (Hendricks, 2014; O'Neill & McPherson, 2002). These contradictions indicate that the role of vicarious experience may depend heavily on the learning context.

Although SCT provides a robust framework for examining the interplay between individual beliefs and social environments, its application in music education raises several unresolved issues. First, studies disagree on the extent to which peer comparison strengthens or undermines self-efficacy, reflecting a lack of consensus on whether vicarious experience functions as a positive or negative influence. Second, the theory has been predominantly validated in Western contexts, where personal agency and self-directed goal-setting are emphasised (Asmus, 2021; Hendricks, 2014, 2016; Schunk & Dibenedetto, 2020, 2021; Schunk & Usher, 2012). In China, however, self-efficacy often develops through external validation from teachers, parents, and examination systems (Chan & Tan, 2004; Dong & Xu, 2016; Meng-ying, 2021; Sichivitsa, 2007). This suggests that SCT's focus on individual agency may overlook culturally specific dynamics of motivation in collectivist societies. Finally, research on musical self-efficacy in China remains sparse, with few longitudinal or large-scale studies exploring how self-efficacy evolves under the combined pressures of family expectations and institutional structures. Addressing these gaps would clarify whether SCT is universally applicable or requires adaptation for different cultural contexts.

3.1.2.3: Achievement Goal Theory (AGT)

Achievement Goal Theory (AGT) is a widely used motivational framework in education that distinguishes between two primary orientations: mastery goals (focused on skill development, learning, and personal growth) and performance goals (focused on demonstrating competence

relative to others and gaining favourable evaluations) (Ames, 1992; Elliott & Dweck, 1983; Nicholls, 1984). Learners may endorse both orientations simultaneously, though the balance between them is strongly influenced by instructional and social environments (García & Pintrich, 1991).

In music education, AGT has been used to examine how learning contexts shape students' motivational orientations across age groups (Asmus, 1986; Mawang et al., 2020; Miksza et al., 2021). Research consistently demonstrates that mastery goals are linked to positive outcomes such as greater persistence, deliberate practice, self-regulation, and higher performance achievement (Ng, 2017; Schmidt, 2005; Schmidt et al., 2006). For example, Ng (2017) found that mastery-oriented students invest more time in practice, while Schmidt (2005) showed that such orientations correlate with higher levels of musical achievement.

By contrast, performance goals have been associated with mixed outcomes. While some studies show that performance-oriented students value competition and may achieve short-term success (Schmidt et al., 2006), others report detrimental effects, including reduced practice, lower achievement, and hindered creativity (Mawang et al., 2020). These contradictory findings suggest that performance goals may function differently depending on whether they are framed as striving for excellence (approach goals) or avoiding failure (avoidance goals), a distinction not consistently examined in music education research.

Although AGT provides useful insights into students' motivational orientations, several limitations emerge. First, contradictions remain regarding performance goals: in some contexts they appear harmful, while in others they coexist with mastery orientations and support achievement. This inconsistency points to the need for finer distinctions between performance-approach and performance-avoidance goals in music education research. Second, Chinese studies on AGT are scarce, and the cultural emphasis on examination success, parental expectations, and teacher authority may shape performance goals differently, sometimes reinforcing persistence rather than undermining it. Finally, there is a lack of longitudinal research examining how mastery and performance orientations evolve over time in response to the unique pressures of Chinese music education. Future studies should therefore explore whether AGT requires cultural adaptation to fully capture motivational processes in non-Western contexts.

3.1.2.4: Expectancy-Value Theory (EVT)

Expectancy-Value Theory (EVT) first conceptualised by Atkinson (1957, 1964) and later expanded by Eccles and colleagues (Eccles et al., 1983; Eccles & Wigfield, 1995, 2020), explains motivation through two core components: expectancies for success (beliefs about one's likelihood of achieving a goal) and subjective task values (the importance attributed to a task). Subjective task values are divided into attainment value (significance of the task), intrinsic value (enjoyment and interest), utility value (usefulness for future goals), and perceived cost (effort and sacrifices required). EVT research across education has shown that expectancy-value beliefs predict achievement, learning behaviours, and emotional outcomes such as test anxiety (Guo et al., 2015; Perez et al., 2019; Selkirk et al., 2011).

In music education, EVT has been widely applied to compare students' motivational beliefs across domains. International studies (Leung & McPherson, 2011; McPherson & Hendricks, 2010; McPherson & O'Neill, 2010; Xie & Leung, 2011) found that students valued music less than core subjects such as mathematics or science, and also perceived it as less difficult. However, cultural, gender, and grade-level differences were evident, shaping both competence beliefs and task values. Research also links expectancy-value beliefs to elective choices in music. While some studies argue that values are weak predictors of elective uptake (Kingsford-Smith & Evans, 2021), others show that students who hold stronger competence and value beliefs for music are more motivated to select it as an elective (Venter, 2019). Similarly, expectancy-value beliefs influence career aspirations: students with higher expectancy-value beliefs are more likely to pursue music-related careers (Parkes & Jones, 2011, 2012), though the predictors differ between performance-focused and teaching-focused pathways. Parental support has also emerged as a strong contextual factor influencing students' expectancy-value beliefs (Juvonen, 2019; Sichivitsa, 2007).

While EVT provides a robust framework for explaining why students choose or persist in music, contradictions exist in the literature. For instance, studies disagree on the predictive strength of values in elective choices, with some emphasising their weak influence (Kingsford-Smith & Evans, 2021) and others highlighting their strong predictive role (Venter, 2019). Moreover, EVT research has been dominated in Western countries, which often assume that value and choice are closely linked. In China, however, students' music learning decisions are strongly shaped by external influencing factors, meaning that subjective task values may not

translate directly into autonomous choice. This raises questions about whether EVT, developed in Western contexts, adequately accounts for collectivist values and structural constraints. Finally, while several cross-cultural comparisons exist, few studies explore Chinese students' expectancy-value beliefs in depth, and longitudinal evidence remains scarce (Leung & McPherson, 2011; Xie & Leung, 2011).

3.1.2.5: Interest Theory

Interest, closely related to intrinsic motivation, is a central factor in sustaining engagement in learning (Deci, 2014; Hidi, 2000; Schiefele, 2009). While intrinsic motivation refers broadly to engaging in activities for their inherent satisfaction, interest is more specific, reflecting the relationship between a person and an object (Hidi & Harackiewicz, 2000). Scholars distinguish between individual interest which is a relatively stable and enduring orientation towards a domain, and situational interest which is temporary and triggered by environmental factors (Roberts, 2015). Both forms of interest can co-exist, and higher levels of both forms of interest are consistently linked to greater persistence, commitment, and effort in learning activities (Hidi, 2000).

Applied to music education, studies suggest that individual interest plays a critical role in sustaining long-term engagement, with children who report stable interest in instrumental learning showing higher levels of persistence and practice (Leung & McPherson, 2011; Renwick & McPherson, 2002). Situational factors also matter, for example, teacher enthusiasm, student–teacher relationships, and opportunities for choice are frequently cited as triggers of situational interest that can enhance intrinsic motivation (Davidson & Burland, 2006; Patall et al., 2008). Additionally, offering students meaningful choices in repertoire or learning strategies has been shown to strengthen both situational interest and longer-term commitment to music (Renwick & McPherson, 2002).

Despite the apparent consensus that interest fosters persistence, contradictions remain regarding the relative weight of individual versus situational interest. Some scholars argue that stable, long-term individual interest is the decisive factor in musical commitment (Renwick & McPherson, 2002), whereas others stress the importance of situational triggers such as teacher

support and repertoire choice, particularly in the early stages of learning (Davidson & Burland, 2006). Furthermore, most studies have been conducted in Western contexts that emphasise learner choice, personal expression, and autonomy. In highly structured systems such as China's, where curriculum and examinations dominate, opportunities to foster situational interest through choice may be limited, raising questions about the applicability of interest theory across cultural contexts.

3.1.3: Conclusion

In general, motivation is a complex construct that underpins students' engagement, persistence and achievement in musical learning. While general psychological theories provide important foundations, the unique cognitive, emotional, social, and cultural dimensions of music necessitate a more specific conceptualisation.

Theories of motivation collectively illuminate the diverse psychological and contextual influences that shape students' engagement with music. While SDT emphasises the fulfilment of autonomy, competence, and relatedness, SCT highlights the role of self-efficacy and social environments. AGT distinguishes between mastery and performance orientations. EVT explains the importance of expectancies and values; and Interest Theory foregrounds the interplay of individual and situational factors. Yet across these perspectives, several issues remain unresolved: studies sometimes contradict one another, findings are often derived from Western contexts, and limited research has explored how these frameworks operate within Chinese music education.

3.2: Identifying Demographic and Psychological Determinants of Children's Musical Motivation

Research on demographic and psychological determinants in music has traditionally examined how musicians differ from non-musicians across a range of personal characteristics, such as age, gender and personality traits (Gaunt & Hallam, 2009; Gjermunds et al., 2020; Hallam et al.,

2020; McPherson & O'Neill, 2010). These variables not only distinguish musicianship but also shape the ways children engage with and sustain musical study. This section synthesises prior studies to identify the most influential demographic and psychological determinants of children's musical motivation.

3.2.1: Age as a Determinant of Children's Musical Motivation

Age represents one of the most significant determinants influencing children's cognitive, emotional, and motivational trajectories. It shapes not only the capacity to learn but also the psychological mechanisms that underpin engagement, persistence, and self-regulation in musical learning (Erikson, 1959; Piaget, 1976; Wigfield et al., 1996). Across developmental stages, children's perceptions of competence, autonomy, and purpose evolve in accordance with their cognitive maturity and social experiences, resulting in age-specific motivational orientations. Developmental theorists such as Piaget (1976) contend that children progress through successive cognitive stages: sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operational and formal operational. Each is associated with increasing abstraction, intentionality, and capacity for self-directed learning. Erikson's (1959) psychosocial theory similarly positions age as central to the formation of identity and self-belief, with each developmental stage presenting distinct motivational challenges and sources of validation. These frameworks collectively suggest that age acts as both a cognitive and socio-emotional lens through which learning experiences, including music, are perceived and internalised.

Within the domain of music education, age plays a critical role in determining both the quality and type of motivation. Early childhood is characterised by play-based exploration, intrinsic enjoyment, and sensory engagement with sound (Gruhn, 2011). At this stage, motivation is closely tied to immediate gratification and curiosity rather than long-term goals. As children mature, cognitive and metacognitive capacities enable more sophisticated forms of reflection and self-regulation. They begin to set goals, monitor progress, and internalise feedback, fostering greater autonomy and persistence in practice (Bonneville-Roussy et al., 2013; Evans & Bonneville-Roussy, 2016; Schatt, 2011). This transition marks a shift from situational interest to individual interest, a process emphasised in motivational development theory (Renninger & Hidi, 2015). However, this developmental progression is not linear or universally positive.

During late childhood and early adolescence, motivational fluctuations often occur as social comparison and peer influence become increasingly salient (Eccles & Wigfield, 2020; Wigfield et al., 1996). At this stage, children's motivation may become contingent on external validation, competition, or perceived competence relative to others. This can result in either enhanced engagement, when positive reinforcement is present, or withdrawal, when failure or criticism undermines confidence (Deci et al., 1999; Ryan & Deci, 2000). In musical learning contexts, these processes are particularly evident as performance-oriented evaluation and examination systems become more prominent (Hallam et al., 2016).

Empirical research supports the notion that age significantly mediates motivational patterns in musical development. Younger learners generally exhibit high levels of enjoyment and enthusiasm but limited self-discipline, while older students demonstrate more differentiated motivational orientations, balancing intrinsic interest with extrinsic goals related to achievement, recognition, or parental expectation (Bonneville-Roussy et al., 2013; Schatt, 2011; Sichivitsa, 2007). Over time, the accumulation of musical experience can strengthen motivation through increased competence and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986, 1989, 2012). Yet, as Hallam et al. (2016) note, this process is sensitive to environmental and cultural contexts: age-related gains in motivation can be disrupted if instructional practices or social expectations fail to align with students' developmental needs.

In the Chinese context, the relationship between age and musical motivation is further complicated by cultural values and educational structures. Traditional Confucian principles emphasise diligence, discipline, and respect for authority, qualities that are often reinforced from early childhood through structured musical training (Ho, 2010b; Huang & Gove, 2015a, 2015b). As children age, these external pressures may interact with internal developmental changes, shifting motivation from intrinsic enjoyment towards extrinsic compliance or achievement orientation (Liu & Bray, 2022). The early introduction of examination-based assessment systems, coupled with parental expectations for visible progress, can amplify this transition (Meng-ying, 2021). Consequently, while younger children may experience music as a playful and expressive activity, older learners may perceive it increasingly as a vehicle for social mobility or familial approval, influencing both the quality and sustainability of their motivation.

In general, age serves not merely as a biological marker but as a developmental and cultural determinant of musical motivation. Understanding how motivation evolves across age groups and how this evolution interacts with the cultural and educational context of China is essential for designing developmentally responsive and culturally sensitive pedagogical practices. Such

an understanding enables educators and policymakers to support sustained engagement in music learning throughout childhood and adolescence.

3.2.2: Gender as a Determinant of Children's Musical Motivation

Gender has long been recognised as a powerful determinant in the development of musical identity and motivation. Within music education, gender not only influences children's access to particular learning experiences but also shapes their perceptions of competence, self-efficacy, and value attached to musical engagement. Theoretical perspectives, particularly those informed by feminist and sociocultural frameworks (Green, 1997; McCarthy, 2010), emphasise that gendered expectations are constructed and reinforced through cultural narratives rather than biological predisposition. These expectations, often internalised from an early age, condition how children relate to music, what they choose to learn, how they participate, and how they evaluate their own abilities.

Extensive research in Western contexts has documented persistent gender differences in musical participation and motivation. Boys are drawn to “masculine” instruments such as percussion, brass, and electric guitar, whereas girls often prefer “feminine” instruments like the piano, flute, or violin (Abeles & Porter, 1978; Bruce & Kemp, 1993). Similarly, gendered listening preferences emerge early, with boys leaning towards rock, hip-hop, or electronic genres, and girls favouring pop or classical music (Christenson & Peterson, 1988; Green, 1997). These divisions reflect the broader cultural association of femininity with expressiveness and aesthetics, and masculinity with technical mastery and performance (Koza, 1993). Consequently, gender stereotypes not only shape children's musical choices but also sustain unequal patterns of motivation and confidence across learning environments.

Gender differences are also evident in self-perception and motivational orientation. Research shows that girls are more likely to attribute musical success to effort and persistence, and to perceive music as personally and socially meaningful (McPherson & O'Neill, 2010; Schatt, 2011). Boys, by contrast, are more inclined to view musical ability as an innate talent and show heightened interest when musical learning involves technology, competition, or public performance (Comber et al., 1993; Hallam et al., 2017). Such differences suggest that girls are often motivated by the expressive and relational dimensions of music, whereas boys'

engagement is more strongly driven by extrinsic or performance-oriented factors. These motivational asymmetries reflect not only gender norms but also broader pedagogical practices that differentially reward expressiveness and technicality.

Evidence from Chinese settings remain comparatively limited. Ho's studies (2001, 2003) in Hong Kong revealed gendered instrument preferences closely mirroring Western patterns, while ethnographic research has identified gender-specific musical roles in traditional Chinese cultural contexts, such as the female-led Hakka Mountain song tradition (Thrasher, 2008). However, systematic investigations into how gender shapes musical motivation within mainland China's formal education system are still scarce. This absence of research is notable given that Chinese educational and familial structures, deeply influenced by Confucian values, often impose differentiated expectations on boys and girls regarding discipline, perseverance, and aesthetic refinement (Liu & Bray, 2022). These cultural scripts may reinforce gendered perceptions of what constitutes "appropriate" musical engagement, thereby affecting motivational development.

Taken together, these studies underscore gender as a central, though underexplored, determinant of children's musical motivation. Gendered norms influence not only instrument selection and self-efficacy but also the affective meanings children attach to musical learning. For a study examining the determinants of Chinese children's musical motivation, gender must therefore be considered.

3.2.3: Personality Traits as a Determinant of Children's Musical Motivation

Personality traits are enduring patterns of thought, feeling, and behaviour that help explain why children differ in their engagement with music (Gjermunds et al., 2020; Hart et al., 2007; Kemp, 1982). Within developmental and educational psychology, personality provides a crucial lens through which to understand intra-individual differences in motivation that cannot be fully explained by demographic or environmental factors (McCrae & Costa, 2003). The Big Five Model (Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, and Openness to Experience) is the predominant framework for examining such differences (Gjermunds et al., 2020; McCrae & Costa, 2003). Among these, openness and extraversion are most consistently linked to creativity, musical preference, and sustained participation, while conscientiousness

and neuroticism also play important, though more complex, roles in practice-based behaviour and performance anxiety (Gjermunds et al., 2020; Judge & Ilies, 2002; Kopacz, 2005).

Research across both adult and youth populations underscores the motivational implications of these traits. Children with high levels of openness, characterised by curiosity, imagination, and aesthetic sensitivity, are more inclined to explore novel musical experiences, experiment with different instruments, and show a deeper intrinsic interest in music learning (Benedek et al., 2014; Kemp, 1982; Vuust et al., 2010). In contrast, conscientiousness, associated with persistence, discipline, and goal orientation, predicts greater practice regularity and long-term skill acquisition (Gjermunds et al., 2020; Judge & Ilies, 2002). Extraversion fosters enthusiasm and engagement in social or performance-oriented musical contexts, while high neuroticism is often linked to heightened performance anxiety, reduced confidence, and motivational inhibition (Kemp, 1982). These personality-based differences illuminate why children of similar age, gender, and socio-economic background can display markedly divergent motivational profiles in music education.

Moreover, the interaction between personality and gender introduces an additional dimension of complexity. Some studies report that girls tend to score higher on extraversion and neuroticism, while boys often display higher levels of openness and emotional Stability (Costa et al., 2001; De Bolle et al., 2016; Limura & Taku, 2018). Other work, however, suggests that boys may score higher on extraversion, openness, and agreeableness (Feingold, 1994; Schmitt et al., 2008). Importantly, these studies have largely been descriptive, documenting mean-level differences, rather than testing whether gender moderates the association between personality and musical motivation. This remains a meaningful empirical and theoretical gap, because gender-linked patterns of emotional expression and coping may condition how personality traits translate into motivation within musical learning contexts. For instance, higher emotional reactivity may support interpretive involvement yet also heighten vulnerability to performance anxiety, whereas greater openness may facilitate exploratory creativity but, in some structured practice environments, may not align with sustained perseverance (McCrae & Costa, 2003).

Findings from studies of professional and student musicians reinforce the enduring influence of personality on musical behaviour. Openness to experience has been consistently associated with musical creativity, improvisation, and diverse genre preference (Benedek et al., 2014; Vuust et al., 2010). Meanwhile, lower conscientiousness levels have been linked to non-linear career paths and flexible practice habits, suggesting that certain “non-conventional” personality configurations may foster creative rather than structured forms of motivation (Gjermunds et al.,

2020). Research with adolescents further reveals that musical preferences, ranging from heavy metal to pop or classical, correspond to distinct personality profiles (Schwartz & Fouts, 2003), implying that personality not only influences musical engagement but also the symbolic meaning and social identity that children derive from musical participation.

Despite this growing body of evidence, research directly addressing the link between personality and children's musical motivation remains sparse. The literature that does exist suggests that personality interacts dynamically with cultural expectations, parental involvement, and pedagogical practices (Hart et al., 2007). For example, in educational cultures shaped by Confucian discipline and collectivist values, traits such as conscientiousness may be socially reinforced and thus more strongly associated with sustained engagement, while openness, which encourages experimentation and self-expression, may be less cultivated or even constrained in highly exam-oriented learning environments (Liu & Bray, 2022). Understanding how these cultural filters moderate personality–motivation relationships is therefore essential to explaining individual variability in Chinese children's musical trajectories.

In summary, personality traits represent a foundational demographic and psychological determinant of children's motivation to learn music, influencing how they experience autonomy, persistence and emotional engagement in learning. Traits such as openness, extraversion, neuroticism and conscientiousness are salient predictors of sustained musical motivation.

3.2.4: Summary

In summary, this section has examined the influence of age, gender, and personality traits as key demographic and psychological determinants shaping children's musical motivation. These factors are well-documented within broader music education and developmental psychology literature, yet empirical research focusing on their influence on children's musical motivation, particularly within the Chinese context, is limited. Addressing this gap, the present study investigates how internal determinants influence children's musical motivation.

Building on this foundation, the following section turns to the external determinants of musical motivation.

3.3: Identifying Key Learning Environment Factors in Music Education Research

This section examines the key external determinants of Chinese children's musical motivation, focusing on the influence of their learning environments. As defined in the Glossary, *learning environment* refers to the physical, instructional, relational, and socio-cultural conditions in which children learn music. It encompasses resources and settings, teaching and assessment practices, interactions with teachers, peers and parents, and the wider cultural and institutional expectations that shape children's motivation to engage and persist in music learning (Dell et al., 2014; Liu & Bray, 2022; Sichivitsa, 2007; Smit et al., 2014). In the field of music education, the learning environment functions not only as a context for skill development but also as a social and emotional ecosystem that mediates students' motivation and self-belief (McPherson & Hendricks, 2010; Sichivitsa, 2007).

The following subsection introduces the structural framework of Chinese music education proposed by Yan (2017), providing a foundation for understanding different types of learning environments.

3.3.1: Basic Framework of Chinese Music Education Proposed by Yan

Yan (2017) identifies three interrelated learning environments through which Chinese children receive music education: family, school, and society. Similarly, Burland (2005) highlights the roles of parents, teachers, peers, and educational institutions as social agents who transmit knowledge, values, and encouragement essential to musical development.

Yan (2017) proposes that music learning begins within the family, where parents exert the most immediate and formative influence from infancy. As children enter formal schooling, teachers and peers become central agents, shaping musical experiences through structured curriculum and social interaction. Beyond school, the societal environment, such as private tutoring, community ensembles, and cultural activities, provides broader opportunities for musical engagement. Although children encounter this societal context later, Yan (2017) emphasises that it exerts a profound and enduring impact. Together, these environments create a mutually supportive framework. Family and societal influences provide the longest and most

continuous exposure to music, while school-based instruction offers structured, periodic guidance.

This framework is particularly significant for this study because it highlights the social and contextual determinants of children's musical motivation. By conceptualising music education as a dynamic interaction between family, school, and society, Yan's framework (2017) provides a holistic lens through which to examine how different learning environments shape children's motivation to pursue and sustain musical learning. It also aligns with the present study's focus on the determinants of musical motivation, as each environment introduces distinct influences, such as parental support, teacher professionalism, peer interaction, and community culture, that collectively affect children's intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to learn music.

Building on Yan's framework, the following sections examine how family (Section 3.3.2), school (Section 3.3.3), and society (later reconceptualised as a wider learning environment, see Section 3.3.4) collectively shape Chinese children's motivation and capacity for sustained musical learning.

3.3.2: Family Learning Environment: Parents as a Determinant of Children's Musical Motivation

A substantial body of research highlights the family as a critical context for children's musical learning. Previous studies have explored determinants in the family learning environment, including parental musical background (Howe & Sloboda, 1991), socioeconomic background (Vadivel et al., 2023), parental support in children's practice and lessons (Brokaw, 1982; Creech, 2010), family interaction (Creech & Hallam, 2003; Davidson & Borthwick, 2002; Davidson & Scutt, 1999) and parent-teacher-pupil relationships (Ang et al., 2020, 2021; Creech, 2009; Creech & Hallam, 2003).

Within this environment, parents consistently emerge as among the most influential factors shaping children's motivation and achievement. Research indicates that parental involvement is strongly associated with academic success and sustained engagement (Gottfried et al., 1998; Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994). As Davidson et al. (1995) observe, "the highest levels of achievement are likely to remain unattainable without the positive involvement of the parent in the process" (p. 44). Extensive educational research suggests that parental engagement supports

not only musical development but also children's broader well-being and motivation (Gottfried et al., 1994, 1998; Grolnick, 2002).

Accordingly, this section focuses on parents as the key determinant in the family learning environment. Their influence is examined through four interrelated dimensions: (a) parental background, (b) parenting style, (c) parental support, and (d) parental roles. Together, these factors illuminate how parental characteristics and behaviours shape children's motivation to learn music.

3.3.2.1: Parental Background

Parental background, such as education and socioeconomic status (SES), is consistently identified as a central influence on children's access to, and motivation for, music education (Caro, 2018; Dini et al., 2019; Elpus & Abril, 2011; Hornby & Blackwell, 2018; Howe & Sloboda, 1991; Jarrett & Coba-Rodriguez, 2015; Şengönül, 2022). However, the mechanisms through which these factors shape children's musical motivation remain contested. Moreover, much of the existing evidence is derived from Western contexts, leaving important gaps in understanding how these influences operate in China. This section therefore examines parental background from two perspectives: parental education and socioeconomic status.

3.3.2.1.1: Parents' Educational Background

Numerous studies have demonstrated a strong relationship between parents' educational background and children's learning achievement (Dini et al., 2019; Hornby & Blackwell, 2018; Howe & Sloboda, 1991). Scholars have explored why well-educated parents positively influence their children's learning outcomes (Dell et al., 2014; Dini et al., 2019). For example, Dini et al. (2019) conducted a study involving 144 students and used a questionnaire to examine the impact of parents' attention, educational background and home study facilities on children's motivation and achievement. Their findings indicate that well-educated parents tend to remain highly informed about their children's progress, regularly collaborating with schools to monitor their child's development and specific needs.

Similarly, Dell et al. (2014) investigated the influences of family background on success in school music education. Their study, which involved 1114 music students in Grades 4 to 12 from six regions of the United States, revealed that well-educated parents could provide a more supportive home environment for musical learning, which strongly correlates with children's musical achievement. Both Dell et al. (2014) and Dini et al. (2019) conclude that well-educated parents are more aware of their children's academic strengths and weaknesses and tend to maintain stronger relationships with their children's teachers, further contributing to their overall educational success.

However, the assumption of a straightforward causal link is problematic. Hornby and Blackwell (2018) show that in some developing contexts, parental aspirations and day-to-day involvement can outweigh formal schooling, indicating that motivation may be shaped less by parents' credentials than by the quality of their interaction with the child. Few studies have tested these relationships in China, where Confucian values of filial responsibility may alter how parental education translates into motivational support. This gap limits our understanding of whether parental schooling is a universal or culture-bound determinant of children's musical motivation.

3.3.2.1.2: Parents' Socioeconomic Background

Many scholars argue that parents' socioeconomic background can directly influence their decisions and involvement in children's musical learning by shaping access to resources, extracurricular opportunities, and cultural capital, all of which contribute to outcomes for their children (Caro, 2018; Elpus & Abril, 2011; Jarrett & Coba-Rodriguez, 2015; Şengönül, 2022).

Prior research has shown that socioeconomically advantaged families provide more benefits for their children's musical learning. First, these families are believed to have more economic resources and willingness to invest in children's education (Caro, 2018; Şengönül, 2022). Parents with good socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to be involved in their children's musical learning, positively impacting their children's learning outcomes (Dell et al., 2014; Long & Pang, 2016). Additionally, compared to lower socioeconomic backgrounds, parents who enjoy more significant financial resources are much more likely to encourage their children to engage in extracurricular activities that require payment, such as attending concerts and private music tutoring (Caro, 2018; Liu & Bray, 2022).

Parents from lower socioeconomic backgrounds often face significant challenges that limit their ability to support their children's learning. Compared to their more affluent counterparts, they are more likely to encounter obstacles such as inflexible work schedules and limited access to transportation, which can hinder their involvement in educational activities (Hornby & Blackwell, 2018). These challenges may also affect children's motivation by exposing them to broader life difficulties (Hornby & Blackwell, 2018). For instance, Caro (2018) highlights that financial constraints make it difficult for low-income families to afford costly musical education, including registration fees, instrument rentals, and private tutoring. Furthermore, socioeconomic disparities can have long-term implications, influencing access to higher education and perpetuating social and economic inequalities (Long & Pang, 2016; Vadivel et al., 2023).

Earlier studies have found that children from higher socioeconomic backgrounds tend to achieve better academic outcomes (Dell et al., 2014; Elpus & Abril, 2011; Jarrett & Coba-Rodriguez, 2015). However, more recent research suggests that family income alone does not determine children's musical learning. Caro (2018) argues that some low-income families actively support music education despite financial constraints, a finding echoed by Jarrett and Coba-Rodriguez (2015) and Tan (2019). These studies highlight that parental attitudes, priorities, and engagement can compensate for limited financial resources, enabling children to excel in both academic and musical pursuits. For instance, Jarrett and Coba-Rodriguez (2015) found that parents from low-income backgrounds often make concerted efforts to encourage and motivate their children, even if they lack financial means. Similarly, Tan (2019) and Jarrett and Coba-Rodriguez (2015) emphasise that while socioeconomic and educational background can influence learning opportunities, they do not rigidly dictate outcomes. Instead, a complex interplay of factors, including parental involvement, access to resources, and institutional support, shapes children's educational and musical development. Therefore, while financial resources can facilitate musical learning, they are not the sole determinant of success.

These findings imply a complex interplay: financial capital can enable access, but motivational capital, expressed through encouragement, value transmission, and sustained involvement, may be equally or more critical. How these dynamics operate within China's rapidly stratifying economy, where urban–rural disparities and competitive schooling coexist with strong cultural esteem for education, remains largely unexplored.

3.3.2.2: Parenting Style

As noted in Section 2.2.2, parenting style refers to the attitudes and strategies parents adopt to guide and regulate their children's behaviour (Baumrind, 1966). An extensive body of research associates parenting style with children's motivation and academic outcomes, including music learning (Chen & Ho, 2012; Dell et al., 2014; Luo et al., 2021; Silva et al., 2007; Tang et al., 2018). Yet the mechanisms through which parenting style affects musical motivation remain under-examined and are likely to vary across cultural settings.

3.3.2.2.1: *Baumrind Parenting Style*

Diana Baumrind is an expert in parenting from California Berkeley University, USA. She classified parenting into four types, namely authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and neglecting (Baumrind, 1966). Each of these parenting types has different characteristics from one another.

Authoritative Parenting

Authoritative parenting is characterised by both high expectations and responsiveness (Baumrind, 1966, 1989). Parents who adopt this style enforce discipline while remaining attentive to their children's needs and aspirations. Baumrind (1989) describe authoritative parents as being supportive and nurturing while maintaining clear boundaries and expectations. Similarly, Fadlillah and Fauziah (2022) explain that this parenting approach is firm yet allows children some autonomy in decision-making. Furthermore, authoritative parents prioritise open communication and emotional warmth, fostering a balanced and supportive environment for their children.

The authoritative parenting style offers several advantages for early childhood development, particularly in fostering independence, discipline, and self-confidence. Santrock (2014) highlights that children raised under authoritative parenting tend to develop greater autonomy and self-discipline. This discipline is cultivated through the structured rules and guidance established by parents. According to Brooks (2023), clear expectations and parental oversight contribute to children's ability to act independently. Within this parenting approach, children's preferences and choices are valued, allowing them the freedom to make decisions while still

receiving parental support and supervision. Moreover, this balance of structure and autonomy enables children to explore their interests within a secure environment (Brooks, 2023). Overall, authoritative parenting is both firm and responsive, effectively nurturing children's independence and self-regulation.

Authoritarian Parenting

Authoritarian parenting is characterised by high parental expectations and strict control, with minimal responsiveness to children's needs (Baumrind, 1966, 1989). Parents who adopt this style enforce rigid rules and demand unquestioning obedience, offering little support or encouragement for their children's autonomy. They tend to prioritise discipline through strict regulations and often resort to punitive measures rather than positive reinforcement. According to Baumrind et al. (2010), authoritarian parents are more likely to suppress their children's desires, showing limited warmth and occasionally exhibiting arbitrary or harsh behaviour.

Psychologically, this parenting style is often considered detrimental to children, leading to feelings of restriction, pessimism, and reduced independence. The strong emphasis on control can hinder children's confidence and ability to make independent decisions (Santrock, 2014). Holden (2010) further suggests that children raised in authoritarian households may develop traits such as unhappiness, shyness, pessimism, and distrust of others. Ultimately, authoritarian parenting enforces strict obedience, positioning parents as the ultimate authority, which can result in a rigid and emotionally distant parent-child relationship.

Permissive Parenting

Permissive parenting is characterised by minimal parental demands combined with high responsiveness and attentiveness to children's needs. Unlike the authoritarian style, permissive parents prioritise their children's desires over imposing strict rules or expectations (Baumrind, 1966, 1989). In this approach, children are granted significant autonomy, with parents providing minimal interference or regulation. Baumrind (1966, 1989) describes permissive parenting as having weak parental control, where parents tend to accommodate their children's wishes rather than enforcing boundaries.

This parenting style is often referred to as open parenting, as it allows children substantial freedom in their decision-making. Fadlilah and Fauziah (2022) note that permissive parents

impose few demands, rarely enforce discipline, and generally refrain from punishing their children. Instead, they encourage independence by allowing children to make their own choices without significant parental oversight.

Neglectful Parenting

Neglectful parenting is characterised by a lack of both expectations and responsiveness, where parents either disregard or fail to engage with their children's needs (Baumrind, 1966, 1989). Unlike authoritative parenting, which balances high demands with high responsiveness, neglectful parents exhibit minimal involvement in their children's lives. Santrock (2014) describes this style as negligent, as parents often display indifference toward their children's well-being. In such households, parents provide little guidance, emotional support, or supervision, resulting in poor communication between them and their children. As a consequence, children are left to manage their own needs, responsibilities, and decisions without parental input. This lack of involvement can have detrimental effects on a child's development, leading to feelings of neglect and a lack of proper emotional and behavioural guidance (Fadlilah and Fauziah, 2022).

3.3.2.2.2: How Parenting Style Influences Children's Motivation

Parenting styles have consistently been shown to relate to various child-related outcomes, including children's motivation and academic achievement (Chen & Ho, 2012; Dell et al., 2014; Luo et al., 2021; Silva et al., 2007; Xie & Li, 2019). However, the parenting style that is most beneficial to stimulating children's motivation and achievement has remained controversial (Peng & Wright, 1994; Tang et al., 2018).

Studies conducted in Europe and North America suggests that authoritarian parenting styles are beneficial for fostering children's good academic performance (Gonzalez & Wolter, 2006; Silva et al., 2007; Tang et al., 2018). These societies often emphasise values such as individualism, autonomy, and self-expression, which influence their parenting norms and educational expectations. For example, Tang et al. (2018) investigated children of authoritarian parents and found that these children exhibited the highest levels of motivation, competence, and achievement orientation.

Studies examining Asian parenting styles present contrasting findings compared to Europe and North America studies (Chao, 1994, 1995; Peng & Wright, 1994). While Asian American parents are often characterised as authoritarian or highly controlling, research suggests that this parenting style is sometimes linked to lower academic achievement (Chao, 1994). This association may be attributed to the increased psychological pressure and reduced autonomy experienced by children, which can negatively affect intrinsic motivation and well-being. However, despite these concerns, Asian American children consistently outperform their peers academically (Peng & Wright, 1994).

Chao (1995) explains this paradox by highlighting cultural differences in the perception of parental control. Unlike the Western interpretation of authoritarianism as rigid and oppressive, Chinese parenting is often influenced by Confucian values, emphasising structured guidance as a means of fostering discipline, family harmony, and academic success. Additionally, Chao (1994) notes that in China, parental control is deeply intertwined with the concept of “guan” (管), which reflects a sense of responsibility and deep parental investment in a child’s success. Rather than undermining motivation, this approach often instils a strong work ethic and perseverance, aligning with the cultural expectation that academic achievement is a collective family goal. This perspective suggests that the effects of parenting styles on academic performance cannot be universally defined but must be understood within broader cultural and familial contexts.

3.3.2.3: Parental Support

There is substantial evidence suggesting that the confident and proficient performance of many young musicians is supported by parents who are deeply committed to guiding their children through the challenging yet profoundly rewarding process of learning an instrument (Davidson et al., 1996; Howe & Sloboda, 1991). This section explores parental support from two distinct perspectives: (a) behavioural support and (b) emotional support.

3.3.2.3.1: Behavioural Support

Behavioural support refers to the tangible, action-oriented assistance that parents provide to facilitate their children's learning and development (Creech, 2010; Margiotta, 2011; Zdzinski, 2021). In the context of music, this includes ensuring regular practice, organising lessons, providing access to necessary resources (such as instruments or sheet music), creating structured routines and home supervision (Caro, 2018; Cui, 2023; Margiotta, 2011; O'Neill, 2003; Suk, 2014; Zdzinski, 1996, 2021).

The relationship between parental behavioural support and children's achievement is well-documented. For example, Brokaw (1982) and Creech (2010) support the idea that parental home supervision strongly supports children's achievement. Similar outcomes had previously been demonstrated by Doan (1973) in his investigation of violin students in the seventh and eighth grades, who found that parental supervision of practice and parent attendance at the child's concerts were significantly related to student achievement on the violin, among other factors. The results of Doan (1973) and Brokaw (1982) have been supported by multiple recent studies (Bugeja, 2009; Suk, 2014; Zdzinski, 2021).

Many scholars agree that a positive link exists between parents' behavioural support and children's achievement, motivation, and attitude towards musical learning (Cui, 2023; Davidson and Pitts, 2001; Sosniak, 1985). Sosniak (1985) argued that parents' ability to encourage practice is critical in maintaining their offspring's development as musicians. Sloboda and Howe (1991) further explained that such support motivates children to form and sustain effective practice habits, a key component of musical development.

However, there is also recognition that the impact of parental behavioural support may vary depending on the child's age and developmental stage (Bamberger, 2016; Brokaw, 1982; Zdzinski, 1996, 2021). Brokaw (1982) suggested that parental behavioural support is particularly influential in the early stages of musical learning, when children are more likely to rely on external structures and supervision. In contrast, Bamberger (2016) noted that young musicians often experience a period of uncertainty and possible disillusionment between the ages of 12 and 18, a time when they may either reaffirm or distance themselves from their musical aspirations. During this transitional phase, the impact of behavioural support may diminish as the child's autonomy increases. It is therefore plausible that at this stage, behavioural support may become less effective, while emotional support (as discussed in Section 3.3.2.3.2) gains increased importance in sustaining the child's motivation and commitment to music.

3.3.2.3.2: Emotional Support

Emotional support refers to the psychological and affective care that parents offer to nurture a child's emotional well-being (Creech, 2010; Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994). In the context of music education, this includes providing reassurance, praise, and encouragement, helping the child manage frustration or setbacks, and fostering a positive, motivating environment (Creech, 2009, 2010; Oliveira et al., 2023).

Emotional support helps children feel secure, valued, and confident, which in turn bolsters their ability to engage with and persist in learning music (Lerner et al., 2022; Margiotta, 2011). For example, when teenagers experience the previously mentioned musical mid-life crisis (in Section 3.3.2.3.1), as well as when young musicians grow more prone to performance anxiety and the fear of receiving unfavourable criticism, the parent-child relationship is especially vulnerable (Bamberger, 2016).

Parents' emotional support is closely associated with their parenting style (Baumrind, 1989). As previously mentioned in Section 3.3.2.2.1, in an authoritarian parenting style, parents are less likely to be concerned about their children's emotional needs and open communication (Baumrind, 1966). However, authoritative parents value open communication, encourage their children to express feelings, and build a mutual respect and understanding relationship with their children (Baumrind, 1966). Therefore, authoritarian parents are regarded as providing low parental emotional support, while authoritative parents provide high emotional support.

Similar to the findings that considered the impact of parenting style on children's achievement (see Section 3.3.2.2.2), the impact of parental personal support has produced mixed results. Some studies suggest that high emotional involvement enhances children's motivation and persistence in music learning (Creech, 2010; Oliveira et al., 2023), whereas others caution that excessive parental involvement can lead to pressure, dependence, or reduced intrinsic motivation (Peng et al., 2024; Ren & Pope-Edwards, 2015). Creech (2009) therefore argues that finding a successful balance may be important to offering personalised support for children's musical development. Nevertheless, much of the existing literature has been conducted in Western contexts, where cultural expectations surrounding parental involvement and children's autonomy may differ significantly from those in China. As a result, the extent to which these findings can be applied to Chinese families remains uncertain. Further investigation is therefore needed to understand how parental emotional support shapes children's musical learning outcomes, including motivation, within the Chinese context.

3.3.2.4: Parental Roles

A growing body of research examines how fathers and mothers contribute differently to children's learning, yet little is known about these dynamics in the context of musical motivation. This section therefore reviews existing research on parenting styles and parental involvement, while identifying key gaps in the literature that are relevant to the present study.

3.3.2.4.1: Paternal and Maternal Parenting Style

In Western countries, scholars have assumed that maternal and paternal parenting may be similar (Cabrera, 2020; Yaffe, 2023). By contrast, traditional Chinese culture emphasises a clear distinction between maternal and paternal roles, encapsulated in the stereotype of *stern father and compassionate mother* (慈父严母). According to these traditional beliefs, the "stern father" serves as the head of the household, tasked with upholding discipline, making decisions regarding the children, exercising well-reasoned authority, and maintaining order within the extended family (Littlejohn, 2010; Shek and Sun, 2014). The term 'stern' further implies emotional distance and limited engagement between fathers and other family members (Ho, 1987; Shek and Sun, 2014). Consequently, Chinese fathers are often associated with authoritarian parenting styles, characterised by strict discipline and high expectations.

Ho (1987) states that the compassionate mother is traditionally expected to oversee household matters, defer to her husband's decisions, and take primary responsibility for her children's well-being and education. The term "compassionate" reflects a mother's protective and nurturing disposition within the family structure. However, more recent research suggests a shift in parenting roles (Chuang & Su, 2009; Luo et al., 2021; Xie & Li, 2019). For example, Xie and Li (2019) conducted a study with 86 Chinese couples, one of only a few studies to directly compare maternal and paternal parenting styles in Chinese families. Their findings indicate that mothers were less authoritative and more authoritarian than fathers, a contrast to earlier characterisations of maternal roles. To describe this evolving dynamic, Xie and Li (2019) proposed the "tiger mother, panda father" model, arguing that this pattern is increasingly typical in contemporary Chinese families. This shift suggests that traditional gender roles in parenting may be adapting to new social and cultural influences.

While some studies have been conducted on other subjects, much less is known about paternal and maternal differences in parenting styles in children's musical learning. Therefore, a research gap in understanding parenting style remains, which warrants further investigation.

3.3.2.4.2: Paternal and Maternal Involvement in Musical Learning

In children's musical learning, mothers and fathers play important roles. Some scholars have explored paternal and maternal involvement. Individuals suppose that mothers are more likely than fathers to participate in their children's education (Hernawati & Hernawati, 2020; Macmillan, 2004; Margiotta, 2011).

When it comes to helping their children to learn music, mothers, especially those with a musical background, are more proactive than fathers (Macmillan, 2004; Margiotta, 2011). They watch over their children when they practice, offering corrections when necessary or pointing out timing errors (Macmillan, 2004; Margiotta, 2011). Suk (2014) concludes that mothers who enjoy music can play music together with their children. In addition, mothers attend classes, communicate with teachers regarding their children's learning progress, issues, and results, in addition to helping with instrumental practice (Margiotta, 2011).

Furthermore, mothers place a high value on academic achievement (Chen & Ho, 2012; Trehub, 2003). When their children encounter difficulties in the classroom, they are prepared to offer solutions or adapt their beliefs about learning styles to help their children overcome obstacles or show support (Chen & Ho, 2012). For instance, when confident children are first introduced to music education, their mothers are encouraging and supportive. Mothers give their children space to learn and develop independence as they continue to practice music over time.

It is widely accepted that the mother is frequently the primary caregiver in many cultural contexts, including China, in those where traditional family structures emphasise the role of the mother in caregiving and child development (Chen & Ho, 2012; Trehub, 2003). This is especially evident in societies where mothers are more likely to take on responsibilities related to academic and extracurricular activities, including music education (Chen & Ho, 2012; Trehub, 2003). In such contexts, mothers significantly influence their children's academic achievement by providing emotional support, creating a conducive learning environment, and facilitating learning opportunities.

Although most scholars have traditionally focused on maternal involvement, the role of paternal involvement in children's learning has garnered considerable attention in recent years. Research indicates that fathers actively participate in their children's musical education, which significantly influences their children's learning outcomes (Suk, 2014; Svane et al., 2021). For instance, Suk (2014) demonstrated that fathers can be just as supportive as mothers, finding that more fathers than mothers attended weekly music lessons. These findings highlight the importance of considering the different roles played by mothers and fathers in children's musical education, underscoring the need for more research to explore the distinct contributions of each parent.

3.3.2.5: Summary

Parents remain powerful agents within the family learning environment. This review highlights four key dimensions: parental background, parenting style, parental support, and distinct maternal-paternal roles. All of these shape children's musical learning. Most notably, few studies examine how these factors specifically drive children's motivation to learn music, and even fewer distinguish the separate contributions of mothers and fathers within contemporary Chinese families. Addressing these gaps is central to this thesis, which seeks to identify the determinants of children's musical motivation and to understand how evolving parental roles influence sustained engagement with music.

3.3.3: *School Learning Environment*

Compared to the family environment, the school provides a more structured and socially engaging space for children to learn music with teachers and peers. Several studies have examined Chinese school music education from different perspectives, addressing aspects of the school music education system such as curriculum design and instructional aims (Du & Leung, 2022; Fan & Xie, 2008; Ho & Law, 2004; Sun & Leung, 2014; Xie & Leung, 2011), approaches to music teaching (Sun & Leung, 2014; Zhang & Leung, 2023), and the current status of school

music education (Cui, 2009; Sun & Leung, 2014; Yu & Leung, 2019). This section reviews this body of literature to offer insight into how school-based music education in China shapes children's opportunities, experiences, and motivation to learn music.

3.3.3.1: Introduction of School Music Education System

China has a vast school-based music education system, with more than 200,000 music teachers providing music education to more than 200,000,000 students at universities, middle schools, and primary schools (Fan & Xie, 2008). Music holds a significant position within aesthetic education in China at the same time as being recognised as an academic subject, emphasising its dual role in the curriculum. While schools and students may exhibit varying attitudes towards music as a school subject, the Chinese national music curriculum underscores its importance as an essential component of the humanities and a vital part of quality-oriented education. Music is not only valued for its contribution to cultural and aesthetic development but also regarded as an academic discipline that fosters creativity, critical thinking, and emotional expression. As such, music is designated as a core course for all students at the compulsory education level (MoE, PRC, 2001).

The promotion of “Quality-oriented Education”, which encompasses music, art, and dance, aims to enhance individuals' overall quality of life while emphasising innovation and practical skills. This initiative seeks to cultivate a high standard of ideological, moral, and cultural development, ensuring that the new generation is well-disciplined and intellectually and physically equipped to continue building socialism. The Third National Education Conference further reinforced the significance of quality-oriented education, advocating for its integration across schools, families, and social education (MoE, PRC, 2001).

Since the education reforms, aesthetic education has been regarded as a core element of music education (MoE, PRC, 1999). The influence of Bennett Reimer's (1989) philosophy of music education has been particularly notable, as his work emphasises music education as a form of aesthetic education. The Chinese translations of *A Philosophy of Music Education (second edition)* (Reimer, 1991) and *A Philosophy of Music Education, Advancing the Vision (third edition)* (Reimer, 2003), have significantly shaped music education policy in China, reflecting

an increasing openness to the Western educational theories (Cao, 2000). This alignment with Reimer's perspective has established a clear direction within Chinese education policy, reinforcing the importance of aesthetic values in music education.

3.3.3.2: 2011 Music Curriculum Standards

The *Music Curriculum Standards of full-time compulsory schooling* (Trial) were initially released in 2001 by the MoE (PRC, 2001). Ten years later, the MoE released the *Music Curriculum Standards of full-time compulsory schooling (2011 edition)*, which subsequently informed the development of the *Compulsory Education Art Curriculum Standards (2022 edition)* (hereafter, “*curriculum standards*”) (MoE, PRC, 2022). A summary of curriculum standards is provided in Table 1.

The promulgation of the curriculum standards required all schools in China to establish comprehensive and systematic music education within compulsory education. Schools were expected to offer compulsory music courses at both primary and secondary levels, comprising one to two classes per week. This requirement signalled the formal recognition of music as an essential component of basic education, rather than as an optional or supplementary subject. By embedding music education within the national curriculum framework, the standards aimed to ensure that students across different regions and school contexts had access to regular and structured musical learning experiences. In this sense, the curriculum standards not only provided institutional support for the development of school music education but also reinforced the broader educational goal of promoting students' aesthetic awareness, creativity, cultural understanding, and holistic development (MoE, PRC, 2022).

The curriculum sets standards for school music education in four areas: (a) preface,¹² (b) goals,¹³ (c) content,¹⁴ and (d) recommendations for implementation.¹⁵ The principles of designing the *curriculum standards* are that the foundation of school music education should be aesthetic education, and teachers should stimulate their students' interests through various music activities and creativity. The *curriculum standards* promote integrating music education with other learning disciplines, such as theatre, dance, poetry, and media.

Table 1

Summary of 2011 *Music Curriculum Standards of full-time compulsory schooling*

Preface	Nature of curriculum	Humanistic
		Aesthetic
		Practical
	Rationale of curriculum	Aesthetic education as music education, with emphasis on promoting musical interest
		Emphasis of creation and practice of music
		Promotion of integration with other disciplines
		Promotion of Chinese music and culture with understanding of musical diversity

¹² The Preface provides an overview of the philosophical foundations and guiding principles of the curriculum, outlining its educational significance and objectives.

¹³ The Goals section defines the learning outcomes and competencies students are expected to achieve, including general aims and learning objectives by different stages.

¹⁴ Content specifies the core musical concepts, themes, and instructional materials to be covered, here categorised into sensitivity and appreciation, performance, creation and music in relevant contexts.

¹⁵ Recommendations for implementation offers guidance on teaching and learning assessment, curriculum development and application and development of teaching materials.

		Addressing all students but valuing individual development
Design of curriculum		Categorisation of teaching areas in music activities
		Designing rich activities for students' participation
		Learning knowledge and skills for musical experiences
		Curriculum design according to children's psychological development
		Flexibility according to different regions
Goals	General aims	Development of positive attitude and value system
		Cultivation of musical interest and life-long learning
		Promotion of aesthetics and morale
		Development of patriotism and collectivism
		Respect of arts and cultural diversity
	Learning objectives in different stages	Primary 1-2: cultivation of musical interest, development of musical sensitivity, elementary singing and improvisation, positive and optimistic attitudes
		Primary 3-6: maintenance of musical interest, nurturing habits of music appreciation, confident singing and improvisation, cultivation of creativity, imagination, collaboration
		Secondary 1–3: enhancement of musical interest, advancement of

		musical appreciation, confident singing and instrumental playing, improvisation, enrichment of creativity and imagination, enhancement of collectivism
Contents	Sensitivity and appreciation	Musical elements
		Musical expression and emotion
		Musical structure and forms
		Musical styles and schools
	Performance	Singing
		Instrument playing
		Integrated artistic performing
		Notation reading
	Creation	Exploration of sounds
		Improvisation
		Composition
	Music in relevant contexts	Music and social life
		Music and other arts
		Music and non-artistic disciplines
Recommendations	Teaching and learning assessment	Organic curriculum ¹⁶ with performance, listening to and creating music
		Balance between summative and formative assessment, quantitative and qualitative assessment

¹⁶ “Organic curriculum” generally refers to a curriculum that is dynamic, flexible, and responsive to the needs of students, educators, and the learning contexts. It prioritises natural, holistic learning processes and fosters a meaningful connection between various aspects of education. In the context of music education, an organic curriculum would emphasise the integration of different musical activities, such as performing, listening and creating music, while allowing space for adaptability based on individual students’ interest, cultural backgrounds and regional diversity.

	Combination of self-assessment, peer assessment and teacher assessment
Curriculum development	Student-centered, educational, scientific, practical, integrative and open
Application and development of teaching materials	Officially recognised teaching materials are to be used
	Schools should infuse regional, ethnic and cultural elements in the curriculum
	Relevant equipment should be employed in teaching and learning
	Application of websites and broadcasting devices in schools for promotion of healthy music Teachers should conduct all appropriate kinds of co-curricular activities
	Exchanges among teachers and schools are encouraged

Note. Adapted from Yu and Leung (2019, pp. 181–182).

The *curriculum standards* outline a comprehensive framework for music education in China, detailing its overarching principles, learning objectives, and implementation strategies. They emphasise the cultivation of aesthetic literacy, the inheritance of outstanding traditional Chinese culture and interdisciplinary integration to enhance students' musical literacy (Li, 2025).

The overarching objectives of school music education encompass fostering children's personal growth, imparting fundamental music knowledge and abilities, and nurturing optimistic outlooks and overall well-being. For different learning stages, the *curriculum standards* list different learning objectives (Yu & Leung, 2019). Children's curiosity about learning music is encouraged in the first stage (Grades 1 to 3 in primary school). In Stage 2 (Grades 4 to 6 in primary school), basic music creation is introduced through instrumental music experiences in addition to singing. Stage 3 (secondary school) is the ideal time to provide humanistic learning experiences, which emphasise self-expression, cultural appreciation, and

emotional engagement with music. For example, students may analyse the historical and cultural significance of different musical traditions or compose pieces that reflect their personal emotions and experiences.

While the previous discussion highlights the curriculum's learning objectives across primary and secondary education, Table 1 offers a broader perspective by summarising key elements of the *curriculum standards*, including its philosophical foundations, content areas, and teaching recommendations. Understanding the full structure of the curriculum is essential for contextualising how music education is integrated into China's compulsory education system and how its implementation may vary across different schools.

Curriculum standards have significantly impacted Chinese music education. Before the reform in 2001, music lessons in Chinese schools were limited in scope. At the primary stage, students received up to two music lessons per week, which were conducted in group formats. These group lessons primarily focused on classroom-based activities such as singing and listening, with limited opportunities for instrumental instruction or individual engagement. Creative elements, such as improvisation or composition, were introduced only gradually and remained secondary components of the curriculum (Yeh, 2001).

3.3.3.3: Current Status of School Music Education

Following the national curriculum reform introduced in 2001, Chinese schools began to expand the scope of music education by incorporating a broader range of musical activities. These included choral singing, dance ensembles, instrumental groups, and school orchestras, many of which were organised as extracurricular programmes rather than formal curriculum components (Yan, 2017). Such initiatives were intended to diversify students' musical experiences and encourage greater participation in music-making activities. It is worthwhile to point out that ensemble-based learning emphasises collective participation and collaborative performance rather than individual instruction. Previous research suggests that participation in group music-making can enhance students' motivation, confidence, and musical achievement by fostering a sense of belonging and shared accomplishment (Larson, 2010; Schmidt, 2005).

Despite these developments, music education continues to occupy a relatively marginal position within the broader hierarchy of school subjects in China. Empirical evidence suggests that students generally attribute lower task value to music compared with core academic subjects (Cui, 2009; Sun & Leung, 2014; Xie & Leung, 2011). For example, Xie and Leung (2011), in a large-scale survey involving 2,750 students from seven schools in Beijing, found that students perceived music primarily as an enrichment activity rather than a core academic discipline. This perception reflects the broader examination-oriented structure of the Chinese education system, where subjects directly related to high-stakes assessments receive greater institutional and parental attention. Nevertheless, the study also indicates that a considerable proportion of students remain actively engaged in school-based music activities, suggesting that music education still plays a meaningful role in students' school experiences.

Within the formal curriculum, group lessons remain the predominant mode of instruction, although their organisation and pedagogical approaches vary across schools. In most cases, these lessons focus on general music education activities, including singing, rhythm exercises, music appreciation, and basic instrumental practice (Yeh, 2001). Such lessons are designed to introduce students to fundamental musical concepts and promote broad participation rather than specialised skill development. In contrast, individual one-to-one instruction is relatively uncommon within the school environment and is generally reserved for students pursuing advanced musical training outside the formal curriculum.

This structural arrangement highlights an important distinction between school-based music education and extracurricular or private music learning in China. While schools aim to provide general musical exposure and promote collective participation, specialised musical development is often transferred to private lessons, conservatory-affiliated schools, or external training institutions (Yan, 2017). As a result, school music education tends to prioritise accessibility and participation over intensive skill development. From a motivational perspective, this arrangement presents both opportunities and limitations. On the one hand, group-based music activities can create supportive social environments that encourage participation and enjoyment in music learning (Larson, 2010; Schmidt, 2005). On the other hand, the relatively peripheral status of music within the academic curriculum may limit the extent to which students perceive music learning as personally meaningful or educationally valuable (Cui, 2009; Sun & Leung, 2014; Xie & Leung, 2011). Consequently, the institutional position of music within Chinese schools plays a significant role in shaping students' attitudes towards music learning and their motivation to engage in musical activities.

3.3.3.4: School Music Education as a Means of Government Propaganda

All Chinese students must learn the theories of Communism, and school music education is regarded as a means of government propaganda. Studies have shown that music education in China aims to invigorate a love of socialism and patriotism (Giray, 2022; Ho & Law, 2004; Perris, 1983). Indeed, many patriotic and social songs are composed to attempt to educate people to be loyal to the Chinese Communist Party, such as “Today is Your Birthday, China,” and “I Love You, Chinese Communist Party.”

As advocated by the Chinese Communist Party half a century ago, since the cultural revolution, the main goal of arts education is to serve politics and socialism (see Section 2.1.1). Consequently, much political and revolutionary content has been included in school music textbooks over the last 50 years. This content mainly includes songs based on the stories of the Chinese Civil War. However, the lived experiences of contemporary children differ significantly from those of earlier generations, raising questions about the relevance and impact of such content in the modern educational context.

The school music curriculum reforms have introduced new ideas and content into China’s school music education (see Section 3.3.3.2). First, the “political” or “revolutionary” content has been significantly reduced and replaced by more authentic children’s music. Second, the music curriculum has expanded beyond a primary focus on singing to incorporate a broader range of musical activities that emphasise active engagement and practical application. These include movement, games, music appreciation, creative activities, and instrumental performances. Third, music textbooks no longer exclusively reference domestic and foreign folk music, although these genres are still highly recommended for school music educators (Xie, 2000). Xie (2000) has advocated for including more folk songs in school music classes and encouraging all children to learn folk songs from their hometowns. For instance, many schools are incorporating Beijing Opera into their music classes (Xie, 2000). This integration aims to preserve and promote an important aspect of China’s cultural heritage. However, Beijing Opera is quite challenging for most children to comprehend and appreciate due to its complexity, including its stylised movements, intricate vocal techniques, and use of symbolism (Xie, 2000). Despite these challenges, the Chinese government has shown strong interest in fostering this unique genre of music across schools nationally, recognising its role in nurturing cultural awareness and promoting traditional art forms among younger generations (Xie, 2000).

The evolution of China's school music education reflects a significant shift from politically driven content to a more diverse curriculum. Despite the change, traditional cultural elements remain integral to the curriculum, aiming to preserve China's cultural and artistic heritage. These developments illustrate a dynamic balance between modern educational approaches and the preservation of national identity within China's music curriculum.

3.3.3.5: Public School Music Teachers and Teaching

Music teachers are a vital component of music education, as they directly influence the quality of public-school music provision. Several scholars have argued that the motivation, professional commitment, and competence of individual music educators vary, leading to disparities in the quality of music education across schools in China (Sun & Leung, 2014; Zhang & Leung, 2023). These disparities highlight the importance of examining the structural and pedagogical factors that influence teaching practice. Accordingly, this section reviews the teacher qualification system and explores key instructional approaches in school music education.

3.3.3.5.1: Becoming a Public School Teacher

The quality of music teachers has been a significant area of research in China since the twentieth century. Becoming a qualified music teacher for a public school requires candidates to complete several rigorous steps (Lee et al., 2019). First, aspiring teachers must obtain at least a bachelor's degree in music, ensuring they possess the necessary theoretical and practical knowledge of the subject. At the end of their studies, they are required to undertake an internship in schools. The duration of teaching internships can vary based on the educational institution and specific programme requirements. Generally, internships for potential teachers range from two months to five months. The internships are designed to equip potential teachers with hands-on experience in classroom management, lesson planning, and student engagement, thereby enhancing their teaching competencies in real-world educational settings (Lee et al., 2019).

Additionally, candidates must apply for and pass the teacher qualification examination administered by the authorities. This examination assesses their competency and grants

certificates corresponding to different teaching levels and subjects (Gao, 2005). Moreover, recruiting a public-school teacher is a demanding process. Candidates must undertake written examinations and interviews organised by the authorities, followed by reference checks, political background checks, and health assessments. Only after successfully completing these steps can they secure a position as a public-school teacher.

In recent years, public school teaching has become a popular career choice in China, reflecting both practical and cultural factors. As described in Section 2.2.2, teachers are highly respected in Chinese society, a status deeply rooted in Confucian values that emphasises the importance of education and the role of teachers in fostering societal harmony (Hwang, 2013; Shim, 2008; Tan, 2015).

One of the most attractive aspects of being a public-school teacher is the stability it provides. In the Chinese context, stability is particularly valued due to the competitive nature of the job market and the pressures of securing long-term employment (Lee et al., 2019). Public school teaching positions offer secure contracts, consistent salaries, and generous benefits, such as housing subsidies, medical insurance, and retirement plans (Gao, 2005). Furthermore, being a public-school teacher is a respected profession, deeply rooted in Confucian culture, which values education and the role of teachers in shaping society (Chien et al., 2024; Shim, 2008). Therefore, a combination of cultural respect and practical security makes public school teaching a sought-after profession in China.

However, due to the large population and strict selection process, competition to become a public-school teacher is fierce. Only one-third of applicants ultimately secure positions as music teachers in public schools (MoE, PRC, 2011). This high level of competition has driven significant improvements in the qualifications of primary school teachers, including professional knowledge and pedagogical skills (MoE, PRC, 2019).

Although numerous studies highlight the importance of teacher qualifications for students' academic achievement (Ömeroğulları et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2020; Yu & Leung, 2019), relatively few have specifically examined the impact of these qualifications on students' musical motivation. This represents a significant gap in the literature that warrants further exploration.

3.3.3.5.2: Instructional Methods

The traditional instructional method in a Chinese music class is “teacher-centred” because teachers dominate the teacher-student relationship in the unique Confucius culture (see Section

2.2.2). Most teachers tend to choose ‘singing-centred’ instruction because it is easy to manage the class (Yeh, 2001). Since the music curriculum reform (MoE, PRC, 2001), some teachers have combined contemporary and traditional approaches and have adopted more performance-based approaches instead of singing according to the recommendations set out by the curriculum standards (see Table 1 in Section 3.3.3.2). For instance, some sufficiently specialised teachers bring traditional Chinese musical instruments into their music classrooms, such as bamboo flutes, recorders, or Chinese drums (Li, 2018).

Teaching concepts from Western pedagogies, such as Kodály, Orff, and Dalcroze, align closely with student-centred instructional methods. These contemporary music pedagogies have been applied in some Chinese urban schools over the past few decades. For instance, Zhang and Leung (2023) proposed that Chinese teachers have begun incorporating interactive and participatory activities, such as body movement (inspired by Dalcroze), vocal improvisation (drawing from Kodály), and the use of simple percussive instruments (modelled after Orff techniques), to engage students more actively in their learning processes. Additionally, Zhang et al. (2023) argue that some schools have restructured their music classes to focus more on fostering creativity and collaboration rather than solely emphasising rote learning or technical drills.

A growing body of literature suggests the benefits of student-centred approaches to children’s motivation (Liu, 2023; O’Neill & McMahon, 2005; Smit et al., 2014; Wang & Torrisi-Steele, 2015). For example, Smit et al. (2014) explain that student-centred approaches can provide a supportive learning environment that fulfils three basic psychological needs (details were demonstrated in the Section 3.1.2.1) and significantly improves students’ motivation. Similarly, Chinese scholar Liu (2023) believes that changing instruction from being teacher-centred to student-centred is the key to fostering students’ motivation to learn music.

However, Zhang and Leung (2023) argue that although student-centred approaches have been promoted in Chinese music education, some challenges persist within the unique Chinese cultural context, primarily due to large class sizes¹⁷ and heavy teacher workloads. They note that teaching at this scale makes it difficult to provide individualised support, facilitate sustained active participation and organise collaborative learning activities, the elements that are integral

¹⁷ In China, standard class sizes in public schools commonly range from 40 to 60 students or more (MoE, PRC, 2019). This scale is substantially larger than the class sizes found in many Western educational contexts, where student-centered pedagogies are often implemented in groups of 20 to 30 students (Jin & Cortazzi, 1998).

to interactive, student-centred pedagogy. Consequently, further empirical research is needed to examine how these structural constraints shape the enactment of student-centred approaches and their effects on students' musical motivation.

Although instructional methods are important, scholarly consensus confirms that teacher interpersonal behaviour is a critical antecedent of student musical motivation (Asmus, 2021; Wubbels et al., 2016). For example, Wubbels et al. (2016) argue that teacher agency and communion as key dimensions shaping engagement. In music settings, supportive, open, and affiliative teacher behaviours are consistently linked to higher student motivation (Asmus, 2021). The influence of these behaviours, however, is not culturally neutral. Recognising this, the current study focuses on the Chinese context, investigating how the interaction between teacher interpersonal style and student motivation is uniquely mediated by cultural norms and values.

3.3.3.6: A Failed Goal in Chinese Music Education

According to the MoE (PRC, 1999, 2001, 2011), the goal of music education in China is to provide aesthetic experiences through various musical activities and develop children's musical abilities and creativity with an understanding of musical knowledge and skills, thereby acquiring an acceptable musical sensitivity in their lives. Though the national curriculum has undergone multiple revisions (MoE, PRC, 1999, 2001, 2011), Chinese music educators and scholars believe the country has not achieved this objective. Several factors contribute to this unmet goal: a shortage of music teachers, insufficient professional development opportunities for teachers, the dominance of traditional instructional methods, and limited teaching time for music education.

First, the shortage of music teachers remains a significant challenge, particularly in rural areas, despite efforts to improve this issue (Sun & Leung, 2014; Yu & Leung, 2019). For historical and political reasons (see Section 2.1.1), Chinese music education has stagnated for a long time, leading to a shortage of qualified teachers. To address this, Chinese authorities have relaxed the requirements for teacher qualifications after the first curriculum reform (MoE, PRC, 2001). In some cases, individuals can obtain a teacher qualification certificate while teaching, and rural teachers are often allowed to start teaching before obtaining certification (Wang et al., 2020). More recently, the MoE introduced stricter standards for becoming a public-school music

teacher and sought to raise overall qualification levels (MoE, PRC, 2019) (see Section 3.3.3.5.1). However, the effects of these reforms appear to be unevenly distributed across regions. Urban schools are generally more able to recruit specialist music teachers and provide access to teaching resources and co-curricular programmes, whereas rural schools often rely on non-specialist or part-time staff, with limited professional support and fewer opportunities for pedagogical development (Cui, 2009; Yu & Leung, 2019). These uneven conditions can translate into systematic differences in the quality and breadth of musical learning experiences available to children, thereby widening motivational and developmental gaps and raising broader questions about equity in music education provision across regions.

Second, limited professional development for music teachers constitutes an additional barrier. Studies emphasise that well-trained teachers create better learning environments for students (Creech, 2009; Pitts, 2004; Sichivitsa, 2007). However, Chinese authorities struggle to organise regular training and professional development courses for primary school teachers (Yu & Leung, 2019). Rethinking teacher education in China is necessary to help music teachers adopt more humanistic and student-centred teaching approaches, moving away from the prevalent teacher-centered methods (see Section 3.3.3.5.2).

Third, limited teaching time for music education significantly hinders the implementation of the national curriculum. Music is allocated only one or two hours per week in public schools, which is insufficient to cover the curriculum's requirements (see Section 3.3.3.2). In practice, the content designed for different grade levels often cannot be fully delivered. Time constraints worsen as schools prioritise subjects covered by the NCEE (see Section 2.1.5). For example, Zhou (2012) found that in Yulin, music lesson time decreased from 100% to 60% of the recommended hours in the final year of primary school. This reduction in music lesson time limits students' exposure to the subject, potentially diminishing their engagement and learning motivation.

In summary, the shortage of music teachers, insufficient professional development, reliance on traditional instructional methods, and limited teaching time contribute to the failure to achieve the national goal of providing high-quality music education in Chinese schools. Addressing these issues is critical for improving the quality and accessibility of school music education.

3.3.3.7: Summary

This section has provided a picture of Chinese school music education. As outlined by the *curriculum reform*, music is considered a core subject within the broader initiative of quality-oriented education. However, despite policy support, challenges persist in effectively implementing music education in public schools. First, curriculum reforms over the past few decades have introduced Western pedagogical approaches into public schools, promoting student-centred learning and interactive teaching methods. However, due to large class sizes, heavy teacher workloads, and a traditional emphasis on teacher-centred instruction hinder their widespread application. Second, *curriculum reform* established structured learning goals for different education levels, promoting aesthetic education, but music remains a non-tested subject in the NCEE, leading many schools to deprioritise it among core academic subjects. Third, teacher qualifications and instructional methods significantly influence the quality of school music education. Although teaching standards have improved, a shortage of specialised teachers, particularly in rural areas, remains an issue. Fourth, political and cultural influences shape the school music curriculum. Recent curriculum reforms have reduced political content and introduced a broader range of musical activities, including traditional Chinese music like Beijing Opera and international musical traditions.

In general, this section has highlighted several critical research gaps in Chinese school music education in children's musical motivation. The first one concerns how public-school music education influences children's musical motivation, particularly in relation to teaching content and curriculum design. The second gap focuses on the role of music teacher in shaping students' musical motivation, including factors such as teacher qualification, professionalism and instructional method.

3.3.4: A Wider Learning Environment – Extracurricular Activities

Beyond the family and school contexts, children's musical motivation is also shaped by a wider learning environment that extends into community and cultural domains. This broader context encompasses informal and supplementary opportunities for musical engagement that exist

outside formal schooling. Yan (2017) refers to this as the societal learning environment, describing it as the wider social and cultural sphere in which learning occurs and is influenced by social values, cultural expectations, and community practices.

In China, this wider environment frequently manifests through private music tutoring and participation in graded music examinations, both of which have become defining features of children's musical education (Cui, 2023; Montefiore, 2014). These activities operate beyond the formal education system as extracurricular pursuits and are influenced by cultural traditions and educational aspirations. As discussed in Section 2.2.3, Confucian heritage continues to inform parental expectations, with music viewed not only as an artistic pursuit but also as a means of cultivating discipline, character and academic advantage, which are highly valued within Chinese families (Huang & Gove, 2015b; Zhang, 2020).

Therefore, the following sections examine private music tutoring and graded music examinations as two central components of the wider learning environment, analysing how they shape Chinese children's motivation to learn music.

3.3.4.1: Chinese Private Music Tutoring

This section introduces private music tutoring and considers its history and prevalence. It then considers the positive and negative impacts of private music tutoring on student learning.

3.3.4.1.1: An Introduction to Private Music Tutoring

Private music tutoring in China began first in big cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Hong Kong. Most Chinese parents are willing to provide financial support for their children to attend after-school music classes, both formal and informal (Choi et al., 2005; Cui, 2023). The Chinese University of Hong Kong (2007) collected data from a phone survey of 698 parents in Hong Kong who had children under the age of 18. Of these parents, only 8.6% did not provide any financial support for their children's musical interests. A recent report estimate suggests that

40 million music learners are enrolled in private piano lessons in mainland China (Montefiore, 2014). This figure does not include students taking lessons in instruments other than the piano.

Due to the high demand for private music tutoring, the Chinese market delivers various services, ranging from one-to-one tutoring to large tutoring classes (Liu & Bray, 2022). Such tutoring is provided on an individual basis. However, there are also a small number of schools catering for students seeking to improve their professional musical skills, such as after-school music training classes, the Children's Youth Palace (a government organisation for after-school learning), and private tuition. When music education becomes more active in a private music institution, it leads to many private tutors with diverse qualifications and backgrounds (Zhang, 2013).

3.3.4.1.2: Influence of Private Music Tutoring

In a series of reviews of the international literature, it was found that many people assume that private tutoring delivers positive results in academic achievement, reasoning that otherwise, families would not invest in it (Bray, 1999, 2013; Bray & Lykins, 2012; Dai & Schader, 2001; Guill & Bos, 2014; Zhang & Bray, 2016). These reviews argue that private tutoring can improve overall educational quality and the students' chances of succeeding in their academic careers (Bray, 1999; Hultberg et al., 2021). In musical learning, private tutoring extends this impact. Some scholars have suggested that private tutoring can significantly improve children's musical professional skills (Bjøntegaard, 2015; Dai & Schader, 2001; Zhang, 2013).

In academic subjects, it has been argued that students' skills or abilities will depend on their tutors' abilities and the students' motivations (Benckwitz et al., 2022; Kim & Park, 2010). For example, some tutors have excellent skills but work with students who are unmotivated or not academically capable. Similarly, some students are motivated and capable, but their tutors lack content knowledge and pedagogical skills.

Despite the obvious merits and benefits of private tutoring, such as academic improvements and increased student motivation levels (Bray, 1999), its disadvantages are equally well-documented. Bray has listed a number of drawbacks to general private tutoring in a series of reviews of the global literature (Bray, 1999, 2003; Bray & Kwok, 2003). These disadvantages still exist in private music tutoring. From the students' perspectives, private music tutoring may

lead to a lack of interest in public school classes. There are also concerns about the fatigue experienced by students who study for long hours (Bonneville-Rossy & Evans, 2025; Evans & Bonneville-Roussy, 2016; Riley, 2016). From parents' perspectives, expensive private tutoring impacts the financial situation of families, especially those from the middle and lower classes (Bray, 2013; Lei, 2005; Parveen et al., 2022), and some students can be excluded from private tutoring for financial reasons. Therefore, the most significant criticism of private tutoring is that it increases or even give birth to social, economic, and academic disparities between the haves and have-nots (Bray, 2009; Dawson, 2010; Heyneman, 2011; Kim & Park, 2010; Murawska & Putkiewicz, 2005; Wiseman, 2021). Moreover, a lack of standardisation and regulation means that the quality of instruction varies widely between tutors, with some students receiving inconsistent or ineffective teaching (Ömeroğulları et al., 2020).

Although numerous studies have explored the impact of private tutoring on children's learning, most have focused on academic achievement, with relatively few examining its effects on music education or motivational outcomes.

3.3.4.2: Graded Music Examinations

Building on the discussion of private music tutoring, graded music examinations represent another significant aspect of the extracurricular learning environment in China. While private tutoring often prepares students for these formal assessments, the examinations themselves exert a broader influence on how music is taught, learned, and valued. This section first introduces the graded music examinations organised by different examination boards and outlines their similarities and differences. It then considers their influence on students, parents, and teachers.

3.3.4.2.1: An Introduction to Graded Music Examinations (GMEs)

The Graded Music Examinations (GMEs) provide a structured framework for progression from beginner to advanced amateurs, and therefore attract many students to evaluate their expertise level. According to the official website of the Central Conservatory of Music (2024), thousands of children participate in GMEs each year to obtain high-level certificates or extra qualifications.

Several examination boards offer music-making certifications at several defined levels or grades (Tse, 2024). The two dominant Chinese examination boards, The Shanghai Conservatory of Music (SHCM) and Central Conservatory of Music (CCOM) are two of the best-known Chinese assessment committees that publish materials for administering examinations at approved test centres around China. Furthermore, the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM) is a music examination board based in the UK and has become one of China's most popular and influential GMEs (Tang, 2024; Tse, 2024).

GMEs organised by CCOM, SHCM and ABRSM have similarities and differences. First, all these GMEs provide fixed examination repertoires for different performance grades. Students' technical and expressive abilities are tested from technical and musician expression perspectives (Boyu, 2016; Tang, 2024; Tse, 2024). However, compared to ABRSM, CCOM and SHCM provide a stricter syllabus and a narrower range of repertoires (Tse, 2024).

Furthermore, compared to CCOM and SHCM, ABRSM offers broader assessments. CCOM and SHCM provide two main types of assessments: (1) solo instrumental and vocal examinations and (2) music theory (Central Conservatory of Music graded examination committee, 2024). Conversely, besides solo instrumental and theory examinations, ABRSM offers different types of music-related assessment, such as ensemble and instrumental teaching examinations (ABRSM, 2024).

Moreover, these examinations have different grading structures. CCOM and SHCM provide GMEs scaled from 1 to 10, while ABRSM ranges from Grades 1 to 8 (ABRSM, 2024; CCOM, 2024; SHCM, 2024). Different grades represent different expertise levels for GMEs offered by CCOM and SHCM (Boyu, 2016). Grades 1–3 comprise the primary level; grades 4–6 are “ordinary”; grades 7–9 are advanced, and the highest is 10th grade. Students who achieve the 10th grade are regarded as having achieved professional level and could be special-skill students. This implies that if students obtain high-level certificates in music, they will gain priority to access an excellent secondary school, high school, and even university admission (see previous Section 2.1.5).

3.3.4.2.2: Influence of Graded Music Examinations

GMEs significantly influence students' motivation in musical learning because they provide formal performance evaluations. Students often seek evaluation through GMEs as they offer a structured way to measure their progress, validate their efforts, and gain recognition for their skills (Sloboda, 1994). This formal evaluation can be particularly appealing because it provides tangible benchmarks, such as grades or certificates, that reflect their achievements and serve as evidence of their abilities for future academic or career opportunities (Sloboda, 1994; Tse, 2024). Favourable evaluations of performance can enable students to develop a solid musical identity, while those who have negative experiences tend to have weaker musical identities (Hallam et al., 2021; Sloboda, 1994; Tse, 2024).

According to achievement motivation theory, for successful students, positive experiences are confirmed by high marks and positive comments. Therefore, it is widely accepted that the prospect of an examination provides extra motivation for pupils to undertake the hard work necessary to perform well (Sloboda, 1994; Tse, 2004). However, for less successful students, examinations can negatively impact their motivation, making learning stressful and even a source of shame (Hallam et al., 2021). Despite these challenges, GMEs encourage pupils to work harder towards a goal without requiring direct competition with others. By focusing on “striving for one’s personal best” rather than external competition, GMEs foster intrinsic motivation while maintaining the positive aspects of self-improvement.

Nevertheless, GMEs also place pressure on both students and teachers. For example, Davidson and Scutt (1999) found that some teachers base their professional reputations on their students' performance outcomes, which can motivate teachers to support students but also create stress to students. Additionally, some students perceive certain exam syllabuses as monotonous and resent the significant time required to prepare for them (Hallam et al., 2021; O'Neill, 2003). These challenges highlight the complexity of balancing the motivational benefits of GMEs with its potential drawbacks for both learners and educators.

3.3.4.3: Popularity of Private Music Tutoring and GMEs

Prior studies have shown two reasons why GMEs and private music tutoring are increasingly popular in China: (a) government policies and (b) the demand for education exceeds the supply of public education.

The popularity of private music tutoring and GMEs is related to political elements. For example, NCEE is the primary source of anxiety for parents as they are eager to see their child succeed in this highly competitive examination. As described in Section 2.1.5, although GMEs and “special-skill students’ examinations” are regarded as social education systems, they are acknowledged by the NCEE. Consequently, an increasing number of parents are encouraging and even forcing their children to participate in private music tutoring because they think it is beneficial for their children to stand out in NCEE (Xie & Leung, 2011). Furthermore, because of the one-child policy and economic reforms, Chinese parents are keen to invest more in their children’s learning (Kwo & Bray, 2014; Jiang, 2020; Settles et al., 2012; Veeck et al., 2003).

The private music tutoring curriculum provides more options to meet students' diverse needs and is considered more effective for students’ studies. Students can attend for as short or long a period as needed. Individual tutoring enables the tutor to better understand each student's strengths and shortcomings, allowing lessons to be customised to the student's needs (Bray & Kwok, 2003; Ömeroğulları et al., 2020; Zhang, 2011). Furthermore, as Cui (2023) argues, private music tutoring can be helpful for students who want to succeed in the music industry or pursue music as a career.

Although previous studies have suggested the above reasons for the popularity of private music tutoring and GMEs from macro perspectives (e.g., government policies), the existing studies still need to consider the micro perspectives, such as personal experiences. This need for more sufficient studies inhibits the academic understanding of Chinese music education.

3.3.4.4: Summary

This section provides an overview of private music tutoring and GMEs and reveals potential future research directions. First, it introduced the prevalence and marketing of private music tutoring. Then, it illustrated the impact of private tutoring on children's learning. However, few studies have addressed musical learning in this setting. Second, it offered an introduction to GMEs, and described and compared three different board systems based on their similarities and differences. Then, it examined the influence of GMEs on children's musical learning. However, few studies have explored this topic in China. Finally, through analysing existing studies, although it identified several reasons for the popularity of tutoring and GME, future exploration is still needed.

3.4: Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented a series of motivation theories and contextualised the demographic and psychological and external factors influencing children's motivation to learn music. The chapter is structured into three key sections.

The first section (Section 3.1) provided the theoretical foundation, establishing that musical motivation is multifaceted. It demonstrated how demographic and psychological determinants, external determinants within learning environment, and their interactions impact an individual's musical motivation. The second and third sections explored the literature on demographic and psychological determinants (Section 3.2) and the learning environment (Section 3.3) in children's musical motivation.

Section 3.2 emphasised several demographic and psychological determinants that influence children's motivation to learn music; however, the existing literature has not clarified their roles comprehensively. For instance, the degree to which personality traits affect musical motivation remains an open question. Furthermore, it is still unclear how different factors interact to shape children's motivation in musical learning.

Section 3.3 discussed the learning environment and its impact on children's musical motivation, using Yan's framework (2017), which identifies three types of learning

environments: the family, school, and wider learning environment. This section reviewed the main factors within these environments that influence children's motivation.

In the family learning environment (Section 3.3.2), parents were identified as the most influential factors. The section examined how parents' backgrounds, parenting styles, involvement, and roles impact children's musical learning. Parents' educational and socioeconomic backgrounds were shown to significantly influence children's musical learning; however, their effects on musical motivation specifically have been underexplored. Furthermore, the extent to which parenting style and involvement shape musical motivation remains contentious. The chapter also highlighted the lack of research on paternal parenting and its influence compared to maternal involvement.

In the school learning environment (Section 3.3.3), music was recognised as a core subject at the primary school level. While curriculum standards were introduced, the chapter noted that few studies have examined the implementation and extent of these standards. Additionally, prior studies have debated whether school music education in China has been used as propaganda by the government, an issue requiring further investigation. The importance of teachers' qualifications and instructional methods was also emphasised, but how these factors influence children's musical motivation remains unresolved.

In the wider learning environment (Section 3.3.4), private music tutoring and GMEs were identified as the most influential determinants. While there is considerable research on private tutoring, studies specifically focusing on music tutoring are limited, particularly in mainland China. The role of private tutoring in shaping children's musical motivation remains poorly understood. Similarly, research on GMEs in the Chinese context is sparse. Further exploration is needed to understand how GMEs influences musical motivation and why tutoring and GMEs are so popular.

In conclusion, this chapter has provided a theoretical foundation for this research by synthesising existing findings and identifying research gaps. These gaps informed the development of research questions (see Sections 4.1). Additionally, the chapter offered insights into the methodological approaches, which are discussed further in Section 4.3.

Chapter 4: Methodology

This chapter sets out the methodological framework for examining the factors that shape Chinese primary-school students' motivation to learn music. It first restates the research aims and questions, explaining the rationale for selecting Zhejiang Province as the study site. It then details the philosophical assumptions, mixed-methods design, and procedures for data collection and analysis, followed by sampling, recruitment, and ethical considerations. Finally, it addresses reflexivity, highlighting how the researcher's positionality and choices help to minimise bias and enhance rigour.

4.1: Research Aims and Questions

Although a substantial body of research has examined musical motivation in Western contexts as illustrated in Chapter 3, relatively little is known about how this phenomenon unfolds among Chinese primary-school children. This study addresses this gap by identifying the key determinants of Chinese children's motivation to learn music within their distinctive cultural and educational milieu.

Accordingly, the overarching aim of this study is to identify key determinants influencing Chinese children's motivation to learn music. In alignment with this aim, the primary research question is:

What are the key determinants influencing Chinese children's motivation to learn music?

Guided by the literature review, this question is further refined through three sub-research questions:

Sub-RQ1: How do demographic and psychological determinants influence Chinese children's motivation to learn music?

Sub-RQ2: How do learning environments influence Chinese children's motivation to learn music?

Sub-RQ3: How do these determinants interact with each other?

4.2: Geographical Focus: Zhejiang Province

Zhejiang Province was selected as the research site due to its accessibility, demographic diversity and supportive policy environment. First, from an accessibility perspective, the strategic location of Zhejiang is noteworthy. As shown in Figure 2, which highlights Zhejiang Province in yellow on a map of the country, it is situated on China's eastern coast near Shanghai, a financial hub. The province is well-connected to both domestic and international destinations, making it convenient for researchers and participants alike. Second, Zhejiang is characterised by its population diversity and cultural richness. Its mix of urban and rural populations reflects the broader socio-economic spectrum of China, making it an ideal context for examining the varied influences on children's musical motivation. Third, the support from the local government for educational research has facilitated data collection and academic collaboration. The final reason is my personal connection to the province: I was born and raised in Zhejiang, offering advantages in terms of logistical efficiency and cultural familiarity, both of which contributed to the smooth implementation of this study.

Figure 2

Map of China, Zhejiang Province indicated in yellow



Note. Zhejiang Province is highlighted in yellow. Map created by the author.

4.3: Previous Methods of Exploring Chinese Children's Motivation

This section reviews prior approaches to investigating Chinese children's musical motivation and explains the rationale for adopting a pragmatism and mixed-methods design in this study (further detailed in Sections 4.4 and 4.5).

Although research on Chinese children's musical learning environments is emerging, empirical work remains limited in both scope and methodological diversity. For example, Yan (2017) proposed a tripartite framework encompassing society, school and family as the key domains shaping children's music education (see Section 3.3.1). While conceptually valuable, Yan's (2017) conclusions were drawn entirely from secondary sources and therefore lack empirical validation.

Many Chinese studies have also relied heavily on single-method, predominantly quantitative designs. Drawing on McPherson and O'Neill's (2010) model, Xie and Leung (2011) surveyed 2,750 Beijing students from three middle schools and four high schools, using MANOVA and mixed-design ANOVA methods to examine competence beliefs, task value, and perceived difficulty. Although statistically rigorous, this approach captured only measurable patterns and could not access the participants' subjective experiences or emotional responses to music learning.

These methodological constraints limit understanding of the complex determinants of musical motivation. As established in Section 3.1, children's motivation is shaped by an interaction of internal determinants and learning environments. Existing studies isolate single variables, such as gender, age, parental influence, or teacher support (see Sections 3.2 and 3.3), without examining how these factors intersect.

To address these gaps, this study is guided by the philosophical paradigm of pragmatism and adopts a mixed-methods strategy, integrating quantitative and qualitative data to capture both breadth and depth of information. The details of this methodological framework are elaborated in the following section.

4.4: Philosophical Paradigm - Pragmatism

Pragmatism provides the philosophical foundation for this study. Widely recognised as a bridge between quantitative and qualitative traditions, pragmatism rejects the notion that these approaches are rigidly opposed. Instead, it views them as complementary points on a single methodological continuum (Creswell, 2021; Ramlo & Newman, 2011; Yvonne Feilzer, 2010). Within this continuum, mixed-methods research occupies the centre ground, drawing strength from both paradigms (Creswell & Clark, 2017). Rather than privileging either positivist objectivity or constructivist subjectivity, pragmatism prioritises the research question and the practical consequences of inquiry (Shah et al., 2018). Its core principle of methodological flexibility encourages the use of whichever tools – quantitative, qualitative, or both – best illuminate the phenomenon under investigation (Denscombe, 2008).

This orientation is particularly suited to the present study, which examines how internal determinants and learning environments shape Chinese primary-school children's musical motivation. A purely quantitative design could reveal statistical patterns, such as correlations between personality traits and motivation levels or gender differences in musical engagement, but would fail to capture the nuanced meanings children and families attach to these experiences. Conversely, a purely qualitative design could illuminate lived experiences but would limit the ability to generalise patterns across a large sample.

Guided by pragmatism, the study therefore integrates quantitative breadth with qualitative depth. Questionnaire data identify relationships among variables, such as age, gender, and personality traits, while interviews grounded in interpretative phenomenology provide rich accounts of how children, parents, and teachers understand these relationships. This triangulation strengthens validity, allows cultural context to inform interpretation, and ensures that participants' voices remain central to the analysis.

Pragmatism also aligns with the study's focus on applicability. By combining statistical correlations with personal narratives, the research produces findings that are both empirically robust and practically relevant for educators, parents, and policymakers seeking to sustain children's motivation for music learning in China.

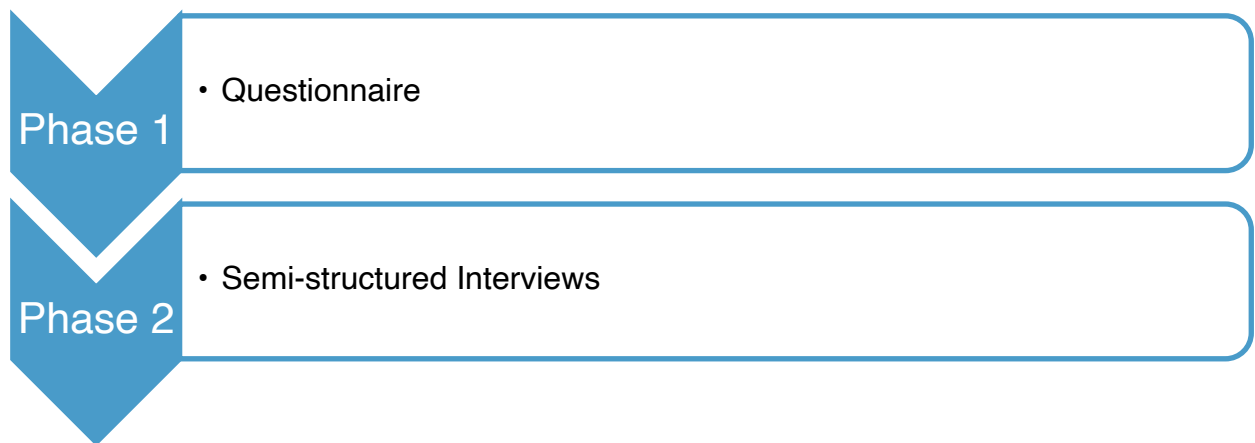
In sum, pragmatism's emphasis on practical consequences, methodological flexibility, and participant-centred inquiry supports a rigorous, contextually meaningful exploration of the complex determinants of children's musical motivation.

4.5: Mixed Methods

Guided by the philosophical paradigm of pragmatism, this study adopts a mixed-methods approach to investigate the determinants influencing Chinese children's musical motivation. Pragmatism supports methodological pluralism, recognising both quantitative and qualitative evidence as complementary means of addressing complex research questions. Accordingly, this study comprises two sequential phases, as illustrated in Figure 3.

Figure 3

Flowchart of the Procedure for Implementing the Design in this Study



The first phase involves a structured questionnaire designed to identify general patterns and statistical relationships among key variables, including demographic information, expertise levels, personality traits and children's motivational levels. This phase provides a broad overview of demographic and psychological determinants shaping children's musical motivation.

The second phase comprises semi-structured interviews designed to explore the learning environmental determinants of children's musical motivation. These interviews offer deeper insights into how children, parents, and teachers perceive and interpret motivational influences within different learning environments.

The decision to integrate quantitative and qualitative data collection stems from the need to address the research aims. Combining these methods mitigates the limitations inherent in single-

method approaches while capitalising on their respective strengths (Bryman, 2016). This methodological choice aligns with the principles of pragmatism, which emphasise selecting research tools that best address the research questions rather than adhering to a single epistemological stance.

By adopting this mixed-methods design, the study ensures that findings are both statistically robust and contextually meaningful. This integrative approach allows for a nuanced understanding of the mechanisms shaping Chinese children's musical motivation and enhances the study's practical relevance for educators, parents, and policymakers.

4.6: Developing the Research Materials

As discussed in the preceding section, data were collected sequentially through a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews, consistent with the study's mixed-methods design. The subsequent sections detail the design of the questionnaire and the construction of the interview schedule.

4.6.1: Phase 1: Questionnaire

4.6.1.1: Questionnaire Instrument Selection

To address the research question "How do demographic and psychological determinants influence children's motivation to learn music?", a structured questionnaire was designed and administrated as the first phase of the data collection. The instrument collected four categories of data: (1) demographic information and musical expertise, (2) personality traits, (3) musical motivation, and (4) open-ended responses concerning children's favourite school music lessons and their perceptions of parental support. Collecting both quantitative and limited qualitative responses allowed for a more nuanced understanding of the internal factors shaping musical motivation, while ensuring alignment with the mixed-methods design (see Section 4.5).

In selecting the measures included in the questionnaire, established theoretical models of motivation and validated personality scales were reviewed and compared to identify instruments suitable for the developmental stage and cultural context of the participants. The final selection was informed by theoretical compatibility with the conceptual framework, evidence of psychometric robustness, and relevance to the specific constructs under investigation. These considerations ensured that the questionnaire generated reliable data that could directly support the analytical aims of the study.

4.6.1.1.1: Demographic Information and Musical Expertise Level

As outlined in Sections 3.2.1 and 3.2.2, age and gender are recognised as important demographic determinants influencing children's musical motivation. Accordingly, this section of the questionnaire collected participants' age (and school year), gender, and relevant information about their musical engagement (e.g., type of musical activity or instrument studied).

Musical expertise was measured using Music Grade Examinations (MGEs) administered by the Central or Shanghai Conservatories of Music. These nationally recognised examinations assess technique (e.g., scales, arpeggios), performance of prescribed pieces, sight-reading, and aural skills. Due to their long-standing application in Chinese music education and their structured, criterion-referenced design, MGEs serve as a valid indicator of students' musical development and learning progression (see Section 3.3.4.2). Therefore, they function as an appropriate and sufficiently robust proxy measure of musical expertise within the context of this study, without the need for additional validation procedures.

4.6.1.1.2: Personality Traits Scale

Children's personality traits were assessed using the Pictorial Personality Traits Questionnaire for Children (PPTQ-C) developed by Maćkiewicz and Cieciuch (2016). This instrument aligns with the Big Five model: Extraversion, Neuroticism, Openness to Experience, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness, through 15 concise items (three per trait) (see Appendix F).

The PPTQ-C is particularly appropriate for the target age group for three reasons. First, it is a child-friendly format. Unlike word-based measures on personality traits, such as the widely used models by McCrae and Costa (2003), the PPTQ-C employs a picture-based design to improve children's comprehension and engagement. Second, the validity of PPTQ-C was

determined by previous studies in a large sample (Martins, 2021; Łubianka and Filipiak, 2022). Third, the pictorial approach minimises linguistic barriers, facilitating application in a Chinese context despite the absence of prior local validation. Although the PPTQ-C has not yet been applied specifically in the Chinese context, its successful use in multiple European countries suggests its potential for cross-cultural adaptability (Martins, 2021; Łubianka and Filipiak, 2022).

By employing the PPTQ-C, this study ensures an age-appropriate, psychometrically robust assessment of personality, supporting analysis of how internal determinants shape Chinese primary-school students' motivation for musical learning.

4.6.1.1.3: Motivation Scale

To measure primary-school students' musical motivation in this study, three established models were initially considered: Hallam et al.'s (2016) motivation scale, the MUSIC Model of Academic Motivation Inventory (MUSIC Inventory) (Jones & Skaggs, 2016; Parkes et al., 2017) and the Motivation for Learning Music questionnaire (MLM Model) (Comeau et al., 2019).

The MUSIC Inventory was developed by Jones and Skaggs (2016) and further utilised by Parkes et al. (2017). This model focuses on measuring motivation across general academic contexts. This model emphasises five key components influencing motivation: eMpowerment, Usefulness, Success, Interest, and Caring. However, its application has primarily been in small-scale music studies, with fewer than 200 participants. For example, Parkes et al. (2017) implemented the model in a study on music education but with a limited participant pool of 93 students, focusing on specific classroom settings. These studies demonstrate the model's utility in highly controlled environments, but they raise concerns about its scalability and reliability for larger samples like the one anticipated in this study (300–500 participants).

The MLM Model was proposed by Comeau et al. (2019). This model integrates input from both students and their parents to evaluate motivation. While this dual-perspective approach offers valuable insights, it introduces practical challenges when applied to large-scale studies involving more than 500 participants, particularly in terms of managing and aligning responses from students and parents.

After evaluating these options, Hallam's (2016) Motivation Scale was selected as the most appropriate tool for this study. Hallam et al.'s (2016) motivation scale offers several unique

advantages, making it particularly well-suited for assessing students' musical motivation. Its primary strength lies in its design as a dedicated tool to measure motivation levels specifically within the context of musical learning. Unlike generic motivation scales, this scale distinguishes between various elements of motivation, enabling a nuanced analysis of both environmental and internal factors that influence students' engagement with music.

The scale incorporates five well-established motivational elements:

- **Social Support and Affirmation:** Evaluating the encouragement and validation students receive from their social environment, including family, peers, and teachers.
- **Social Life and the Value of Playing an Instrument:** Assessing the role of music in shaping students' social experiences and perceived value in their lives.
- **Enjoyment of Performing:** Capturing the intrinsic joy and satisfaction derived from musical performances.
- **Self-Belief in Musical Ability:** Measuring students' confidence in their own musical skills and potential for success.
- **Enjoyment of Instrumental Musical Activities:** Focusing on students' enjoyment and engagement with musical practice and group activities.

This comprehensive framework allows for a detailed exploration of the multifaceted nature of musical motivation. Extensively validated across diverse child populations (Hallam, 2002, 2009, 2016; Hallam et al., 2020, 2021), this scale captures both internal and external motivational factors, offering a nuanced framework to analyse Chinese primary-school students' musical motivation.

Validation of the Motivation Scale

A modified version of Hallam et al.'s (2016) motivation scale was employed to measure students' musical motivation. It was adapted to reflect the broader context of Chinese primary-school music education while retaining psychometric integrity. Table 2 overleaf presents the original and revised items, with bold text highlighting modifications.

Reliability Testing and Cronbach's Alpha

The revised scale was pilot tested with 40 primary-school pupils to assess reliability. Cronbach's alpha values for all five subscales exceeded 0.65, which is acceptable for a small sample of this

size (Abell et al., 2009; Field, 2013). These results indicate satisfactory internal consistency across subscales.

In the context of this study, reliability refers to the extent to which items within each subscale consistently measure the same underlying construct related to children's musical motivation. For example, items designed to measure intrinsic motivation included statements such as “*I enjoy learning music*” and “*I feel happy when I practise my instrument.*” If these items produce similar response patterns among participants, the subscale demonstrates internal consistency. Similarly, items within the parental support subscale assessed children's perceptions of encouragement from parents, such as whether parents listen to their practice or encourage participation in musical activities. The acceptable Cronbach's alpha values obtained in the pilot study suggest that the items within each subscale function coherently in measuring these constructs within the context of Chinese primary-school children's musical learning.

Table 2

Comparison between Original Subscale Statement and Modified Subscale Statement

Sub-section of scale and Cronbach's alpha	Original statements	Final statements
Social support and affirmation (A=.70)	My teachers at school like me to play a musical instrument	My teachers at school like me to learn music
	I can achieve anything I want on my instrument if I practise enough	I can achieve anything I want with my music skills if I practise enough
	Most people think that I play my instrument well	Most people think that I play my instrument well / dance well / sing well
	My parents want me to play an instrument	My parents want me to learn music
	My relations (e.g. grandparents, aunts and uncles) like me playing a musical instrument	My relations (e.g. grandparents, aunts and uncles) like me to learn music

Social life and the value of learning music (A= .66)	Playing an instrument is an important part of my social life	Learning music is an important part of my social life
	I enjoy going to concerts to listen	I enjoy going to concerts to listen
	I think it is valuable to play a musical instrument	I think it is valuable to learn music
	I have many friends who play musical instruments	I have many friends who play musical instruments / dance / sing
Enjoyment of performing (A= .85)	Playing in concerts gives me a real thrill	Playing in concerts gives me a real thrill
	I find it very satisfying to play in concerts	I find it very satisfying to play in concerts
Self-belief in musical ability (A= .86)	I have the potential to be a good musician	I have the potential to be a good musician
	I have musical ability	I have musical ability
	I am successful in what I attempt to do on my instrument	I am successful in what I attempt to do on my instrument / dance / sing
Enjoyment of musical activities (A= .69)	I hate having to play a musical instrument (reversed)	I hate having to practise (reversed)
	I find practice boring (reversed)	I find practice boring (reversed)
	I enjoy my instrumental lessons	I enjoy my music lessons
	I enjoy playing in musical groups, orchestras and bands	I enjoy performance with others

Significance of the Modified Scale

Adapting Hallam's scale expands its focus from instrumental performance to encompass a wider range of musical experiences (e.g., singing, dancing). The Cronbach's alpha values confirm that these modifications preserved internal consistency and construct validity. By tailoring the wording to Chinese cultural and educational contexts, the revised scale provides a culturally

relevant and reliable instrument for investigating primary-school students' motivation to learn music.

This validation demonstrates that the adapted measure effectively captures both intrinsic and extrinsic motivational dimensions, ensuring its suitability for large-scale data collection and for addressing the study's research questions.

4.6.1.2: Questionnaire Structure

The final questionnaire comprised four main sections: (1) demographic information and musical expertise level, (2) personality traits, (3) motivation levels, and (4) two open-ended questions. See Figure 4 for the questionnaire map and Appendix F for the full questionnaire (in both English and Chinese).

Following a brief introduction and consent statement, the first section gathered demographic and expertise information. Items included gender, age, school year, musical activities undertaken, instrument group, years of practice, and the musical expertise level (highest grade of music examination achieved).

The second section assessed personality traits using the PPTQ-C). This instrument contains 15 items, three for each trait: Extraversion, Neuroticism, Openness to Experience, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness. Each item presents a short caption describing a situation (e.g., "When it rains ..."), accompanied by two pictures. Children select the picture whose behaviour most closely matches their own and rate their similarity on a three-point scale. This child-friendly, visual approach reduces reading demands and supports accurate self-reporting among younger respondents.

The third section measured students' musical motivation using the modified Hallam et al. (2016) scale. As outlined in Table 2, the scale comprises 18 items with five subscales: (a) social support and affirmation (5 items), (b) social life and the value of playing an instrument (4 items), (c) enjoyment of performing (2 items), (d) self-belief in musical ability (3 items), and (e) enjoyment of instrumental musical activities (4 items). Participants responded on a seven-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree), enabling nuanced measurement of both intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors.

Finally, two open-ended questions invited students to describe (a) how their families support their musical learning and (b) one of their favourite school music lessons.

Figure 4 illustrates the questionnaire map. The survey was designed to capture both quantitative and qualitative data, addressing the primary research questions by integrating the influencing factors summarised in Table 3.

Figure 4

Questionnaire Map

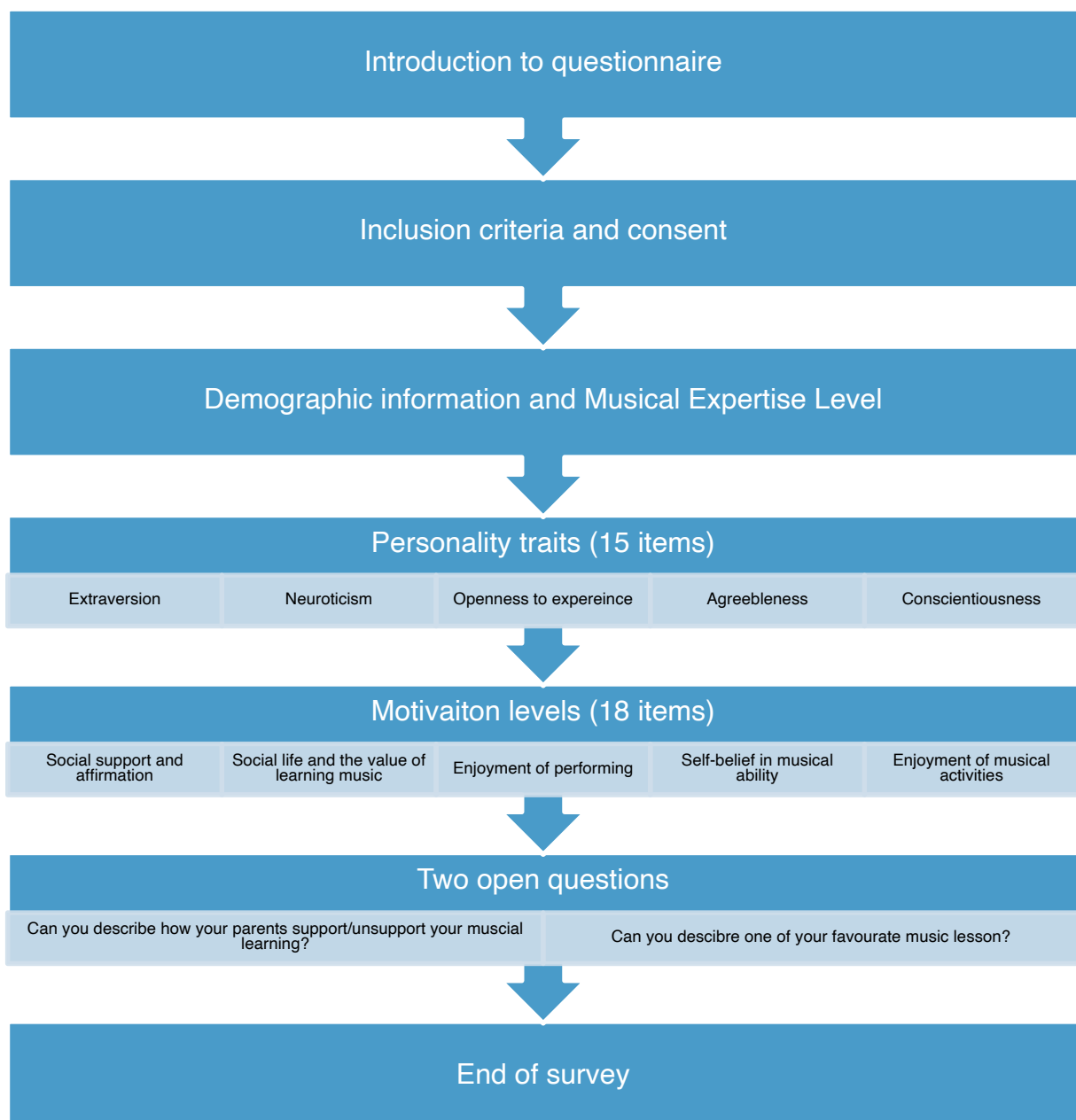


Table 3*Influencing Determinants Incorporated in the Questionnaire*

Influencing Factors	Subcategories	Rationale
Demographics	Age	Examine variations in musical motivation across demographic groups
	Gender	
	Year of School	
	Instrument played or activities involved	
	Years of practice	
Expertise Level	Music graded examination	Evaluate the relationship between expertise and children's motivation
Personality Traits	Extraversion	Identify how personality influences children's motivation
	Neuroticism	
	Openness to Experience	
	Agreeableness	
	Conscientiousness	
Motivation Level	Social support and affirmation	Assess intrinsic and extrinsic contributors to children's musical motivation
	Social life and the value of learning music	
	Enjoyment of performing	
	Self-belief in musical ability	
	Enjoyment of musical activities	
Learning Environment	Family, school and societal influences	Bring understanding of how external determinants shape children's motivation

4.6.2: Phase 2: Semi-structured Interviews

4.6.2.1: Interview Schedule

The semi-structured interview method was selected for its flexibility and suitability for exploring potentially sensitive topics (Evans & Jones, 2011). This format enables participants to share experiences in a conversational setting while allowing the researcher to probe emerging themes and clarify responses, yielding a comprehensive understanding of diverse perspectives (Ryan et al., 2009).

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with parents and teachers to explore their experiences and insights regarding children's musical learning. The interview questions were designed to align with the research aims while remaining sufficiently flexible to accommodate each respondent's context. For example, parents were asked about the types of support they provide for their children's musical education, including emotional encouragement and financial investment. Teachers were invited to discuss their strategies for motivating students and the challenges they encounter in fostering sustained musical engagement. Tailoring questions to participants' lived experiences enabled the collection of nuanced data on how learning environments shape children's motivation.

Semi-structured interviews were also conducted with children to elicit both general and in-depth reflections on how their family, school, and broader social contexts influence their musical learning. To ensure age-appropriate communication, interview questions were simplified and adapted according to each child's age and verbal ability. Open-ended prompts, such as "Can you tell me what you like most about learning music?" and "How does your family help you with your music practice?", were used to encourage free expression and genuine reflection. This adaptive approach allowed children to communicate their views comfortably, yielding rich and meaningful data.

The interview introductions and schedules for all participant groups are provided in Appendix G, outlining the structure, key themes, and flow of the interviews. These materials ensured consistency across interviews while maintaining sufficient flexibility to respond to individual participant needs.

4.7: Recruitment and Sampling

4.7.1: Recruitment

Four schools from within Zhejiang were recruited to take part in this study. The schools that agreed to participate were situated in three cities: Hangzhou, Jinhua, and Lanxi. Due to the inclusive nature of this research and the involvement of multiple stakeholders with various levels of authority, recruitment was carried out over three stages: school-level approval, parental consent via digital platforms, and student assent through an introductory video. Further details of each stage were demonstrated below.

4.7.1.1: Stage 1: School-level Approval

The participating schools were recruited directly via the Head of Music of each school. The schools were contacted directly via telephone to obtain an initial response. Upon expressing an interest in participating in the study, an online meeting was arranged between the headteacher at the school and the researcher to further explain what participation in the research would involve. A formal email was also sent to further explain the project (see Appendix B).

4.7.1.2: Stage 2: Parental Consent via Digital Platform

Once the teachers had agreed to take part in the research, parents, guardians, and carers of the children in each participating teacher's class were issued with an information pack (see Appendix C) and an informed consent form for the questionnaire (see Appendix E) via WeChat (Chinese social media platform). The researcher prepared these documents but issued them to the primary caregivers via the teachers. The parents, guardians, and carers responded on WeChat to give their consent for their children to take part. All documents were distributed two weeks before the data collection. Within these two weeks, the parents, guardians, and carers could decide whether to participate.

4.7.1.3: Stage 3: Student Assent through an Introductory Video

The teachers played an introductory video to the research participants during a school music lesson (the script of the video content is attached in Appendix D). This video briefly introduced the study and the children's role and rights as participants. In addition, the participants were provided with information regarding the research process, the level of confidentiality which would be upheld throughout the project, and the voluntary nature of participation. This video was played at the beginning of a music lesson two weeks before the data collection. Within this two-week duration, students were given time to decide whether they would like to be involved in the study.

4.7.2: *Sampling*

As previously mentioned in Section 2.1.4, music is a compulsory subject for primary-and secondary-school students in China, and thus all compulsory education stage students must attend school music lessons. Therefore, all primary- and secondary-school students were initially considered. However, due to the time limited nature of collecting, transcribing, and analysing qualitative data, children were recruited from the higher grades (Grades 4 to 6) at the primary schools. Compared to younger (Grades 1 to 3) children, these higher-grade students have richer musical learning experiences and would be better able to reflect on and articulate their musical learning experiences and motivations. Compared to older children at secondary schools, primary-school students have more free time and may have more interest in participating in this project. Therefore, higher-grade primary-school students (Grades 4–6) were prioritised for participation to maximise the richness of response.

This decision was informed by the assumption that older primary-school students are more likely to articulate their experiences meaningfully. Students younger than this may have less reflective capacity, while secondary-school students often have more demanding schedules, limiting their availability for participation (Kan, 2019).

4.8: Data Collection Procedure

4.8.1: Phase 1: Questionnaire

To distribute the questionnaire and engage with potential participants, I positioned myself in a public area within each school, such as at the corner of the stairs or somewhere under a tree in the playground. Each location was chosen for its high visibility and accessibility, ensuring that students could easily approach me without disrupting their regular activities.

A poster was displayed prominently in front of my desk, which briefly introduced myself and provided an overview of the project, including its aims and significance. The poster also included assurances about confidentiality, voluntary participation, and the right to withdraw at any time.

Students were informed they could collect a questionnaire and return it directly to me during the times I was present. I was stationed at this location for one week in each school to accommodate varying schedules and to maximise participation.

Students approached the desk of their own volition, ensuring that participation was entirely voluntary. Alongside the questionnaire, participants received an information sheet detailing the purpose of the study, confidentiality protocols, and their rights. The corner of the stairs or somewhere under the tree provided a semi-private area, allowing participants to approach discreetly if desired.

This collection approach was designed to create a welcoming and non-intrusive environment, encouraging participation while respecting the autonomy and comfort of the students.

A total of 679 students participated in the questionnaire phase of this study. However, some participants did not complete the first three sections of the questionnaire, resulting in incomplete data. To ensure the validity and reliability of the findings, only the first three sections (including demographic information, expertise level, personality traits and musical motivation level) of the questionnaires were fully completed and included in the analysis. As a result, data from 464 students, depending on the remaining valid responses, were adopted for the study.

4.8.2: Phase 2: Semi-structured Interviews

A total of 17 students out of 464 participants expressed that they were willing to participate in a further interview. Through further communication and discussion with their parents and teachers, formal interviews were conducted with 13 participants - five primary-school students, five parents and three teachers. To ensure participants' surnames were anonymised in the research, pseudonymisation was employed, where surnames are replaced with generic surnames that do not reveal the participants' real identities. Table 4 provides demographic information for each of the study participants.

Table 4

Details of Interviewed Participants

Children					
	Age	Gender	Grade (Year of Study)	Instrument group	Motivation level (from questionnaire)
Qin	12	Male	6	Erhu (a Chinese two- stringed bowed musical instrument)	5.18
Wang	11	Male	5	Erhu	5.27
Liu	11	Female	4	Erhu	4.43
Li	13	Female	6	Violin	3.98
Chen	11	Female	5	Piano	6.13
Adults					
Socio-economic status (Job, background)					
Qin's mother	Occupation: Former editor, currently a full-time housewife.				
	Education: Holds a postgraduate taught degree.				

	Socio-economic insights: Her decision to focus on domestic roles might indicate a financially stable household supported by other family members' income.
Wang's mother	Occupation: Operates in cross-border e-commerce. Education: College graduate. Socio-economic insights: Operating in e-commerce suggests entrepreneurial engagement, with income potentially varying based on market success.
Liu's mother	Occupation: Practising lawyer. Education: Bachelor's degree. Socio-economic insights: Lawyers in China often earn above-average incomes and hold a respected societal position.
Li's mother	Occupation: Currently a full-time housewife; previously employed. Education: College graduate. Socio-economic insights: Being a housewife suggests financial reliance on family income streams.
Chen's mother	A doctor and currently a full-time housewife. Holds a postgraduate research degree. Occupation: Former doctor, now a full-time housewife. Education: Holds a postgraduate taught degree. Socio-economic insights: Doctors with postgraduate degrees are well compensated and highly respected in society, indicating a strong socio-economic standing even after transitioning to a domestic role.
Zhao	Occupation: Full-time private tutor specialising in Erhu, self-employed. Education: Graduate from Zhejiang Conservatory of Music. Socio-economic insights: Income depends on the demand for private music lessons. Specialisation in a traditional Chinese instrument like the Erhu suggests cultural expertise and dedication to arts education.
Shen	Occupation: Full-time university lecturer and private violin teacher. Education: Graduated from the Shanghai Conservatory of Music and the Hanover Theatre Conservatory for the Performing Arts.

Socio-economic insights: A dual role as a lecturer and private instructor indicates a stable income, with his international education adding prestige and likely higher earnings.

Zeng **Occupation:** Associate professor and private piano teacher.

Education: Graduate from Sichuan Conservatory of Music.

Socio-economic insights: The position of associate professor in China is highly respected and well compensated. Combining this role with private teaching provides a stable and substantial income.

4.8.2.1: Parents and Teachers

The semi-structured interviews with adults were designed to explore each individual's experiences and perspectives concerning their children's musical learning. The interview questions were adapted to allow participants to express their thoughts and feelings openly and in their own words (see Appendix G). This approach provided the flexibility to delve into participants' unique experiences while maintaining a structure aligned with the research objectives.

A total of eight adult participants were interviewed, including five parents and three music teachers. Each interview lasted approximately 30 minutes and was conducted at a location chosen by the participant, such as a public area on the school campus or a nearby café. Prior to the start of each interview, the researcher briefly outlined the general focus of the discussion and asked several introductory questions. For example, participants were asked: "*Could you describe the types of musical activities your child participates in?*" These initial questions were followed by more detailed prompts intended to deepen the discussion, such as: "*How does your child practise music at home?*"

Introducing the discussion in this way served several purposes. First, this allowed the interviewee to feel partly in control and at ease, which helped establish a sense of trust and entice the participants to share their experiences. Secondly, it was a goal to probe into the personal and social world of the participant, and the approach provided the interviewee with opportunities to introduce issues that may not have otherwise been considered. Smith and Osborn (2008)

explained that the participant can be “perceived as the experiential expert on the subject and should therefore be allowed maximum opportunity to tell their own story” (p. 59).

All the interviews were audio recorded, transcribed into Chinese, and translated into English. The participants were able to view the transcription of their interview before data analysis to ensure that no false information had been documented. Furthermore, the participants could withdraw their data within two weeks of the conclusion of the interview. All participants remained in the research project.

4.8.2.2: Children

A total of five children participated in semi-structured interviews. The interview approach with the children varied depending on their age, communication abilities and response style. For example, Liu’s interview lasted longer than Wang’s, as Liu provided a detailed account of her musical experiences and shared extensive information about the support she received from her family and teacher. Conversely, shorter interviews were conducted when children provided concise responses or when their attention span required adjustments, such as Wang, whose interview only lasted around eight minutes. The duration of Li, Liu, Chen, and Qin’s interviews ranged from 10 to 20 minutes, depending on the depth and details of the participants’ responses.

To ensure minimal disruption to the children’s routines, the interviews were arranged directly after their parents’ interviews. This sequencing allowed the researcher to understand the child’s learning schedule and establish context. Further details about the scheduling process and methodology are provided in Section 4.8.2 and Appendix G.

By tailoring the interview approach to each child’s needs, this study ensured that participants felt comfortable sharing their experiences, contributing to the richness and reliability of the data.

4.9: Data Analysis Methods

Different methods were used to analyse quantitative and qualitative data: SPSS statistics, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) and Thematic Analysis (TA).

4.9.1: Quantitative Data Analysis

The quantitative data from the questionnaire were interpreted based on raw scores for Hallam's motivation scale (2016) and PBPS-C (Maćkiewicz & Cieciuch, 2016). Statistical analyses were performed using SPSS 26.0 software. Each measure's mean, standard deviation, median, and mode were calculated to determine participants' personality characteristics and motivation levels. Pearson's r was adopted to measure whether there are significant relationships between students' age, expertise level, and musical motivation. Then, analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to determine whether there were any personality traits and motivation level differences between boys and girls. Next, correlation analysis was performed using Pearson's r . Multiple regression analyses were carried out in which personality traits were predictors, and motivation levels were dependent variables. Correlation analysis and regression analyses aimed to investigate the relationship between participants' personality traits and motivation levels. Finally, the significant linear correlation variables were substituted into the linear regression analysis.

4.9.2: Qualitative Data Analysis

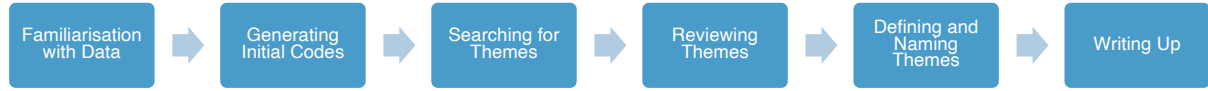
To address the complexity of the research questions and gain a more comprehensive understanding of Chinese children's musical motivation, this study adopts a combined qualitative approach, integrating Thematic Analysis (TA) and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). This methodological combination is driven by the need to explore both the common patterns across a broader group of participants and the individual, lived experiences of specific children in depth.

4.9.2.1: Thematic analysis (TA)

TA is a widely used method for analysing qualitative data. In this study, TA was employed to examine responses to two open-ended questions in the questionnaire, which sought to uncover the role of family and school support in children's musical learning.

One of the key strengths of TA is its flexibility (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Unlike other methods such as Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), which are closely tied to specific theoretical perspective, TA is not constrained by a fixed epistemological framework (Howitt & Cramer, 2011). This adaptability makes it particularly suitable for analysing the qualitative data in this study, allowing themes to emerge organically from participants' narratives rather than being shaped by a predefined theoretical lens.

Guided by Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step process of TA (see Figure 5), the following steps were undertaken. The first step is familiarisation with data, achieved through repeated reading of participants' responses to the open-ended questions to gain a comprehensive understanding of the dataset. This process facilitated the identification of initial patterns and salient ideas. In the second phase, a systematic coding procedure is applied, during which recurring ideas and concepts were labelled and organised into smaller units of meaning. The third phase involves collating codes into potential themes that captured recurring patterns across the dataset. In the fourth phase, these themes are reviewed and refined to ensure internal coherence and accurate representation of the data, with overlapping or ambiguous categories clarified. The fifth phase entails defining and naming themes, providing each with a clear and descriptive title that encapsulates its essence. Finally, in the sixth phase, the finalised themes are integrated into the findings and supported by illustrative quotations from participants to enhance credibility and transparency.

Figure 5*Six Steps of TA Process*

Note. Developed by the author based on Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis process.

In general, the use of TA provided a rigorous and systematic analysis of qualitative data, offering deeper insights into the determinants of children's motivation for musical learning. By maintaining a data-driven approach, TA contributed to a holistic understanding of the research questions.

4.9.2.2: Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

IPA was employed to analyse qualitative data derived from semi-structured interviews, with the aim of understanding how individuals perceive and make sense of their lived experiences (Smith & Osborn, 2008). IPA enables a detailed, idiographic exploration of how children interpret their musical experiences within personal, cultural, and educational contexts (Howitt & Cramer, 2011; Reid et al., 2005). This approach is particularly suited to addressing sub-research questions concerned with subjective meaning-making, such as how children perceive parental involvement, teacher influence, and educational expectations in relation to their motivation to learn music.

Within this study's mixed-methods design, IPA complements the quantitative analysis by addressing aspects that numerical data alone cannot capture. While statistical results identify patterns and correlations, IPA provides interpretive depth by exploring how these relationships are experienced and understood by individuals. For instance, quantitative analyses may reveal

gender or age differences in motivation, whereas IPA examines how social and cultural expectations shape these differences within family and school environments.

Moreover, IPA enhances the analytical framework by bridging quantitative findings with qualitative insights, adding interpretive and cultural depth to the data (Willig, 2013). First, it illuminates the dynamic interactions between learning environments, revealing how broader cultural values and institutional expectations influence children's musical engagement. Second, IPA ensures that interpretations remain grounded in participants' lived experiences, thereby enhancing both the cultural and contextual relevance of the findings (Smith and Osborn, 2008). This interpretive dimension is particularly valuable given the distinctive educational and sociocultural context of Chinese primary-school students.

According to Pietkiewicz and Smith (2014), the IPA process comprises six steps, illustrated in Figure 6:

Figure 6

Six Steps of IPA Process (Pietkiewicz and Smith, 2014)



Note. Developed by the author based on the IPA process described by Pietkiewicz and Smith (2014).

The first step involves transcribing and initially interpreting the interviews. The process of transcription and translation facilitates close engagement with the data and deepens familiarity with participants' responses. In the second step, key notes are recorded in the right-hand margin of each transcript, while emerging ideas and potential themes are documented in the left-hand margin (see Appendix H: Qualitative Analysis Example). The third stage entails identifying connections among emerging ideas. Related concepts are clustered into subordinate themes, which are then grouped under broader superordinate themes. Once this process is completed for

the first interview, it is repeated for subsequent cases. The fourth stage involves comparing interviews to identify recurring and divergent patterns across participants. In the fifth stage, similarities and differences among the three participant groups (children, parents and teachers), are analysed to understand how each group conceptualised and experienced musical motivation within their specific contexts. Finally, the sixth stage involves checking all codes and themes against the original transcripts to ensure fidelity to participants' intended meanings. While existing literature was used to interpret and situate the results, all themes were inductively derived from participants' narratives rather than imposed *a priori*.

By integrating IPA within the mixed-methods framework, this study achieves a comprehensive and contextually rich understanding of musical motivation. IPA enhances the quantitative findings by revealing the subjective meanings, emotional dimensions, and cultural nuances underlying children's musical engagement. This participant-centred approach ensures that the voices of students, parents, and teachers remain central to the analysis, producing findings that are both methodologically rigorous and practically relevant to understanding musical motivation within the Chinese educational context.

4.9.2.3: Developing a Theme Map

As discussed above, TA is a flexible method used to identify patterns across a dataset, while IPA is more idiographic, focusing on the detailed understanding of individual lived experiences. By integrating these two approaches, this study benefits from both breadth and depth: TA captures broader socio-cultural patterns, while IPA adds rich interpretive detail, ensuring that individual voices are not lost within aggregate trends. This integration supports a more nuanced analysis that is sensitive to both single-determinant and shared influences, thereby enhancing the trustworthiness and complexity of the findings.

A theme map was employed as a visual representation of the key themes derived from the qualitative data and the relationships among them. When combining TA and IPA, TA provides the foundation by identifying overarching themes based on patterns across participants. IPA also contributes to the development of these themes by offering in-depth insights into how individual participants make sense of their experiences. In this study, the broader thematic structure was

first established through TA, and then both TA and IPA were used to enrich the analysis by incorporating sub-themes and illustrative examples grounded in rich, individual meaning-making. This combined approach ensures that both commonalities and unique personal experiences are captured, enhancing the depth and complexity of the overall interpretation. The process involved several iterative stages, ensuring the themes accurately captured the core concepts of the data and were logically structured. Below is a detailed explanation of how the theme map was developed.

The process of developing the theme map was iterative and systematic. As described in Section 4.9.2.1, TA was conducted first to identify and code recurring patterns across the entire dataset. Related codes were then grouped into preliminary themes and refined to form the initial structure of the theme map. For example, key TA-derived themes included Parents and School.

Subsequently, IPA findings were incorporated by analysing key meaning units and experiential insights from individual participants. These insights were used to add interpretive depth to the TA-derived themes and to develop sub-themes that, while not widespread across all cases, held significant relevance within individual narratives. For instance, within the overarching theme Parents, sub-themes such as Parental Background and Parental Support were generated based on IPA data.

The final theme map followed a hierarchical structure, linking main themes with their respective sub-themes to illustrate relationships among different dimensions of the data. An example of this hierarchical organisation is presented in Table 5, while the full theme map is displayed in Section 6.2.

In general, by following this structured and iterative approach, the theme map effectively synthesises the findings and supports the narrative of the research. It highlights the multidimensional nature of the learning environment and its influence on children's musical motivation, aligning seamlessly with the overarching aims of the study.

Table 5*Exemplar Theme Map*

Overarching Theme	Sub-theme	Codes
Parents	Parents' background	Education
		Socio-economic status
	Parenting style	Authoritative parenting
		Authoritarian parenting
		A combination of authoritative and authoritarian parenting
	Parental support	Behavioural support
		Emotional support
	Different roles in musical learning – tiger mother, panda father	Different work division Parenting style

4.10: Reflexivity

Reflexivity is a critical component of qualitative and mixed-methods research, as it acknowledges the researcher's positionality and the potential influence of personal background on all stages of the research process, including design, data collection, analysis, and interpretation (Berger, 2015; Olmos-Vega et al., 2023). In this study, reflexive practice was employed to examine my dual cultural positioning, mitigate potential bias, and enhance methodological transparency.

Having been raised in China until the age of eighteen and subsequently educated in the United Kingdom, I occupy both insider and outsider positions. As an insider, I possess a deep understanding of East Asian educational norms, such as hierarchical teacher-student relationships and the cultural emphasis on academic achievement. As an outsider shaped by British pedagogical values, I also recognise the importance of autonomy, individuality, and progressive teaching practices. This dual perspective provides valuable interpretive insight but

also carries the risk of privileging Western values, such as independence and creativity, over the collectivist values deeply embedded in Chinese education.

To address this potential bias, several strategies were implemented. First, triangulation was employed by integrating data from questionnaires, interviews, and existing literature, thereby capturing multiple perspectives and reducing reliance on any single source of evidence. Second, I engaged in continuous self-reflection, systematically comparing emerging interpretations with participant narratives and prior research to ensure alignment with the data. Third, I sought peer feedback from colleagues with diverse cultural and academic backgrounds to challenge and refine my interpretations. Finally, an independent qualitative researcher, experienced in music psychology and not involved in this study, validated the thematic analysis by reviewing selected transcripts and annotated themes. Consensus was reached through discussion, following best practices for enhancing qualitative research credibility (Burland, 2005).

By explicitly recognising my positionality and incorporating these reflexive measures, the study maintains both analytical rigour and cultural sensitivity. Reflexivity functions here not as an auxiliary step, but as an integral methodological component, ensuring that interpretations of Chinese children's musical motivation remain firmly grounded in participants' lived experiences rather than in the researcher's assumptions or cultural predispositions.

4.11: Ethical Approval

Ethical approval is a fundamental requirement of any research study, ensuring adherence to ethical principles, protection of participants' rights and dignity, and mitigation of potential risks. This study was conducted in full compliance with the ethical standards set forth by the British Psychological Society (BPS, 2021).

4.11.1: Ethical Approval Application

The ethical approval process began with the preparation of an application submitted to the University of Leeds Research Ethics Committee. The application included an overview of the

study's aims, research questions, and methodologies, along with a clear justification for its scholarly and practical contributions. Details were also provided regarding participant recruitment, including inclusion and exclusion criteria, to ensure fairness and equity in participant selection. The submission further outlined the data collection procedures, a detailed risk assessment identifying potential risks to participants, and strategies to minimise such risks. Data protection protocols were specified, including anonymisation processes, secure data storage, and data destruction procedures following the study's completion, to safeguard participants' privacy.

Ethical approval was granted by the University of Leeds Research Ethics Committee in January 2020, under reference number FAHC19-016 (see Appendix A).

4.11.2: Data Collection Process

As discussed in Sections 4.7 and 4.8, four key ethical measures were implemented throughout the data collection process to ensure participant welfare and research integrity.

First, participation in the study was entirely voluntary. An introductory video and detailed information sheets were provided to participants and their guardians, clearly explaining the study's purpose, methodology, and participants' rights. Informed consent was obtained through signed consent forms prior to participation.

Second, participants were informed of their right to participate voluntarily and withdraw from the study at any time without repercussions. Efforts were made to prioritise participants' psychological comfort, including offering the option to skip questions or pause interviews if they felt uncomfortable.

Third, participants were offered the opportunity to review and approve their interview transcripts. This process ensured that their views were represented accurately and that the final data reflected their intended meaning.

Fourth, interviews were conducted in neutral and familiar settings, such as public areas of school campuses or cafés, to create a relaxed and non-intimidating environment, particularly for child participants. Communication methods and language were adjusted to be age-appropriate and accessible for younger participants, fostering a sense of ease during interactions.

4.11.3: Data Handling and Management

In this study, the term ‘data’ refers to all information collected, generated, and analysed to address the research questions. This includes both quantitative and qualitative data obtained directly from participants through surveys and semi-structured interviews. Quantitative data were collected using structured questionnaires designed to measure factors such as musical motivation, engagement, and attitudes towards music education. Qualitative data were obtained through semi-structured interviews with students, teachers, and parents. Verbatim transcripts of these interviews were produced to capture participants’ experiences, perceptions, and cultural perspectives in detail.

The data therefore comprise two formats: quantitative and qualitative. All data were securely stored in compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), with access restricted to the researcher and the supervisory team. Regular checks were conducted to ensure that data storage and handling procedures complied with ethical guidelines. In addition, strict confidentiality and anonymisation protocols were followed for any data sharing, where necessary.

4.12: Chapter Summary

This chapter has provided a detailed account of the research methodology employed in the study. It began by outlining the research aims and questions and justifying the selection of Zhejiang Province as the research setting. The philosophical paradigm of pragmatism and the use of a mixed-methods approach were explained, demonstrating their alignment with the study’s overarching research aim. By integrating quantitative and qualitative methods, the research offers an exploration of the determinants of Chinese children’s musical motivation. This approach not only addresses significant gaps in the literature but also provides practical insights for educators and policymakers.

The chapter further detailed the instruments and procedures used in data collection, including the questionnaire and semi-structured interviews, alongside the sampling and recruitment strategies. Analytical procedures were described in depth, encompassing both quantitative

analyses, using statistical methods, and qualitative analyses, including TA and IPA. Ethical considerations and reflexive practices were addressed to ensure transparency and credibility in the research process.

Together, these methodological decisions establish a robust foundation for investigating the determinants of children's musical motivation. The quantitative results are presented in Chapter 5, followed by the qualitative findings and their integration in Chapter 6.

Chapter 5: Demographic and Psychological Determinants of Children's Musical Motivation

This chapter presents and interprets the key quantitative results of the study, focusing on the demographic and psychological determinants of Chinese children's musical motivation. The analysis examines how age, gender and personality traits influence both musical expertise and motivation, providing insights into the individual factors that shape children's engagement with and attitudes towards music learning.

5.1: Research Aims and Hypothesis

As outlined in Section 3.2, demographic and psychological determinants of musical motivation encompass age, gender, personality traits and learning styles. These factors critically shape how students engage with learning, respond to instruction, and develop musical skills over time (Gaunt & Hallam, 2009; Gjermunds et al., 2020; Hallam et al., 2020; McPherson & O'Neill, 2010).

To explore this, the present chapter addresses Sub-RQ 1: *How do demographic and psychological determinants influence Chinese children's motivation to learn music?* To guide the analysis, five subsidiary research questions were formulated:

- What is the relationship between children's age and their musical motivation levels?
- What are the differences in motivation levels to learn music between primary-school girls and boys?
- What are the differences in expertise levels between primary-school girls and boys?
- What is the relationship between students' expertise level and their musical motivation?
- What is the relationship between children's personality traits and their musical motivation?

Based on existing empirical evidence, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: There is a significant relationship between age and musical motivation among Chinese primary-school students.

H2: Gender differences significantly influence musical motivation levels among Chinese primary-school students.

H3: Age is positively correlated with musical expertise levels among Chinese primary-school students.

H4: Higher levels of musical expertise are positively correlated with greater musical motivation among Chinese primary-school students.

H5: Personality traits, particularly extraversion, neuroticism, conscientiousness, and openness, are significant predictors of musical motivation among Chinese primary-school students.

5.2: Results

This section presents the key quantitative results of the study. It begins with an overview of the participants' demographic characteristics and relevant descriptive statistics. The subsequent analysis examines the effects of age, gender and personality traits on children's musical motivation and expertise levels. Finally, the relationship between musical expertise and motivation is analysed in depth to provide an understanding of how internal determinants shape children's musical motivation.

5.2.1 Descriptive Statistics of Participant Sample Characteristics

5.2.1.1: Age, Grade (Year of Study), Gender

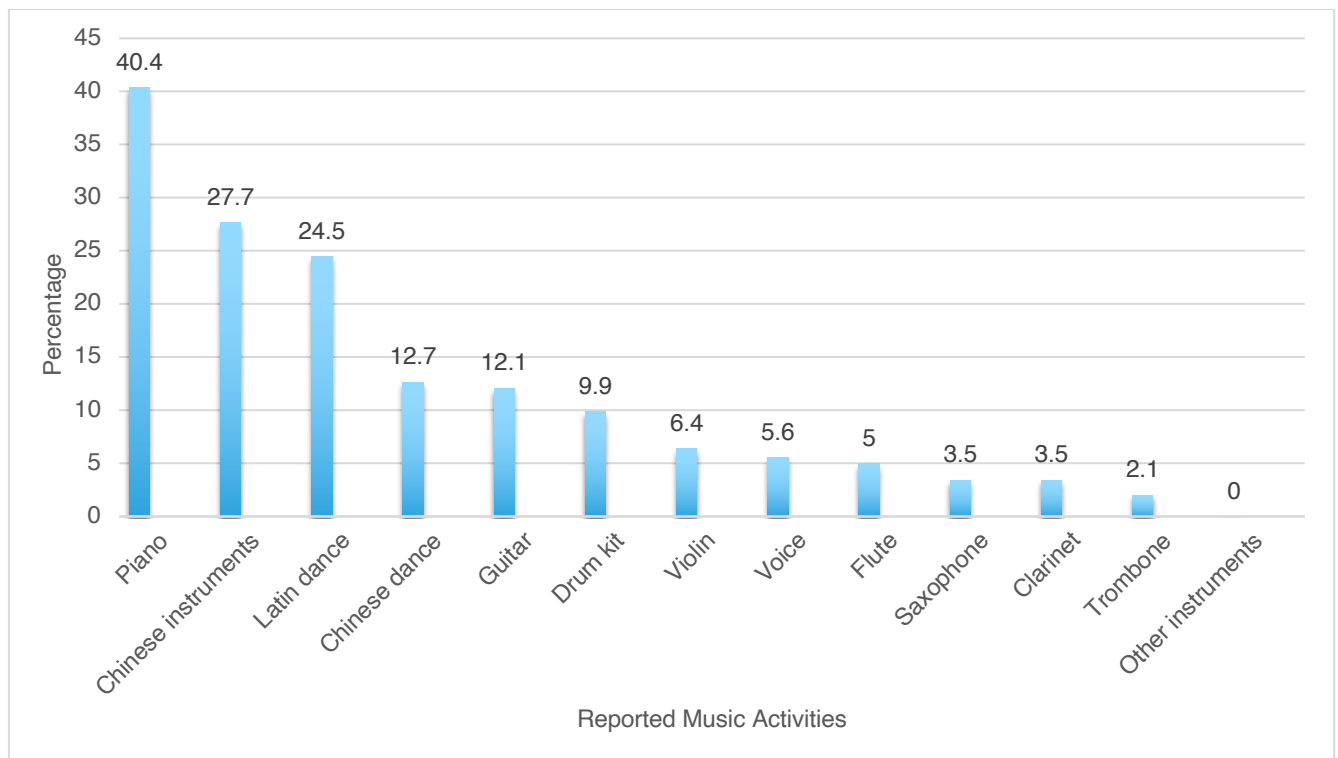
A total of 464 participants completed the questionnaire. The participants were aged between 10 and 13 years, with a mean age of 12.21 years ($SD = 0.76$). They were enrolled in 4th, 5th, or 6th grade in primary school. Additionally, slightly more than half of the participants were girls ($n = 233$), while the remaining participants were boys ($n = 231$).

5.2.1.2: Spread, Type of Private Music Tutoring, and Expertise Level

A high proportion (73.5%) of participants reported receiving private music tutoring, with 27.3% engaging in two or more private music activities. As illustrated in Figure 7, the piano was the most commonly played instrument (40.4%), followed by Chinese instruments (27.7%), Latin dance (24.5%), and Chinese dance (12.7%). Other popular choices included guitar (12.1%), drum kit (9.9%), violin (6.4%), voice (5.6%), flute (5.0%), saxophone (3.5%), clarinet (3.5%), and trombone (2.1%). Instruments with less than one percent representation were categorised under “other instruments”.

Figure 7

Reported Music Activities Joined

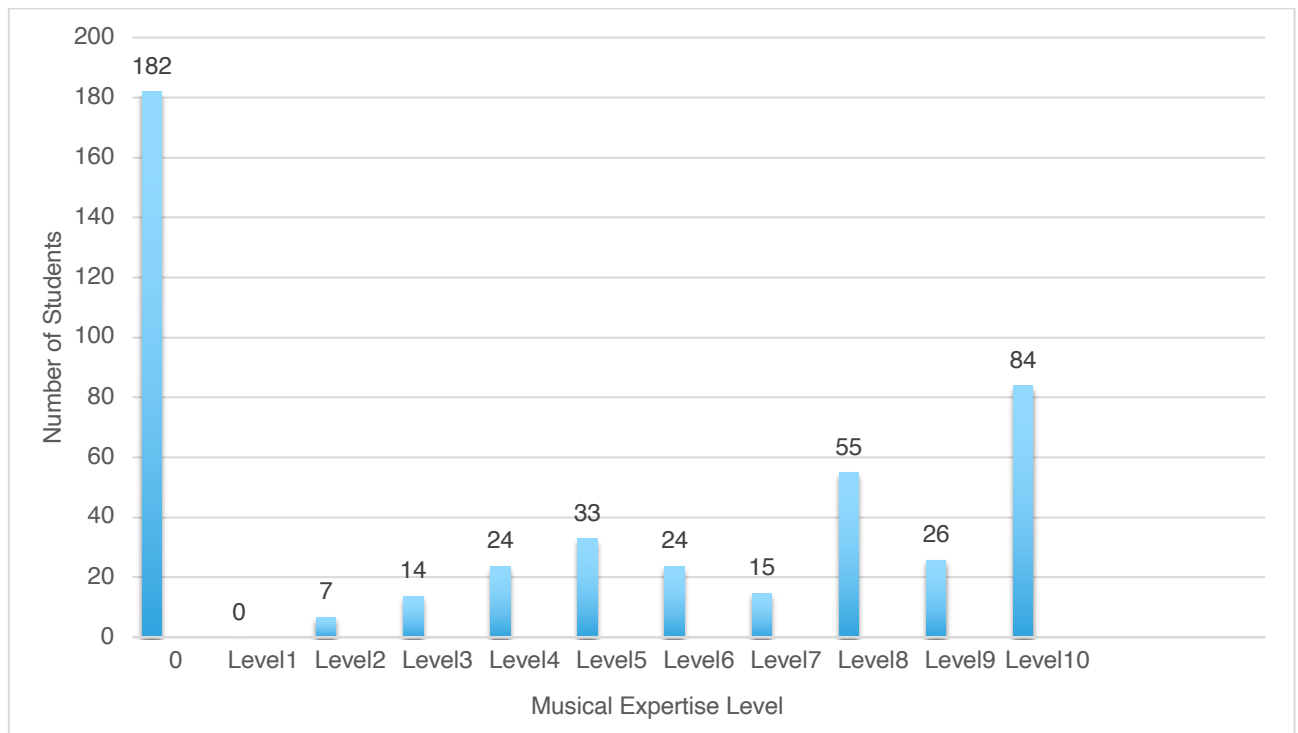


Note. The numbers add up to more than 100% because some students participated more than one instrument.

More than half of the participants ($n = 282$, 60.8%) reported participating in music graded examinations (MGE), which serves as an indicator of their musical expertise level. As illustrated in Figure 8, only a small proportion of participants ($n = 7$, 1.5%) achieved Level 2, suggesting that few students opt to take lower-grade examinations. Additionally, Figure 8 shows that within the MGE, 18.1% of participants ($n = 84$) achieved the highest level, while 11.9% ($n = 55$) reached Level 8, and 5.6% ($n = 26$) achieved Level 9.

Figure 8

Students' Music Expertise Level



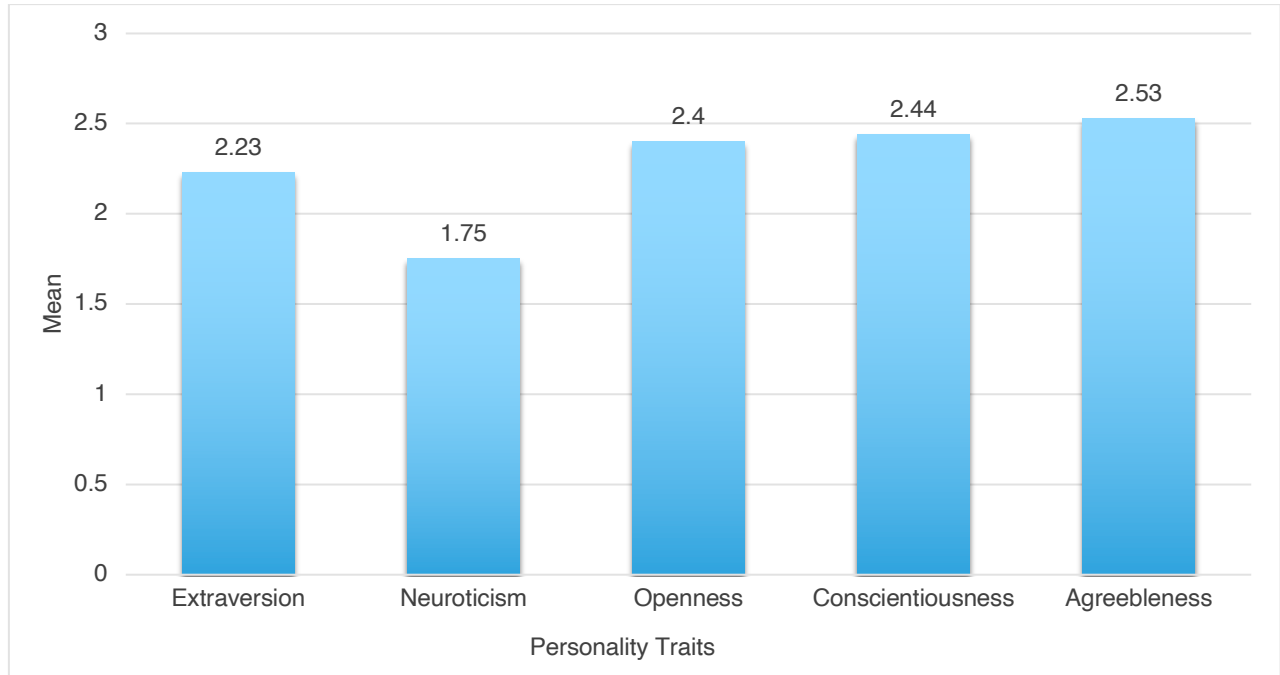
5.2.1.3: Personality Traits

In general, participants in this study tended to score highly on agreeableness ($M = 2.53$, $SD = 0.44$), conscientiousness ($M = 2.44$, $SD = 0.51$), openness ($M = 2.40$, $SD = 0.41$), and extraversion ($M = 2.23$, $SD = 0.55$), while scoring lower on neuroticism ($M = 1.75$, $SD = 0.51$),

as illustrated in Figure 9. These results suggest that participants can be sociable, enthusiastic, action-oriented, and positive in their personality traits.

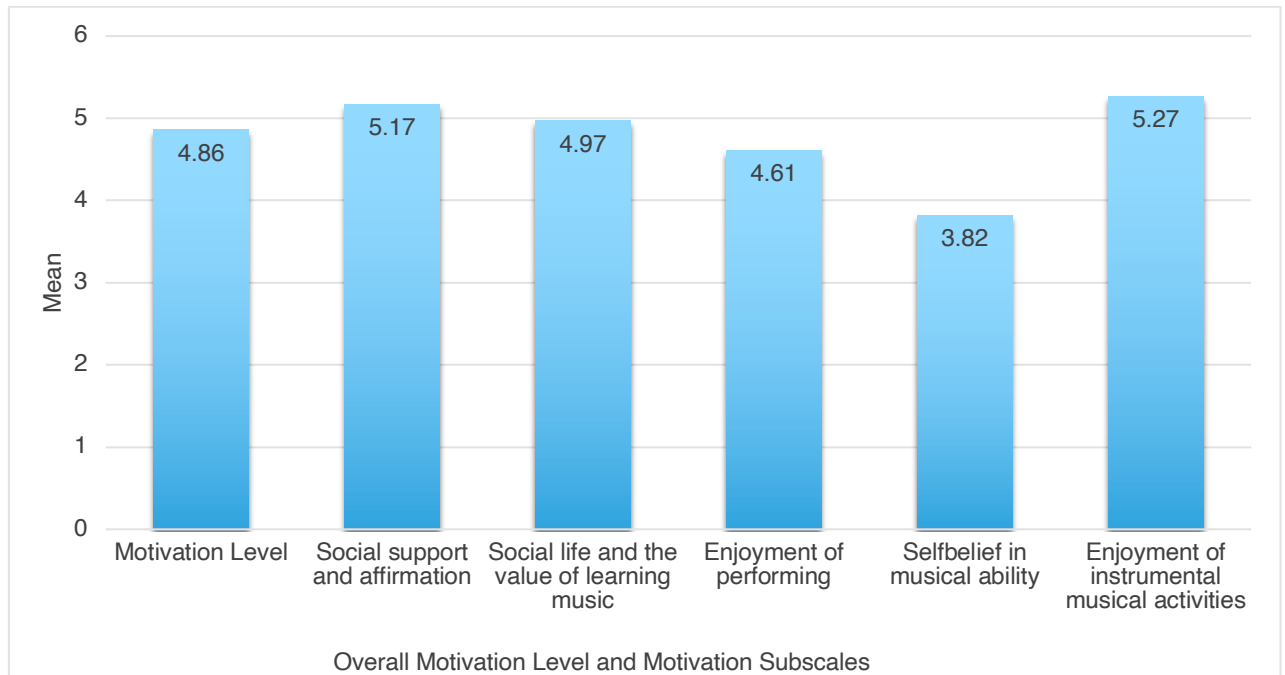
Figure 9

Participants' Mean Big Five Personality Traits



5.2.1.4: Motivation Levels

Figure 10 illustrates participants' overall motivation levels and subscale scores. Chinese primary-school students exhibited high levels of motivation to learn music ($M = 4.86$, $SD = 1.08$). They reported strong social support ($M = 5.17$, $SD = 1.19$) and perceived music as a valuable aspect of their social life ($M = 4.97$, $SD = 1.21$). However, their self-belief in their musical ability was relatively lower ($M = 3.82$, $SD = 1.59$).

Figure 10*Participants' Mean Motivation Levels***5.2.2 The Impact of Age on Children's Musical Learning**

A statistically significant relationship was found between children's age and their expertise level ($r = .151$ [.057, .239], $p = .001$), as well as a significant linear relationship ($F(1,462) = 10.838$, $p = .001$). These results suggest that students' expertise levels tend to increase with age. Additionally, students' age was significantly correlated with their overall musical motivation ($r = .104$ [.016, .194], $p = .025$), indicating that older students exhibited higher levels of motivation for music learning. However, age was not significantly related to all motivation subscales. Notably, significant relationships were observed between students' age and their self-belief in musical ability ($r = .120$ [.026, .212], $p = .010$) as well as their enjoyment of instrumental musical activities ($r = .137$ [.048, .221], $p = .003$). These results suggest that as students grow older, they develop greater confidence in their musical abilities and derive more enjoyment from instrumental music activities. Table 6 presents the correlations between students' age, expertise levels, and musical motivation.

Table 6*Pearson Results of Children's Age, Expertise and Motivation Levels*

Students' age	Motivation level						Expertise level
	Overall motivation level	Social support and affirmation	Social life and the value of learning music	Enjoyment of performing	Self-belief in musical ability	Enjoyment of instrumental musical activities	
Pearson's r	.104	.069	.053	.037	.120	.137	.151
p	.025**	.139	.251	.430	.010**	.003**	.001***

Note. **p<0.05; ***p<0.001

Multiple regression analyses were conducted to further examine the relationships between students' age, overall musical motivation, and two subscales (self-belief in musical ability and enjoyment of instrumental musical activities). Table 7 presents the standardised beta weights for each factor, along with the multiple correlation coefficient (R), coefficient of determination (R²), F-values, and significance levels. The results indicate that as children grow older, their overall motivation levels, self-belief in music, and enjoyment of musical activities tend to increase. Consequently, Hypothesis 1 was accepted.

Table 7*Regression Results for Students' Age, Expertise and Motivation Levels*

	R	R²	F	p
The motivation scale	.104	.011	5.037 (1,462)	.025**
Self-belief in musical ability	.120	.014	6.752 (1,462)	.010**
Enjoyment of musical activities	.137	.019	8.884 (1,462)	.003**
Expertise level	.151	.023	10.838 (1,462)	.001***

Note. **p<0.05; ***p<0.001

5.2.3 The Impact of Gender in Children's Musical Learning

5.2.3.1: What are the Differences in Personality Trait Configurations between Primary School Girls and Boys

The results indicate that statistically significant differences exist between girls and boys across the Big Five personality traits: extraversion, neuroticism, openness to experience, conscientiousness, and agreeableness. However, the effect sizes for these differences are small. Boys scored higher in extraversion, openness to experience, and agreeableness, suggesting they are more sociable, enthusiastic, and cooperative in teamwork and are more open to forming new friendships. In contrast, girls scored higher in neuroticism and conscientiousness, indicating they are more prone to anxiety and demonstrate greater self-control. Table 8 presents the comparative analysis of personality trait scores between boys and girls, highlighting the statistical significance of these differences.

Table 8

Students' t-test Results for Boys' (n=231) and Girls' (n=233) PBPS-C Scores

Personality Trait	Boys		Girls		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
	M	SD	M	SD		
Extraversion	2.31	.52	2.16	.57	3.026	.003**
Neuroticism	1.7	.34	1.8	.56	-2.250	.025**
Openness to Experience	2.44	.43	2.35	.40	2.391	.017**
Conscientiousness	2.39	.52	2.49	.50	-2.216	.027**
Agreeableness	2.57	.42	2.48	.40	2.199	.028**

Note. ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.001$

5.2.3.2: What are the Differences in Motivation Levels to Learn Music between Primary-School Girls and Boys

As the Table 9 presented, the results indicate statistically significant gender differences in overall motivation levels, with girls exhibiting higher motivation levels ($M = 5.03$, $SD = 0.96$) compared to boys ($M = 4.69$, $SD = 1.17$). Additionally, statistically significant gender differences were observed across all motivation subscales. More specifically, girls reported higher levels of social support and affirmation ($M = 5.36$, $SD = 1.04$) than boys ($M = 4.98$, $SD = 1.30$). They also demonstrated greater enjoyment in musical learning ($M = 4.88$, $SD = 1.63$) compared to boys ($M = 4.34$, $SD = 1.85$). Based on these results, Hypothesis 2 was supported as predicted.

Table 9

Students' t-test Results for Boys' (n=231) and Girls' (n=233) Motivation Level Scores

Motivation Level	Boys		Girls		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
	M	SD	M	SD		
Overall motivation level	4.69	1.17	5.03	0.96	61.13	.001***
Social support and affirmation	5.00	1.30	5.36	1.03	58.32	.001***
Social life and the value of learning music	4.81	1.27	5.13	1.13	57.65	.005**
Enjoyment of performing	4.34	1.85	4.88	1.63	35.68	.001***
Self-belief in musical ability	3.67	1.71	3.98	1.46	32.65	.035**
Enjoyment of instrumental musical activities	5.14	1.21	5.40	1.12	64.48	.017**

Note: ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.001$

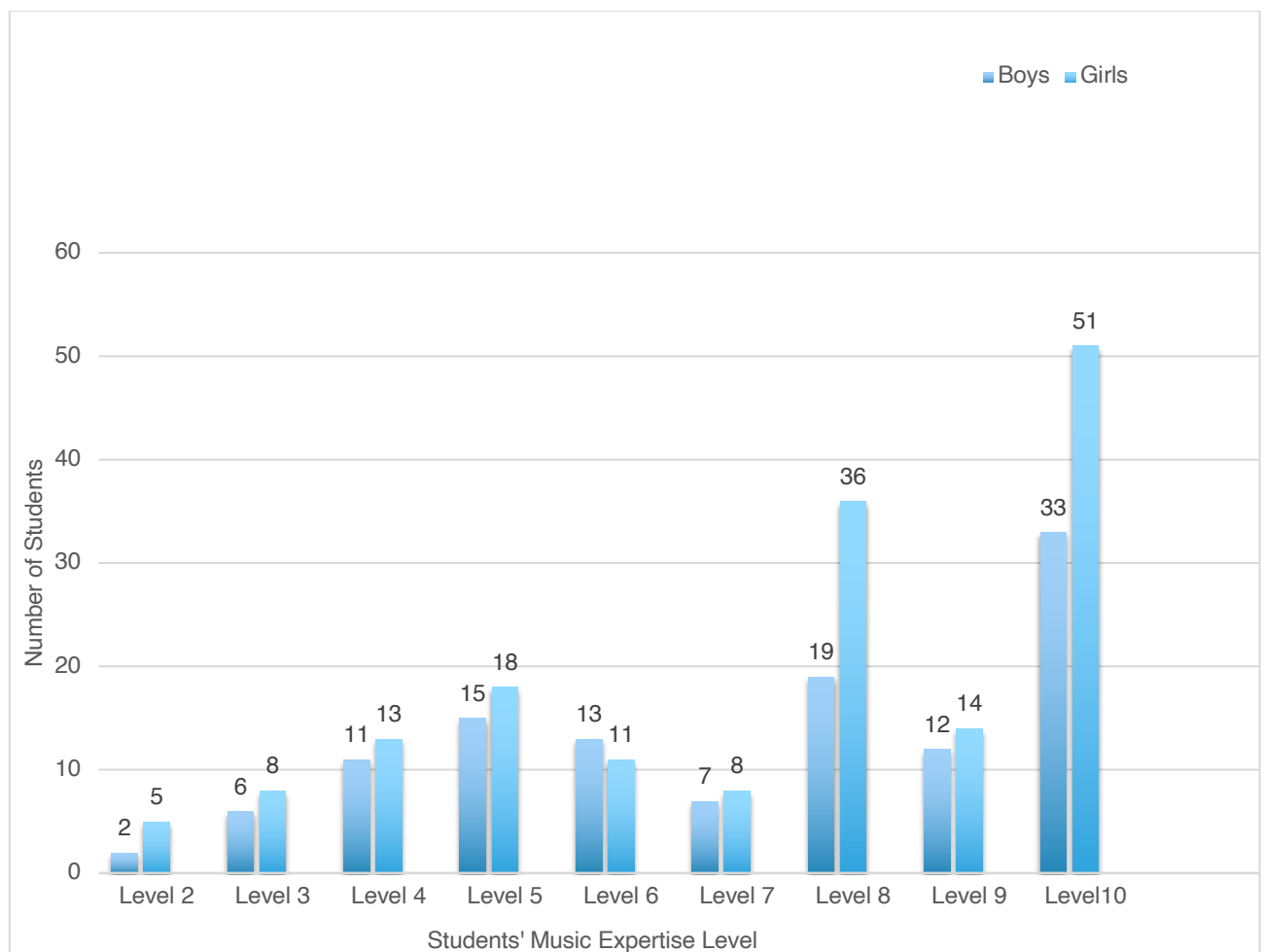
5.2.3.3: What are the Differences in Expertise levels between Primary-School Girls and Boys

There was a statistically significant difference between boys and girls as determined by a one-way ANOVA [$F(1, 462) = 16.979, p = .000$]. Under the condition that the number of people is equal, girls reached higher levels of expertise than boys. Therefore, hypothesis 3 was accepted.

Moreover, girls achieved higher levels of expertise as they were nearly twice as successful at expertise levels 8 and 10 as boys. Figure 11 demonstrates the gender difference in expertise level.

Figure 11

Gender Difference in Expertise Level



5.2.4: Relationship Between Students' Expertise Level and Motivation Levels

In this study, children's level of musical expertise was significantly related to their motivation levels (overall motivation level and five subscales) because all p values were .000. Table 10 shows the correlation results between children's expertise level and motivation levels (overall motivation level and five subscales) for the entire sample.

Table 10

Pearson Results of Children's Expertise Level and Motivation Levels

Expertise level	Motivation level					
	Overall motivation level	Social support	Social life	Enjoyment of performing	Self-belief in musical ability	Enjoyment of instrumental musical activities
Pearson's	.461	.437	-.348	-.362	-.402	-.315
r	.000***	.000***	.000***	.000***	.000***	.000***
p						

Note. ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.001$

To further examine the relationship between students' level of expertise and their motivation levels, a series of multiple regression analyses were conducted. The results shown in Table 11 revealed statistically significant relationships between students' expertise levels and motivation levels because all p values were .000. Specifically, as children's motivation levels increased, so too did their expertise levels. Based on these results, Hypothesis 4 was supported.

Table 11*Regression Results for Students' Expertise Level and Motivation Levels*

	R	R²	F	p
The motivation scale	.461	.213	124.933 (1,462)	.000***
Social support and affirmation	.437	.191	109.311 (1, 462)	.000***
Social life and value of learning music	.348	.121	63.517 (1, 462)	.000***
Enjoyment of performing	.362	.131	69.80 (1, 462)	.000***
Self-belief in music	.402	.161	88.910 (1, 462)	.000***
Enjoyment of musical activities	.315	.099	50.798 (1, 462)	.000***

Note. ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.001$

5.2.5: The Impact of Personality Traits on Children's Musical Learning

5.2.5.1: Impact of Personality Traits on Children's Expertise Level

Not all personality traits were found to be significantly associated with children's musical expertise level. However, extraversion and neuroticism demonstrated statistically significant correlations with musical expertise. A negative correlation was observed between extraversion and expertise level ($r = -.105$ [-.196, -.026], $p = .023$), indicating that higher levels of extraversion were associated with lower levels of musical expertise. A statistically significant linear relationship was also identified ($F(1,462) = 5.171$, $p = .023$). Conversely, a positive correlation was found between neuroticism and expertise level ($r = .109$ [.015, .241], $p = .019$), suggesting that children with higher levels of neuroticism tended to demonstrate greater musical expertise. This relationship was also statistically significant in a linear model ($F(1,462) = 5.584$, $p = .019$).

5.2.5.2: Impact of Personality Traits on Children's Musical Motivation

Not all the Big Five personality traits were found to be statistically significant predictors of children's musical motivation levels. There was no statistically significant interaction observed between children's agreeableness and overall motivation ($r = .08, p = .087$). However, extraversion, neuroticism, openness to experience, and conscientiousness demonstrated statistically significant relationships with musical motivation. A negative correlation was found between extraversion and overall motivation levels ($r = -.105, p = .024$). Similarly, openness to experience was negatively correlated with overall motivation ($r = -.148, p = .001$). In contrast, neuroticism and conscientiousness were positively associated with musical motivation. Neuroticism was significantly correlated with overall motivation ($r = .154, p = .001$). Similarly, conscientiousness was positively correlated with overall motivation ($r = .175, p < .001$).

Based on these results, Hypothesis 5 was largely supported. Table 12 presents the detailed correlation analysis between children's Big Five personality traits and motivation levels, including overall motivation and five subscales for the entire sample.

Table 12

Results of Analysis of Pearson Correlation between PBPS-C and Motivation Level Scores for the Entire Sample (n=464)

Personality Traits		Motivation level					
		Overall motivation level	Social support	Social life	Enjoyment of performing	Self-belief in musical ability	Enjoyment of instrumental musical activities
Extraversion	Pearson's r	-.105	.007	-.106	-.078	-.122	-.131
	<i>p</i>	.024**	.872	.022**	.095	.009** *	.005***
Neuroticism	Pearson's r	.154	.147	.115	.081	.142	.127
	<i>p</i>	.001***	.001**	.013*	.082	.002** *	.006

Openness to Experience	Pearson's r	-.148	-.120	-.144	-.097	.100	-.138
	<i>p</i>	.001***	.010**	.002	.036**	.031**	.003***
Conscientiousness	Pearson's r	.175	.143	.201	.058	.122	.170
	<i>p</i>	.000**	.002**	.000**	.210	.009**	.000***
			*			*	
Agreeableness	Pearson's r	.08	.050	.099	-.001	.081	.082
	<i>p</i>	.087	.280	.033**	.989	.082	.079

Note.

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed);

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

This study employed linear regression analysis to examine the influence of children's personality traits on their motivation levels. Based on Pearson correlation analyses, it was hypothesised that extraversion, openness to experience, conscientiousness, and neuroticism would exhibit linear relationships with students' motivation levels. Variables that demonstrated statistical significance ($p < .05$) in the correlation analysis were included in the multiple linear regression model. As shown in Table 13, the regression model was statistically significant, $F = 10.484$, $p < .001$. The results indicate that neuroticism, openness to experience, and conscientiousness were independent predictors of students' motivation levels.

To further investigate its role as a moderating variable in the relationship between personality traits and students' motivation levels, gender was incorporated into the regression model. The results confirmed that the regression model remained statistically significant, suggesting that gender moderates the relationships between children's personality traits and motivation levels.

Table 13

Results of Linear Regression Analysis with Gender as a Moderator of Relationships between Personality Traits and Motivation Levels

Predictors		Motivation levels				
		Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficient	t	p
		Beta	Std. Error	Beta		
Model 1	(Constant)	4.374	0.495		8.840	<0.001
	Extraversion	-0.162	0.087	-0.083	-1.858	0.064
	Neuroticism	0.370	0.105	0.160	3.528	<0.001
	Openness	-0.318	0.120	-0.120	-2.657	0.008
	Conscientiousness	0.395	0.096	0.186	4.118	0.000
Model 2	(Constant)	4.017	0.516		7.780	<0.001
	Extraversion	-0.137	0.088	-0.070	-1.559	0.120
	Neuroticism	0.346	0.105	0.149	3.295	0.001
	Openness	-0.293	0.120	-0.110	-2.449	0.015
	Conscientiousness	0.372	0.096	0.175	3.867	<0.001
	Gender	0.226	0.098	0.105	2.300	0.022

Model 1: $F=10.848$, $p<0.001$; $R^2=0.084$

Model 2: $F=9.524$, $p<0.001$; $R^2=0.094$; adjust $R^2=0.084$

5.3: Findings and Discussion

5.3.1: Impact of Age on Children's Musical Learning

The results align with previous research suggesting that age is associated with children's musical motivation (Bonneville-Roussy et al., 2013; Evans & Bonneville-Roussy, 2016; Hallam et al., 2016). In the present sample, older children reported higher overall musical motivation, characterised by stronger self-beliefs in their musical abilities and greater enjoyment of musical activities. This pattern is consistent with the conclusions of Hallam et al. (2016) and Sichivitsa (2007), who identified age as a significant factor shaping children's motivational development in music learning.

A reasonable explanation for this trend lies in the reciprocal relationship between competence and motivation. As children grow older and accumulate musical experience, sustained engagement and skill acquisition likely enhance their sense of self-efficacy and intrinsic enjoyment, consistent with prior findings linking perceived competence to continuing musical participation (Bonneville-Roussy et al., 2013; Evans & Bonneville-Roussy, 2016; Schatt, 2011). This account is broadly compatible with self-determination theory, which posits that perceived competence and autonomy contribute to sustained motivation in learning contexts (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Furthermore, developmental psychology suggests that cognitive maturity may allow older children to better appreciate the long-term value of musical learning, further reinforcing their motivation.

These results, however, should be interpreted cautiously. The age range in this study was limited (9-13 years), which constrained the generalisability of the results and potentially obscured motivational shifts that occur in early childhood or later adolescence. Moreover, while the analysis indicates that age is associated with musical motivation, it does not clarify how or why motivation changes with age. In the Chinese context, factors such as examination pressures, access to private tutoring, and parental expectations may shape motivational experiences and may covary with age in ways not fully captured in the current data. These limitations are discussed further in Section 8.3.3.

5.3.2: Impact of Gender in Children's Musical Learning

The results of this study reveal that girls exhibited significantly higher overall levels of musical motivation and outperformed boys across all five subscales: social support and affirmation, social life and the value of learning music, enjoyment of performing, self-belief in musical ability, and enjoyment of musical activities. Girls also achieved higher levels of musical expertise than boys. These results suggest that boys were comparatively less engaged in music learning, demonstrated lower interest in practice, and received less parental support, factors that may have contributed to their reduced motivation and achievement. These results align with previous research highlighting gender disparities in musical motivation and attainment (Comber et al., 1993; Green, 1997; Hallam et al., 2017; McCarthy, 2010; McPherson & O'Neill, 2010).

A reasonable explanation for these differences lies in the persistence of gendered social stereotypes surrounding music education. Music continues to be perceived as a feminine domain (Green, 1997; Hargreaves, 2023), potentially influencing girls to value music more highly and to develop stronger self-perceptions of musical competence (McPherson & O'Neill, 2010). The present results further suggest that girls' motivation is more strongly shaped by parental and teacher expectations, whereas boys are more responsive to peer-group influences (Hallam et al., 2017). This external sensitivity may partially explain girls' higher levels of practice and achievement, as their engagement is reinforced by encouragement from authority figures.

However, the gendered patterns observed here should not be interpreted as fixed or biologically determined. Emerging research indicates that boys' engagement increases when music learning is contextualised through technology-based or production-oriented activities, where they often report higher confidence and enjoyment (Comber et al., 1993). This points to the importance of pedagogical adaptation, educators should design inclusive and diverse music curricula that appeal to different motivational drivers across genders.

Taken together, these results underscore the complex social construction of gender within music education. They suggest that motivational disparities are less a reflection of innate ability and more a consequence of cultural expectations, socialisation processes, and pedagogical practices that differentially shape boys' and girls' engagement with music.

5.3.3: Impact of Personality Traits on Children's Musical Learning

This study identified significant linear relationships between children's personality traits, specifically extraversion and neuroticism, and their musical expertise levels. The results indicate that students with lower scores of extraversion and higher scores of neuroticism achieved higher levels of musical expertise. These results align with Kemp's (1982) seminal work, which characterised musicians as more introverted and emotionally sensitive than non-musicians, suggesting that introspection and heightened emotional awareness may contribute positively to musical development.

However, more recent evidence presents a more complex picture. Gjermunds et al. (2020) found that professional musicians tend to score higher in openness to experience and lower in conscientiousness, diverging from the current results. Such discrepancies likely reflect differences in age, developmental stage and musical context. This study focused on primary school children engaged in early learning experiences, whereas Gjermunds et al. (2020) examined professional musicians who had already undergone long-term musical training and identity formation. This contrast highlights the developmental nature of personality's influence, suggesting that the traits that facilitate persistence and skill acquisition in childhood may differ from those that support creative innovation in adulthood.

Furthermore, this study found that children's personality traits correlated with their musical motivation, echoing findings from prior research (Hart et al., 2007; Judge & Ilies, 2002; Major et al., 2006). Among the Big Five dimensions, only conscientiousness and neuroticism were significantly associated with musical motivation. Conscientiousness appears to foster sustained effort, discipline, and goal orientation, which are qualities closely linked to higher self-efficacy and achievement motivation (Hart et al., 2007; Schunk, 1991). Conversely, neuroticism's positive association with motivation may seem counterintuitive but can be interpreted through emotional and expressive frameworks. As Kemp (1982) argues, emotionally sensitive individuals may experience stronger affective responses to music, perceiving it as a channel for introspection and emotional regulation. Thus, children with higher neuroticism scores may find music an emotionally meaningful and self-expressive activity, reinforcing intrinsic motivation.

Taken together, these results suggest that personality traits shape not only children's capacity for musical skill development but also their emotional engagement with music. While conscientiousness supports the behavioural dimension of sustained learning, neuroticism may

underpin the affective connection that drives meaningful musical participation. This dual influence underscores the need for pedagogical approaches that recognise diverse personality profiles, promoting both disciplined practice and emotional engagement in musical learning.

5.3.4: Relationship between Children's Expertise Level and Their Musical Motivation

The results of this study reveal a positive association between children's expertise levels and their musical motivation, with individuals demonstrating higher expertise also exhibiting greater motivational intensity. Strong linear relationships were identified across all motivational subscales, indicating that both social and psychological dimensions contribute to the development of expertise.

These results are consistent with previous research by Hallam et al. (2016), who found that musical engagement and achievement are mutually reinforcing processes: motivation stimulates practice and learning, while increasing expertise further enhances motivation through growing competence and self-efficacy. This reciprocal relationship aligns with Bandura's (1986, 1989, 2012) self-efficacy theory, which posits that mastery experiences strengthen belief in one's abilities, thereby sustaining motivation and persistence. Similarly, Schunk and Usher (2012) argue that the social learning environment, through feedback, modelling, and reinforcement, plays a critical role in shaping both motivational orientations and learning behaviours. Interest also emerges as a key mediating factor. As Hidi (2000) and Renwick and McPherson (2002) suggest, intrinsic interest not only enhances engagement but also supports the sustained effort required for expertise development. Within the present study, children who reported greater enjoyment and curiosity towards music were more likely to practise regularly and achieve higher performance levels.

Taken together, these results highlight the dynamic and cyclical nature of musical motivation and expertise. Motivation acts as both a precursor and a product of musical skill development, suggesting that educational interventions should cultivate positive affect, self-belief, and supportive social contexts to foster long-term engagement and achievement in music learning.

5.3.5: Gender Differences in Personality Traits

The results of this study support the existence of gender differences in the Big Five personality traits. Boys exhibited higher scores in extraversion, openness and agreeableness, whereas girls scored higher in conscientiousness and neuroticism. These results align with previous research, which consistently demonstrates that, on average, girls outperform boys in neuroticism and conscientiousness (Costa et al., 2001; De Bolle et al., 2016; Limura & Taku, 2018). Notably, the gender differences in neuroticism and conscientiousness observed among Chinese boys and girls appear to be more pronounced compared to studies conducted in Western contexts, such as Belgium (De Bolle et al., 2016) or Japan (Limura & Taku, 2018), where research frameworks are often Westernised. These results underscore the influence of cultural and societal norms in a Chinese context, which may amplify gender differences in personality traits compared to Western or Western-influenced societies.

Several explanatory factors may contribute to these results. First, age and ethnicity have been suggested as moderating variables in gender differences related to neuroticism and conscientiousness (Weisberg et al., 2011). For instance, neuroticism tends to increase among females during emerging adulthood but remains relatively stable in males (Dunkley et al., 2012). Additionally, the role of ethnicity has been highlighted. Among White participants, men often score higher in neuroticism than women, whereas the opposite pattern is observed among Asian participants (Weisberg et al., 2011).

Second, cultural expectations within Confucian-influenced societies may shape these observed gender differences. East Asian social norms often emphasise diligence, modesty, and emotional restraint for women, which are traits that align closely with conscientiousness and neuroticism, while men are encouraged to display assertiveness and confidence (Matsumoto et al., 2008). Such gendered socialisation processes may reinforce differential personality development across genders in Chinese cultural contexts.

Interestingly, the current results diverge from much of the existing literature by showing higher levels of extraversion, openness, and agreeableness among boys (Costa et al., 2001; Feingold, 1994; Schmitt et al., 2008). This pattern may be partially explained through the lens of traditional Chinese gender hierarchies. Historically, Confucian values positioned men as social leaders and decision-makers, fostering traits associated with social dominance and interpersonal agency (Chen & Tan, 2021; Huang et al., 2021; McElroy & Yang, 2000; Tan,

2019). Although contemporary Chinese society has undergone significant modernisation, traces of these gendered expectations may persist, shaping personality expression in subtle ways. In contrast, in societies characterised by higher levels of gender equality, such as Sweden, more balanced gender role expectations have been associated with narrower personality differences (Schmitt et al., 2008).

Finally, cultural and ethnic factors may also influence self-perceptions of agreeableness. Previous research suggests that Asian participants tend to rate themselves as less agreeable than Western counterparts (Costa et al., 2001; Schmitt et al., 2008), possibly reflecting cultural modesty norms. However, as this study's participants were exclusively Chinese, these results may represent intra-cultural variation rather than deviations from universal gender trends.

Overall, these results underscore that gender differences in personality are not merely biological or psychological phenomena but are deeply intertwined with sociocultural context. The influence of traditional Chinese values, combined with evolving gender norms in modern society, may shape distinct patterns of personality development among boys and girls. Understanding these cultural nuances is therefore crucial for interpreting personality-based differences in children's musical motivation and engagement.

5.3.6: Prevalence of Private Music Tutoring

The results of this study reveal a high prevalence of private music tutoring among participants, consistent with existing research (Choi et al., 2005; Montefiore, 2014). As Bray and Lykins (2012) observe, private tutoring has deep historical and cultural roots across East Asia, shaped by Confucian educational traditions and reinforced by recent economic reforms. Within Confucian philosophy, learning is often conceptualised as a disciplined, repetitive process that values mastery through persistent effort, which is an ethos that continues to underpin contemporary attitudes towards supplementary education in China (Bray & Lykins, 2012).

Furthermore, China's transition towards a market-oriented economy has significantly intensified the demand for private tutoring. Kwo and Bray (2014) and Jiang (2020) argue that economic liberalisation, combined with the one-child policy, has heightened parental expectations and investment in children's academic and extracurricular achievement. With greater disposable income and fewer children to support, many families allocate substantial

resources to private education as a means of ensuring social mobility and future success. This dynamic reflects broader socio-economic transformations following the 1978 reforms, which not only increased household affluence but also expanded the commercialisation of the education sector (Jiang, 2020; Kwo & Bray, 2014; Settles et al., 2012; Veeck et al., 2003; Zhang & Bray, 2016). Consequently, private music tutoring has flourished as part of a competitive educational landscape that privileges early specialisation and measurable skill acquisition, which was also observed in Cui's (2023) findings.

While the quantitative results of this study confirm the widespread participation in private music tutoring, several critical questions remain. For instance, the motivations driving parents to invest in private lessons, whether cultural, aspirational, or status-related, require further exploration. Equally, the pedagogical and psychological implications of such tutoring on children's musical motivation remain underexamined. It is unclear whether private instruction fosters intrinsic engagement with music or reinforces extrinsic, performance-oriented motivations.

To address these issues, the qualitative phase of this study investigated children's, parents', and teachers' perceptions of private tutoring, focusing on its influence on motivation, enjoyment, and learning identity. The results from this phase provide nuanced insights into how private tutoring shapes children's musical experiences and are discussed in detail in Section 6.2.3.

5.4: Chapter Summary

This chapter examined the key demographic and psychological determinants of Chinese children's musical learning, focusing on how age, gender and personality traits influence both musical expertise and motivation. The results demonstrate that these demographic and psychological determinants, in conjunction with varying levels of expertise, significantly shape children's engagement with and attitudes toward music learning. Specifically, age was found to correlate positively with self-belief and enjoyment; gender differences revealed distinctive motivational patterns and disparities in musical expertise; and personality traits such as conscientiousness and neuroticism emerged as key predictors of musical motivation.

Despite the robustness of these results, certain methodological limitations must be acknowledged. As the data were collected through self-reported questionnaires, the results may be influenced by participants' subjective perceptions rather than their actual behaviours or levels of engagement. Nevertheless, this quantitative phase provided a valuable foundation for understanding the internal determinants of musical motivation, highlighting the complex interplay between personal characteristics and musical development.

Importantly, these results informed the qualitative phase of the research, guiding the design of semi-structured interviews to further investigate key demographic and psychological determinants in children's musical motivation. Building upon the quantitative results, the next chapter delves more deeply into the external learning environment, providing a holistic understanding of the determinants of Chinese children's musical motivation.

Chapter 6: The Role of Learning Environment in Children's Musical Motivation

Building on the quantitative findings presented in Chapter 5, this chapter examines the learning environmental determinants that shape Chinese children's musical motivation. While the previous chapter addressed internal (demographic and psychological) determinants, the focus here shifts to the social and educational contexts influencing children's engagement with music. Drawing on qualitative data from semi-structured interviews with children, parents and teachers, the analysis explores how different types of learning environments interact to support or constrain musical motivation. Together, these insights offer a holistic understanding of how external conditions shape the development of children's musical engagement within the Chinese educational context.

6.1: Research Aims and Questions

As previously defined in the glossary, the *learning environment* refers to the physical, instructional, relational, and socio-cultural conditions in which children learn music. Learning environment encompasses resources and settings, teaching and assessment practices, interactions with teachers, peers and parents, and the wider cultural and institutional expectations that shape children's motivation to engage and persist in music learning (Dell et al., 2014; Liu & Bray, 2022; Sichivitsa, 2007; Smit et al., 2014).

The chapter seeks to address the overarching research question: What are the key factors influencing Chinese children's motivation to learn music?

To explore this, the chapter aims to answer the following two sub-questions:

Sub-RQ2: *How do the learning environments influence Chinese children's motivation to learn music?*

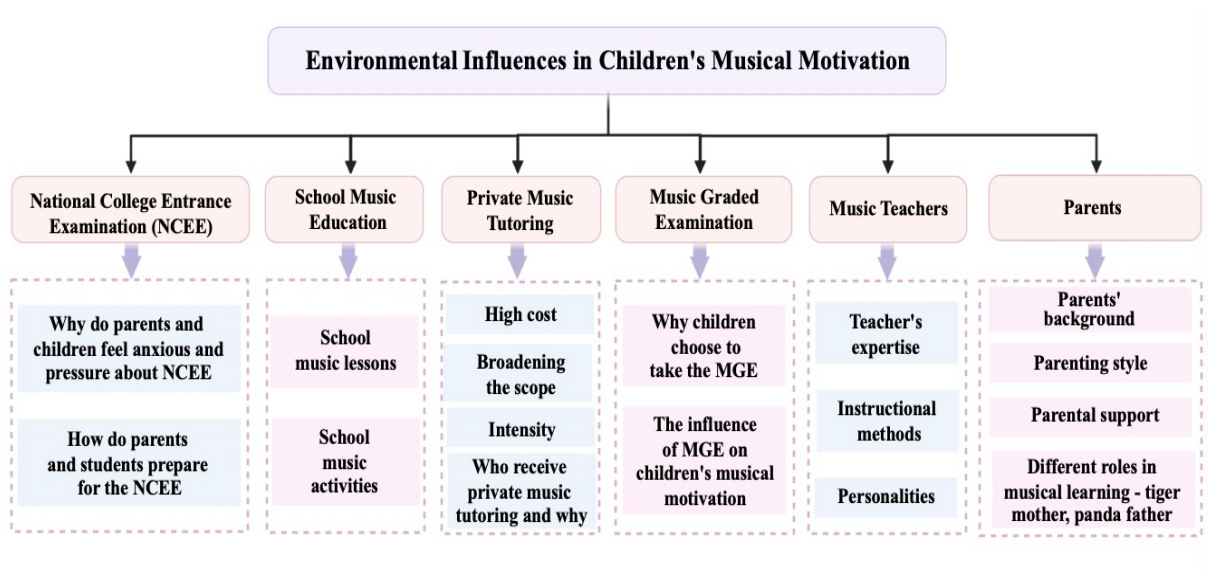
Sub-RQ3: *How do different types of learning environments interact?*

6.2: Findings and Discussion

The following section aims to place the critical findings of this research in a broader context by exploring the effects of children's motivation on learning music. Figure 12 provides a thematic map that outlines the structure of the findings.

Figure 12

Thematic Map



6.2.1: National-College Entrance Examination (NCEE)

The NCEE plays a significant role in shaping the Chinese education system because it is the key to the admissions and selection process for prospective students who seek to enter a university or college. This section considers NCEE from two perspectives: (1) why parents and children feel anxious and pressured about the NCEE and (2) how parents and children prepare for the NCEE.

6.2.1.1: Why do Parents and Children Feel Anxious and Pressured about NCEE

Most of the parents and students in this study expressed anxiety and felt pressure with respect to the NCEE. They provided different explanations for the source of anxiety. Although the specific sources of anxiety varied, participants consistently highlighted the highly competitive nature of the examination system. For example, Qin's mother explained that anxiety persists even among families with strong educational backgrounds:

I have a master's degree, and his father holds a PhD, but we are anxious about whether our child can get into a regular high school and about his performance in the examinations. It is highly competitive. (Qin's mother)

Despite their strong educational background, Qin's parents remained deeply concerned about the intensity of competition. Similarly, Wang's mother attributed her anxiety to the limited availability of places in mainstream academic high schools:

Only half of the children will get into regular (or normal) high schools, and the remainder will enter vocational high schools. (Wang's mother)

These comments illustrate how the structural competition embedded in the Chinese education system generates considerable anxiety among families. As Teacher Shen observed:

This (NCEE) is not just an examination, the result significantly affects the future life, a child's future. (Teacher Shen)

The high-stakes nature of the NCEE is a major source of parental stress, as it is widely regarded as a critical determinant of a student's future educational and professional opportunities.

While parents often emphasised structural competition, children's experiences of anxiety were more closely linked to parental expectations and emotional responses to academic performance. Li, for instance, described feeling significant pressure related to the audition for the junior department of the Shanghai Conservatory of Music:

Interviewer (hereinafter referred to as “I”): Does the exam bring you pressure?

Li: Yes, I feel much pressure. I'm afraid that I won't get an offer [to the Junior department of the Shanghai Conservatory of Music], but every time I say this, my mother's reaction is fierce, she thinks that if I work hard, how can I fail the exam?

Next, Li described how she had lost interest in pursuing the goal:

Li: That's not my dream to get into the junior department of Shanghai Conservatory of Music.

I: Did you tell your parents this?

Li: Yes, I told them before, but they said I was not focused enough on the examination. My mother says that since we have invested so much in preparing for this exam, she does not allow me to express such thoughts.

Li's feeling reflects that she suffered anxiety and pressure from her mother's expectation that she should excel in the exams, rather than from the exams themselves. Parents' constant criticism brings intense pressure on Li and leads to a fear of failure. Li's mother demonstrated why she put high pressure on Li:

Li's mother: ...as a parent, I definitely want my child to be the best, if possible, I dream that she can be a professional musician, a second Lang Lang.

I: I understand that a person must put in much effort to become a professional musician. How do you help Li to become a professional musician?

Li's mother: To realise this dream, Li needs to enter the junior department of the Shanghai Conservatory of Music [hereinafter referred to as “Shanghai Conservatory”] or the Central Conservatory of Music [hereinafter referred to as “Central Conservatory”] – In China, they are the best secondary schools for musical students. For musical students, compared with universities, junior departments are more difficult to gain admission. In general, most young talents who have become famous internationally have emerged at high school or are even younger and have prioritised to get into the top music colleges or universities.

Li's parents expressed a strong desire for Liu to pursue a career as a professional musician, placing significant emphasis on her success in the NCEE as a necessary step toward that goal. Reflecting on this, Li described experiencing anxiety and pressure stemming from these high parental expectations.

Similarly, Liu shared her feelings of anxiety and pressure because of her parents.

I: Why do you think you are not good at Erhu?

Liu: When I hear other students who play really well, I worry that I will fail the exams and my parents will be disappointed with me and will not love me.

I: Why do you think that your parents will not love you if you fail the exams?

Liu: Because when I failed a test at school, they became angry and asked me why I failed and told me to analyse the reasons. They keep talking about how important it is to get into the junior department of the conservatory, and ask me to work harder and harder

Liu's quotation reveals that excessive pressure from parents can have detrimental effects on children's musical motivation. Therefore, Li's mother and Liu revealed the significant roles that parents play in shaping children's perceptions of pressure in the NCEE. When children feel overwhelmed by high parental expectations, they may become demotivated and lose interest in their musical learning. Li and Liu's fear that their parents would withdraw their affection if they failed to perform well in the exam reflects a threat to their sense of relatedness. The use of conditional regard, whereby love and support are perceived as contingent on academic success, has been shown to produce feelings of anxiety, inadequacy, and alienation (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Li and Liu's self-doubt and fear of disappointing their parents suggest a motivational environment that undermines both competence and emotional security.

These findings are consistent with previous research indicating that exam-related pressure and high parental expectations can generate fear of failure and psychological distress among Chinese students (Hesketh et al., 2010; Pires & Duarte, 2019; Zhang, 2016; Zhao et al., 2015). Within such environments, children may begin to associate musical learning with external pressure rather than personal interest.

By contrast, Chen expressed positive attitudes towards pressure and anxiety.

I: Does the exam bring you pressure?

Chen: Certainly. I know my family and teacher have tried to support me and I really want to obtain an offer from the exam, not only for me, but also for everyone who has helped me. I know all of us are working towards this goal. I must work hard for this!

This quotation reflects that the anxiety and pressure Chen experiences heighten her awareness of the importance of her goals, leading to increased musical motivation to achieve them. Her

recognition of the support received from both family and teacher contributes to a sense of relatedness, while her commitment to achieving a meaningful goal supports her sense of competence and autonomy (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Moreover, students' recognition and appreciation of parental and teacher support can be interpreted as an expression of filial piety, in line with findings from previous research (Chan & Tan, 2004; Dong & Xu, 2016; Ho et al., 2012).

In general, because the NCEE has pushed competition to the primary school stage, anxiety and pressure are now experienced amongst children from the early stages of their music education. Anxiety and pressure can have both positive and negative effects on children's musical motivation. A student's motivation is highly related to their perceptions of control and ability. On the one hand, pressure may bring out the best in students and stretch them to maximise their potential (Stoeber & Eismann, 2007). On the other hand, tremendous pressure may have negative effects on students' motivation towards musical learning (Mikszta et al., 2021; Stoeber & Eismann, 2007). The pressure to be successful in the NCEE might stifle the learning motivation of children (Pires & Duarte, 2019; Zhao et al., 2015).

6.2.1.2: How do Parents and Students Prepare for the NCEE

Because the highly competitive academic environment associated with the NCEE is perceived even at the primary school level, many parents begin to consider how extracurricular activities, including music education, might support their children's future educational opportunities. In this context, some parents view musical training as a strategic resource within the NCEE system. For example, Qin's mother explained that obtaining a high level in MGEs could potentially enable Qin to qualify as a "special-skill" student:

I: What is the plan for Qin after achieving grade 10 [in the MGE]?

Qin's mother: Then I think we will consider different education pathways, for example, are there any good high schools or universities that could help him gain priority with admission? As a music special-skill student, this would provide him with more choices regarding majors at university, and the entry requirements are not so high compared to those at conservatoires or music colleges.

In China, students recognised for their musical talents under this designation may receive preferential admission opportunities at prestigious universities. Similarly, Liu's mother echoed this perspective:

As Liu grew older, her Erhu teacher, who is also a friend of ours, had a serious discussion with us. She explained that there were two possible paths for Liu. One option was for her to become a 'special-skilled' student, which would allow her to enter a regular high school or university through music-related admission routes. The other option was for her to pursue professional training and aim to become a professional Erhu student. At first, my husband and I preferred the first option, because it would allow her to enter regular high schools and universities. However, after further thought and discussion, we felt that the second option might be more suitable for Liu. We believed that it would allow her to become self-sufficient as an Erhu major. In addition, we felt that she would need to put in a similar level of effort whether she pursued the 'special-skilled' route or the professional route. Another reason was that Liu's academic performance at school was below average. She struggled particularly with subjects such as mathematics and science. At that time, her erhu teacher suggested that specialising in the erhu could provide a possible career pathway for her. After considering this advice, we felt that this path might be appropriate for Liu. We also discussed this with her, and she agreed. As a result, we all decided that pursuing the Erhu could become her future career path.

The above quotations indicate that music learning can function as a strategic resource for gaining advantages within the NCEE system, a phenomenon also observed by Xie and Leung (2011). In this case, the parents actively sought information and explored alternative educational pathways through music in order to maximise their child's chances of success. Such behaviour reflects a strategic approach to educational decision-making that is commonly associated with highly educated parents, who tend to possess greater awareness of educational opportunities and institutional pathways (Dell et al., 2014; Dini et al., 2019).

Examination preparation in China involves rigorous study routines that extend beyond standard school hours. Liu's mother introduced their strategy for Liu to prepare for the upcoming examination:

In addition, our friend told us that many children who are seeking entrance into an attached secondary school of a conservatory, will commonly suspend their school courses when they are preparing for high-school-attached primary school, and instead practise 8 - 10 hours per day; and except for eating and sleeping, they spend all their time practising. I also considered whether I should let my daughter suspend all her school courses next semester and concentrate on preparing for the exams. Her professional teacher told her that her preparation for the exam was insufficient, and she must add further music theory classes. I am so worried about her entrance exams. (Liu's mother)

Liu's mother indicated that Liu would engage in intensive practice in combination with additional private tutoring for the examination. Other participants reported similar experiences:

I have to practise 10 hours per day [for the exams]. (Li)

[Chen] would practise at least 6 hours per day on weekdays. At the weekend, she practices for at least 8 hours [to prepare for the examination]. (Chen's mother)

The experiences of Liu, Li, and Chen illustrate that intensive practice is a key strategy in exam preparation. This observation is consistent with previous research (Pires & Duarte, 2019; Zhao et al., 2015), which emphasises the substantial time students devote to rigorous study in anticipation of examinations. In addition to intensive practice, some students and parents discussed the strategic value of participating in music competitions. Liu's mother, for example, identified several advantages of competitions in relation to the NCEE:

Large music competitions are helpful for her application to an attached secondary school of a conservatory. First, Liu can accumulate stage experience making her more confident on stage. Secondly, competition committees include many professors from a conservatory, if they can form a positive impression of Liu, that's a good thing. (Liu's mother)

Therefore, taking part in national or international instrumental competitions provides benefits for students so they can obtain additional awards in the NCEE. Chen's mother also reported that they had taken part in several such competitions, including the Xinghai Cup Competition, which she described in detail:

I: How was Chen's performance at the Xinghai Cup Competition?

Chen's mother: I believe it was a special experience for Chen because it was the first time that Chen had performed in a formal concert hall, and the competition system was formal. Because the number of participants was large, we waited a long time, Chen was excited. To be honest, Zeng and I did not expect Chen to win a prizes, but Chen performed really well, and we were surprised when she won second prize in the first round. This meant she had the opportunity to perform in the final and compete with other winners from the provisional competitions. Zeng and I began to discuss the repertoire for the final. To gain the best results, we decided to choose a Chopin étude which Chen already knew. She did not obtain any awards in the final.

I: Why?

Chen's mother: In the final round, Chen played four pieces: Mozart's sonata, Beethoven's bagatelle, Chopin's étude and waltz. In the competition, Chen performed really well and Zeng and I were satisfied with her performance. After Chen's performance, we visited Tiananmen Square and the Forbidden City because it was our first time in Beijing. According to the competition system, the results were announced the next day. As a result, Chen's name was not on the award lists. Chen felt depressed and doubted herself. I tried to comfort her and told her that she was great. At the final announcement, one of the examiners explained to the participants that they cancelled two participants' awards because the participants' pieces were Chopin études. Although there were no instructions for participants to select their pieces, Chopin études were considered too difficult for children. It was therefore considered unfair to the other participants and not good for the participants' future music musical learning. We felt depressed about this result and when we were leaving, we met Professor Zheng with whom we had a trial lesson before. Professor Zheng was one of the examiners in this competition. He told us there had been no restriction for performers to play Chopin études before, but this was a new rule introduced into the competition. The examination committee discussed this question seriously and emphasised that we should consider the technical difficulty of the pieces. The purpose was to prevent the phenomenon of forcibly practising pieces that were too difficult to win a prize. Zeng told us he noticed that Chen had won third prize, and he regretted that the prize had to be cancelled. I am not sure if this was true or a 'white' lie. Zeng encouraged Chen to practise and participate in the next competition.

Chen's experience highlights a broader issue in the Chinese music education context, the tendency of parents, teachers and students to overprepare for music competitions. This also reflects students' desire to achieve high performance standards and succeed in competitive evaluations. However, when the pursuit of high standards occurs under excessive pressure and lacks intrinsic interest, it can result in a fragile form of motivation that is highly susceptible to burnout or failure (Bonneville-Rossy & Evans, 2025; Evans & Bonneville-Roussy, 2016; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Chen's experiences of self-doubt and disappointment underscore the vulnerability of students whose motivation is heavily dependent on external reward and evaluation. This vulnerability was further intensified by the lack of transparency in the competition's judging criteria, which undermined Chen's sense of competence and posed a risk to her long-term motivation. Kai (2012) indicates that in response to such challenges, some examination committees have implemented strategies such as providing designated repertoire lists, to reduce excessive competition and support the holistic development of students.

6.2.1.3: Conclusion

The section highlights how the NCEE fosters high levels of pressure and anxiety among both parents and students, often leading to controlled forms of musical motivation. While some students channel this pressure into focused effort, many experience diminished autonomy and emotional strain. This section also identifies that although parents often act with the intent of securing a better future for their children, their actions can unintentionally foster controlled forms of motivation that risk undermining students' long-term engagement and well-being. These findings underscore the importance of creating autonomy-supportive environments that not only prepare students for academic success but also nurture their intrinsic motivation.

6.2.2: *School Music Education*

In this study, all participants had received school-based music education, highlighting the influential role of the school learning environment in children's musical motivation. This section is organised into two perspectives: (a) the school music lesson and (b) school music activities.

6.2.2.1: School Music Lessons

Open-ended survey responses indicated that school-based music lessons featured a range of teaching activities, including singing, instrumental instruction, dancing, and music appreciation. A summary of the reported teaching content is presented in Table 14. As shown in Table 14, singing and appreciation are the activities which occur most frequently in school music lessons in China which confirms Yeh's research (2001).

Table 14*Reported Teaching Content in the School Music Lesson*

Activities	Form	Description from children
Singing	Choral	Choral competition; rehearsals
	Popular songs	Qingren; Denghua Liu's and Tingfeng Xie's songs; Junjie Lin's songs
	National or Folk songs	Chinese national and folk songs: Moli flower, Grandma's penghuwan, Mama Gelasang
	Others	Electronic, film and hip-hop music
Appreciation	Musical theatre	<i>The Cat, Les Misérables, The Lion King</i> , Background knowledge
	Musical films	<i>The Sound of Music, Beauty and the Beast</i>
	Opera	<i>Rigoletto</i>
	Symphony	/
	Recital	Piano and violin recitals
Dancing	Chinese dance, ballet	/
Instrumental teaching	Instrumental lessons	Guitar, ukulele, flute, etc.
	Performances	Piano solo

A diverse range of music types and broad teaching content are also covered. For example, many students mentioned learning revolutionary and patriotic songs. A participant expressed his feelings about learning the national song, "I think it is really powerful" (Anonymous). Other revolutionary and patriotic songs are common in music textbooks, such as '*Yellow River*'. Furthermore, traditional songs and dances of the minorities were also described by the students. For example, some participants mentioned the Chinese folk songs '*Moli flower*' and '*Grandma's Penghuwan*'. Two typical responses are illustrated below:

The teacher was nice and taught us to sing '*Moli flower*'. (Anonymous)

Miss Yang taught us to sing ‘*Grandma’s Penghuwan*’, everyone was happy, and we hit the beat. (Anonymous)

These statements indicate that plenty of revolutionary and patriotic songs are incorporated into school music textbooks. These positive responses suggest that such content connects classroom activities to students’ cultural identity. This finding supports earlier research by Giray (2022), Ho and Law (2004) and Perris (1983), who argue that school music education in China has frequently been employed as a mechanism for promoting national values, ideological cohesion, and patriotism, reflecting the dual role of music as both an educational and ideological tool.

In addition to revolutionary and patriotic songs, popular songs were mentioned by the student respondents. For example, a participant described a memorable lesson: “Everyone sang Dehua Liu’s and Tingfeng Xie’s songs” (Anonymous). Another participant also mentioned her favourite song ‘*Qingren*’ by a famous contemporary pop idol Xukun Cai (Anonymous). These statements suggest that school music lessons incorporate elements of popular culture and current trends that resonate with students. Such inclusion of familiar and engaging content appears to foster a sense of relatedness which is beneficial to improve their motivation.

In addition to the rich content related to Chinese music, the participants also reported that they appreciate many types of Western music. For example, a participant described one of her favourite music lessons as “watching a musical theatre, such as ‘*Cats*’ and ‘*Les Misérables*’ (Anonymous). Moreover, many students expressed that their favourite content was related to Western music, such as a musical movie or an opera. This reflects the quantity and richness of the school music teaching content, which aligns with the students’ interests and lives, leading to increased students’ motivation.

While some students expressed positive attitudes towards school music lessons, others revealed that they did not enjoy them. For example, one participant wrote, “Not an impressive lesson, it seems every music lesson is the same, we are just listening and singing” (Anonymous). Similarly, another student agreed that “every music lesson is based on singing” (Anonymous). These responses reflect a perceived lack of opportunities for choice and ownership in lessons, which may contribute to reduced student motivation (Evans & Bonneville-Rossy, 2016). When music education is reduced to rote activities or outdated content, students may feel disconnected from the material and lack ownership over their learning.

In general, this study finds that schools provide structured music education as part of the curriculum, offering children the opportunities to systematically develop their musical skills under the guidance of qualified teachers. Participants note that formal music lessons introduced them to fundamental musical concepts, instruments, and techniques, forming the foundation for their long-term musical engagement. Additionally, many students expressed that the structured nature of school music programmes encouraged their interest in music, aligning with the rationale for music curriculum standards in China (MoE, PRC, 2011). Research supports that school music education is designed to nurture holistic personal development and spark student interest through engaging activities (Yu & Leung, 2019).

Furthermore, this study confirms that school music education in China is intended not only to cultivate students' appreciation for music and life, but also to promote nationalism and foster patriotism, in alignment with the MoE's (PRC, 2001) guidelines. This dual purpose is further supported by findings from Xie (2000) and Yu and Leung (2019). A growing body of research has highlighted the role of music as a medium for political and social influence, strategically employed by the Chinese Communist Party to advance its ideological objectives (Ho & Law, 2004; Xie & Leung, 2011). Within this context, music education serves as a conduit for conveying state-endorsed messages and shaping students' cultural and national identity.

In addition, diverse world musical content reflects that the values of social interaction and inherited culture are highlighted as important elements in the curriculum of Chinese music education. Students can appreciate the music of other countries through learning world music and develop a broader sense of aesthetics and a greater understanding and respect for other cultures. By incorporating traditional Chinese music and world music cultures in music education, schools introduce social and cultural values through music, preparing students for lifelong engagement in the arts, which is in line with previous studies (Ho, 2010a, 2010b; Ho & Law, 2004).

6.2.2.2: School Music Activities

In addition to regular weekly music lessons, schools also offer a variety of extracurricular music activities. For example, Wang's parents responded to a question concerning their child's participation in school-based music activities as follows:

I: Has [Wang] talked about the school arts festival?

Wang's mother: He won't talk about it. There will be an instrument competition at the arts festival, but Wang doesn't play well, you know, so he will not participate. However, if it's a class arts festival, then we will encourage Wang to participate, just try it.

I: Can you talk more about the class arts festival?

Wang's mother: Sure, for example, the morning is the school's arts festival, there will be no academic classes in the afternoon. Their teacher encourages the pupils to perform, such as by singing, dancing, or playing an instrument. He performed before, because we encouraged him to take part.

Wang's mother listed several school music activities, such as arts festivals, and various music competitions. Similarly, Chen shared her experiences of taking part in school music activities:

I am a member of the school orchestra. Because I am a pianist, I don't have regular weekly rehearsals. However, when I do, I enjoy every rehearsal with my friends. This is a good opportunity to practise and make friends. My best friend is also a member of the orchestra, so I enjoy the time there. (Chen)

Chen explained that she was motivated to participate in the school orchestra because it allows her to connect with her peers, highlighting the importance of relatedness as a motivational factor. Similarly, Liu expressed comparable feelings and shared similar experiences regarding her involvement in school music activities:

I: Your mother told me that you also joined a Chinese band at school.

Liu: Well, yes, I attended last year and the year before and performed at the school art festival.

I: Tell me about it?

Liu: I really enjoyed it. I rehearsed with my friends and then performed; I am good in the team. Also, I am the first Erhu player in the band, so I feel a sense of accomplishment.

The above quotations reflect that school music activities instil a sense of accomplishment and pride in Liu, motivating her to continue her involvement in music. Liu's parents also described their attitudes towards Liu's school music activities:

We supported her because she was happy to perform. The techniques needed in band are not difficult. She enjoys cooperation with other children and is proud of joining this ensemble. (Liu's mother)

The above quotation suggests that Liu's parents encouraged Liu to take part in the ensemble because they saw this as an opportunity to develop social competence and build friendships.

Wang, Chen and Liu's examples show that participating in extracurricular musical activities helped them develop stronger musical skills, perform with more confidence, and view music as a rewarding experience. This finding is consistent with prior research showing that ensemble participation contributes to higher levels of musical achievement (Schmidt, 2005), increased motivation and engagement (Asmus, 1986; Asmus & Harrison, 1990) and more positive attitudes towards music education (Larson, 2010).

Even though some parents presented positive attitudes towards school music activities, others did not:

His school has a Chinese instrument band, but Qin didn't join in. He mentioned that he has some interest in it, but I think it's a bit of a waste of time, and this experience doesn't quite make it onto her resumé. It's not a good deal, you know, it would take up more time and with few returns, so Qin didn't join in. (Qin's mother)

The above quotation reflected that Qin's mother may not fully understand the educational or developmental benefits of extracurricular musical activities. She viewed music participation as non-essential, describing it as "a waste of time" with "few returns". Her perception reflects a controlled motivational climate, where the value of an activity is measured primarily in terms of tangible outcomes or academic advantage. This mindset may thwart a child's autonomy, particularly when students are discouraged from pursuing interests that do not directly contribute to high-stakes exam preparation (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

In general, Chinese primary schools make efforts to organise a variety of school music activities. Students are highly engaged in school music activities, although parents have different worries about these activities. Music education in China might be described as a paradoxical situation, which aligns with previous studies (Cui, 2009; Sun & Leung, 2014; Xie & Leung, 2011): On the one hand, music is regarded as an enrichment activity rather than an academic subject, leading many students to seek private tutoring to excel. On the other hand, it remains marginalised within the core curriculum.

6.2.2.3: Conclusion

This section identified several key factors within the school learning environment that influence children's musical motivation in China. These include the structure and content of music education, as well as the extent to which music lessons and activities foster a sense of belonging, opportunities to develop skills and confidence, and scope for students to make meaningful choices. When students feel connected to peers, experience skill development, and are supported by teachers and parents in making autonomous choices, they are more likely to engage meaningfully in musical learning. However, when music education is marginalised due to exam-oriented priorities, these motivational benefits are significantly reduced.

6.2.3: *Private Music Tutoring*

Students in China fall into two groups concerning music education: those who do not study music outside the school curriculum, and those who may, in addition to studying music at school, participate in private tutoring out of school (Xie & Leung, 2011). This section considers private music tutoring from four perspectives: (a) high cost, (b) broadening the scope, (c) intensity and (d) who receives private music tutoring and why.

6.2.3.1: High Cost

Participants reported that private music tutoring is costly, and the most significant expense is the fees paid to private tutors. All parents and teachers in the interviews emphasised the financial burden associated with these lessons. For example, Li's mother shared specific details about the tuition fees:

I: Tell me about private lesson tuition?

Li's mother: The tuition fee is 2,000 Chinese Yuan [around £225, approximately one-third of an average Chinese's monthly income] per class, and one class is 45 minutes long.

I: Really? I am shocked at this price...it is much more expensive than from my previous experience.

Li's mother: Compared to other teachers, Shen's tuition is not expensive, just a normal price. For example, some teachers charge 3,000 Chinese Yuan [approximately £335]. Even though the tuition is so expensive, it is difficult to find a good teacher to accept you as a student.

However, not all private tutors charge high fees. Several factors influence the cost of tuition, including the tutor's reputation, professional background, and track record of student success.

Li's mother explained why the tutor's high tuition fees are worthwhile:

He [Shen] is a good teacher, strict and uses professional techniques. In every lesson, he asks Li to perform her homework first. Then, Shen would provide a few comments and suggestions, and Li plays the piece again from beginning to end. 45 minutes is short, and time flies. I know the tuition is expensive, but I think it's worth it. My husband and I are willing to pay it, but we have to make sacrifices in other ways, such as reducing the money spent on food and clothes. (Li's mother)

In addition to tuition fees, students are also required to cover a range of supplementary expenses, including the cost of music books, sheet music and transportation. Increasingly, families are also expected to purchase instruments and related equipment. Table 15 provides some examples of the expenses associated with private music tutoring in this study:

Table 15

Cost Items and Evidence

Cost item	Evidence - Quotations
Travel	"Interestingly, I have kept all the high-speed rail tickets we used, and they have already filled an entire drawer. The commuting cost is not even the most expensive part (...)" (Li's mother)
	"Every Saturday, my parents spent 30 minutes driving me to my music lesson." (Anonymous)
	"My husband and I spent a considerable amount of extra money on this competition, including train fares and local transportation." (Chen's mother)

Instruments “We planned to buy a piano for our new home. My husband joked that we had to buy one whether our son learned piano or not, because we had already reserved a space for it in the house.” (Wang’s mother)

The financial burden associated with expensive private tutoring can significantly influence children’s motivation. Many students in this study highlighted the intense pressure resulting from high costs. For example, one participant shared:

They bought a piano and Pipa [a traditional Chinese instrument belonging to the plucked category of instruments], I know it’s expensive...and I know the private tutoring price is much higher...(Anonymous)

Individuals respond differently to financial pressure and anxiety. For instance, two students demonstrated contrasting attitudes and motivation levels toward musical learning, despite facing similar financial difficulties. For Chen, financial pressure motivates her to practise diligently in pursuit of excellence:

I feel that my parents spend much money on my piano learning, so I feel that I must work hard and strive for excellence. (Chen)

This response suggests that Chen has internalised financial pressure as a personal responsibility, possibly motivated by a sense of obligation or fear of disappointing her parents. While such motivation may result in increased effort in the short term, it is accompanied by heightened stress and diminished well-being when sustained over time. In contrast, students like Li reported feeling overwhelmed by the financial demands, stating:

My private lessons are expensive, and my family’s income is neither stable nor high. I know it is difficult for my family to afford it. (Li)

This statement suggests that the financial strain associated with tutoring may thwart autonomy, as students feel trapped by circumstances rather than freely choosing their musical path. This pressure may undermine intrinsic motivation and result in emotional distress. Previous studies have reported similar results, where student autonomy might be reduced because participation

in a fee-based activity, which is expected to improve student performance, can cause pressure for students to ensure they achieve (Bray, 2013; Lei, 2005; Parveen et al., 2022).

Moreover, students' recognition and appreciation of their parents can be reviewed as an expression of filial piety, consistent with findings from previous studies (Chan & Tan, 2004; Dong & Xu, 2016; Ho et al., 2012). Chinese parents frequently invest considerable time, financial resources, and effort into supporting their children's musical education, expecting it to yield both personal and cultural enrichment. In response, children often demonstrate commitment to their musical studies as a way of expressing gratitude and fulfilling parental aspirations (Chen, 2016; Chen & Ho, 2012; Guo et al., 2020; Leung et al., 2010). However, while filial piety can serve as a powerful motivator, it can also create pressure for children who feel obligated to meet high parental expectations. This pressure may, at times, overshadow intrinsic enjoyment of musical learning, transforming it into a duty rather than a passion.

Beyond financial expense, private music tutoring often entails significant opportunity costs, including the time invested in lessons, preparation, administration and travel. Chen's experience provides a good example:

After we moved to Hangzhou, Chen transferred to a nearby primary school. To give her more time to practise the piano, we discussed with her schoolteacher and agreed that Chen would not participate in afternoon classes. She would only attend important cultural classes in the morning, and then go home for lunch at noon, and then practise the piano. (Chen's mother)

As shown in Chen's case, time spent in private music tutoring frequently comes at the expense of regular schooling and peer interactions. The resulting demanding schedule and limited engagement with classmates may hinder students' social development, potentially isolating them from broader school-based relationships and weakening their sense of connection to the school community (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Schmidt, 2005).

The findings also highlight that private music tutoring constitutes not only an economic issue but also a broader social phenomenon. Most participants reported that the high cost of private tuition places a significant financial burden on families, a finding consistent with prior research (Bray, 2013; Lei, 2005; Parveen et al., 2022). In China, education expenditure is a significant component of household expenditure. From an economic perspective, the rapid growth of the private music tutoring sector undeniably contributes to economic development (Bray, 2009; Hultberg et al., 2021). However, Bray's series of studies (2006, 2009, 2013) argue that private

tutoring may distort the educational system by exacerbating inequalities. Although his work primarily focuses on subjects other than music, it still has implications for music education. Specifically, private music tutoring may increase or even give birth to social, economic, and academic disparities between the haves and have nots. As Teacher Zeng observed, private music tutoring is more accessible to families with greater financial resources than to those with limited means:

Rich families can easily afford the tuition, which means their children have more opportunities to receive a good education and enter a good university. (Zeng, Chen's teacher)

Due to the high cost of private tutoring, students from low-income families are significantly less likely to access it compared to their wealthier peers, resulting in unequal opportunities in private music tutoring. This pattern aligns with findings from previous research (Bray, 2009; Dell et al., 2014; Parveen et al., 2022). Consequently, private tutoring functions as a mechanism that perpetuates and intensifies social inequalities and educational instability, as highlighted in earlier studies (Dawson, 2010; Heyneman, 2011; Kim & Park, 2010; Murawska & Putkiewicz, 2005; Wiseman, 2021).

6.2.3.2: Broadening the Scope

Compared to school-based music education, private music tutoring offers a broader and more in-depth scope of learning. For example, Chen demonstrated that her private tutoring had already covered the core content of her school music curriculum:

Because I have already learned most of the key points in private music lessons, the content taught at school is not attractive to me. (Chen)

Similarly, Wang described that private music tutoring offered in-depth score of learning:

The music class at school is too noisy (...) I can learn much more in my private Erhu lessons. (Wang)

Both Wang and Chen highlighted the advantages of private tutoring, with Chen noting its overlap with school content and Wang emphasising its effectiveness. This finding echoes that of previous studies that private tutoring can meet individual needs and serve higher-ability students to enrich their learning by offering a broader scope of knowledge and in-depth instruction (Bray, 1999; Bray et al., 2003; Hultberg et al., 2021).

However, Wang and Chen presented contrasting perspectives on the impact of private tutoring. Wang reported that his motivation had increased because private tutoring satisfied his need for competence and interest by offered high-quality training (Hidi, 2000). Conversely, Chen's experience revealed a different dynamic. While her need for competence may have been satisfied through private instruction, the repetitive nature of school-based lessons appeared to reduce their perceived value (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Moreover, diminished motivation often led to reduced classroom participation (Deci, 2014; Trautwein et al., 2006). Therefore, these contrasting examples highlight the complex and context-dependent influence of private music tutoring on students' musical motivation, which may vary depending on how it aligns with or conflicts with their broader educational experiences.

6.2.3.3: Intensity

The intensity of practice during private music tutoring significantly influences children's musical motivation. Teacher Zhao compared two students, Qin and Wang, highlighting differences in their corresponding progress:

Because Wang does not practise much on a daily basis, his progress is relatively slow, which concerns me. However, his parents do not fully recognise the importance of daily practice, especially his father, who thinks it does not matter [...] Another student, Qin, performs better than Wang. Qin practises every day and takes it seriously. Qin's parents are also supportive and cooperative. They place some pressure on their child, but not excessive pressure. (Zhao - Qin, Wang and Liu's teacher)

Zhao noted that Wang lacked consistent practice yet maintained a relaxed attitude toward music learning. In contrast, Qin practised diligently with the support of his parents, though not under excessive pressure. Despite their differing habits, both students showed distinct motivational outcomes.

Interestingly, although Wang's progress was limited, his enthusiasm for learning the Erhu remained strong. Zhao even advised his parents to discontinue lessons due to the slow progress, but received a determined response:

I even spoke with Wang's parents and suggested that they consider giving up [...] I believe Wang actually likes the erhu and enjoys learning it, but he does not put much effort into practising. At first, I thought Wang did not like learning the erhu, so I asked his mother. However, she told me that Wang does enjoy learning it. (Zhao, Qin, Wang and Liu's teacher)

Conversely, Qin experienced a decline in motivation despite his practice routine:

I: Do you enjoy Erhu?

Qin: I suppose I used to enjoy Erhu when I started studying, but currently it is just okay, not much.

I: Can you tell me why there has been this change?

Qin: I was quite interested and was excited at the beginning, but currently, practice makes me feel bored.

A similar sentiment was echoed by Liu, who, although enjoying Erhu in general, found routine practice frustrating and isolating:

Yes, I enjoy it. Practice can be a bit annoying because I have to practise while others are playing. This happens quite often, and it does not feel good. However, I feel happy when I am preparing for a competition. (Liu)

In a more extreme case, Li reported intense dissatisfaction with music learning due to an overwhelming practice schedule:

I: Since you started to learn music, have you enjoyed violin?

Li: No, I don't like it. Before I prepared for the exams, I had to practise the violin 5 hours per day, I felt it was boring and it was a hard time for me. After I came to Shanghai, I have to practise 10 hours per day.

Li's experience indicates the negative effects of excessive practice, which led to emotional exhaustion and loss of enjoyment. These findings resonate with existing literature suggesting that over-practice in private tutoring can undermine intrinsic motivation (Bonneville-Rossy & Evans, 2025; Evans & Bonneville-Roussy, 2016; Riley, 2016; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

From the comparison of Wang and Qin's practice intensity and motivation levels, it becomes evident that higher practice intensity does not necessarily lead to greater motivation. In fact, excessive practice appears to be correlated with decreased motivation. Wang, despite his limited practice, exhibited the highest motivation levels, whereas Li, who practised the most, reported the lowest levels of enjoyment. This suggests a potential negative correlation between excessive practice and sustained motivation in music learning.

However, an exception was observed in Chen, whose motivation remained high despite a rigorous schedule:

In general, Chen would practise at least 6 hours per day on weekdays [...] at least 8 hours on weekends. (Chen's mother)

Importantly, Chen's motivation was described as largely self-driven:

I don't need to push [Chen], she keeps practising the piano consciously. She is a self-motivated child [...] Many times, Chen did not stop practising even when her fingers hurt. (Chen's mother)

A key reason for Chen's sustained motivation appears to be her intrinsic drive. Unlike Li, who attended private tutoring due to parental pressure, Chen's decision to engage in intensive practice was self-motivated. Intrinsic motivation is strengthened when individuals autonomously choose their activities (Hidi, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

In general, these findings indicate that motivation in private music tutoring is influenced by multiple factors, not just practice intensity. While moderate practice may enhance skill development, excessive practice can lead to fatigue, reduced autonomy, and diminished intrinsic motivation. However, when students are intrinsically motivated, such as in Chen's case, the negative effects of high-intensity practice may be mitigated.

6.2.3.4: Who Receives Private Music Tutoring and Why

This study found that all interviewed children were engaged in private music tutoring. These children could be categorised into two groups based on their initial motivations: those whose motivation was internally driven (e.g., personal desire or passion) and those whose involvement was primarily influenced by external factors such as parental expectations or policy-related advantages (e.g., parental expectations or societal pressure).

Wang and Chen belonged to the first group as they independently expressed a desire to learn music and sought parental support. Wang's interest in Erhu led him to convince his parents to support his musical pursuits:

I told my parents that I wanted to learn the erhu, but my mother and father preferred that I learn the piano. In the end, they supported my decision to learn the erhu. (Wang)

Similarly, Chen's journey into music began with her natural talent and early interest. Although her parents initially hesitated, they ultimately supported her musical ambitions after observing her strong determination:

My husband and I seriously considered Chen's future career path and the teacher's suggestions. We discussed this many times and asked Chen whether she would like to spend more time practising the piano and whether she wanted to become a pianist when she grew up. She answered clearly that she wanted to be a pianist. (Chen's mother)

These statements suggest that Chen and Wang's high levels of musical motivation grounded in personal choice. Their parents' support further enhanced their sense of autonomy, contributing to intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Conversely, Qin, Li, and Liu belonged to the second group, having been introduced to music due to external influences such as teachers or parents. For example, Liu's parents arranged for her to study Erhu at the suggestion of a family friend:

I: Okay, the first question is why did you learn Erhu?

Liu: My parents have a friend, Aunt Wei, who is an Erhu teacher. She recommended that I learn the erhu, and that's how I started learning it.

Similarly, Li's motivation for learning the violin stemmed from her mother's aspirations rather than personal interest:

Actually, I am not sure. My parents wanted me to learn the violin [...] My mother often says that she never had the chance to learn an instrument when she was young because my grandfather would not allow her to. That is why she insisted that I learn an instrument. (Li)

Li's mother confirmed that her own regret played a significant role in her decision:

I: Why do you encourage Li to learn the violin?

Li's mother: In fact, this comes from my personal background and a regret from my childhood [...] I showed a strong interest in music when I was young. I cried several times and told my father that I wanted to learn an instrument and dance, but he refused. Later, I was admitted to a good university and majored in chemistry. However, I often wonder that if I had the opportunity to go back to my childhood and learn an instrument, it would have fulfilled a dream that I have regretted ever since. Because of this regret, I was determined that Li should learn music. When she was three years old, she began learning music at the Young Children's Palace [a government organisation providing extracurricular education for children]. She tried many activities, including Chinese dance, ballet, and violin.

Unlike Li's mother, who sought to fulfil a personal aspiration through her child, Qin's mother illustrates a pragmatic parental approach focused on policy advantages:

Everyone knows it [music] is a good way to get into a better high school or university, and you are free to choose the major you would like to learn. That means you will have more choices for your future career path. My husband and I hope our son can study artificial intelligence and become an engineer in the future. That is why we plan to move to Beijing after he graduates from primary school, he will get a better education and have more opportunities. (Qin's mother)

These statements suggest that the second group of students' engagement in musical learning was primarily compelled by external parental expectations. Such environments, which predominantly lack student autonomy in the decision to learn, risk fundamentally compromising the development of intrinsic motivation. This aligns with findings from prior research indicating that while parental expectations can offer encouragement (Long & Pang, 2016; Guo et al., 2020), excessive parental expectations may cause stress and anxiety, leading to burnout and decreased enjoyment (Dong & Xu, 2016; Zhao et al., 2015). Children who feel controlled by their parents' expectations may perceive their musical activities as externally driven rather than self-directed, which can diminish intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Some participants identified private tutoring as a strategic step toward competitive academic goals. For example, Li and Chen pursued private lessons to prepare for conservatory admissions:

I'm afraid that I won't get an offer [from the Junior department at Shanghai Conservatory].
(Li)

After discussing this with her teacher and our family, we felt that there was too little time for Chen to prepare for the entrance examination to the conservatory-affiliated primary school. Therefore, we thought that applying for the secondary school might be a better option for her. (Chen's mother)

Similarly, Liu engaged in private tutoring to prepare for musical competitions:

Preparing the same repertoire for a competition takes a long time, and during that period I practise only one or two pieces. (Liu)

These findings suggest that while feeling capable and successful can enhance motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000), excessive emphasis on performance outcomes may reduce intrinsic interest (Mawang et al., 2020; Schmidt, 2005; Schmidt et al., 2006). However, if such goals are

personally valued and self-endorsed, as in Chen's case, they may still promote engagement by reinforcing a sense of mastery and achievement.

Importantly, the rise in private music tutoring also reflects larger social structural and cultural shifts. Chinese education policies reward students with musical talents through preferential admissions (Yang & Welch, 2023), encouraging families to invest in music as a form of academic capital. Furthermore, economic growth and the legacy of the one-child policy have enabled many families to dedicate considerable resources to a single child's success (Jiang, 2020; Kwo & Bray, 2014; Settles et al., 2012). This study also expands on Dai and Schader's (2001) research by highlighting that parents often support music education not only to foster talent but also to advance academic or social mobility. Bray's (1999) argument that supply generates demand is also relevant, once tutoring services become available, families increasingly perceive them as essential.

Interestingly, the findings challenge assumptions from academic tutoring research (e.g., Guill & Bos, 2014; Zhang, 2013), which associate private tutoring with underperformance and remediation. However, those studies primarily focus on academic subjects like mathematics and science. In contrast, the present study reveals a different pattern in the context of music education, where students who engage in private tutoring are frequently high-achieving and motivated by a desire for excellence.

This study highlights that private music tutoring serves multiple purposes, depending on individual motivations. While some students pursue private tutoring out of personal interest, others engage in tutoring due to parental influence or academic considerations. Moreover, the findings indicate that many Chinese parents also prioritised children's intrinsic motivation, recognising the importance of personal interest.

6.2.3.5: Conclusion

This study reveals that private music tutoring in China is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon shaped by economic, social and psychological factors. While it offers expanded learning opportunities and caters to individual needs, its high cost and intensity often place significant pressure on students and families. The impact of tutoring on students' motivation

varies, depending largely on whether participation is autonomous or externally driven. Students like Chen, who were intrinsically motivated, benefited more from tutoring, whereas those under external pressure, such as Li, experienced stress and reduced well-being. Moreover, disparities in access to tutoring highlight broader issues of educational inequality. In general, private music tutoring serves as both a driver of musical excellence and a reflection of socio-economic divides, underscoring the importance of supporting students' autonomy and well-being in music education.

6.2.4: Music Graded Examination (MGE)

The MGE is closely linked to both private music tutoring and NCEE. This section explores the MGE from two perspectives: (a) why children choose to take the MGE and (b) the influence of the MGE on children's musical motivation.

6.2.4.1: Why Children Choose to Take the MGE

All interviewed children reported that they had previously taken MGEs. Teacher Zhao revealed the high proportion of her students who participate in MGEs:

Basically, most of my students have taken the examination, especially those in my one-to-one lessons, all of them have taken it. (Zhao - Qin, Wang and Liu's teacher)

Zhao emphasised that participation in MGEs is common among young music students in China. Given its widespread prevalence, it is important to explore the reasons why students undertake these examinations.

Wang's mother indicated that the MGE system serves as a tangible milestone that validates effort and marks progress:

I think graded examinations can motivate my child to practice and to learn. First, the graded examination serves as milestone for Wang, he can see his progress, and he can see the return. Secondly, I think graded examinations encourage him to practise more. Once he has achieved a graded certificate, he feels motivated to continue practising. (Wang's mother)

In Wang's case, the MGE acted as a marker of achievement and a source of confidence. However, Qin's experience demonstrated a contrasting example. Qin's mother viewed the MGE as part of a broader academic plan:

I believe he could reach Grade 10 in the MGEs before completing primary school. Subsequently, we will evaluate his academic examination results. If his performance in high school or college entrance examinations is not satisfactory, we will consider music as a potential career path. In this scenario, we would also take relevant education policies into account, such as whether certain high schools or universities offer preferential admission to students with musical specialisations. As a music-specialist student, he may have greater flexibility in selecting university majors, and the entry requirements are typically lower than those of conservatoires or dedicated music institutions. (Qin's mother)

Qin's mother indicated that participating in the MGE provides a strategic advantage in the NCEE. By obtaining a MGE certification, students may qualify for preferential admission policies, offering them an alternative academic route beyond traditional academic examinations. However, the current study found that children, including Qin and Wang, rarely expressed personal motivations for pursuing the MGE. Instead, decisions were often shaped by parental expectations, reflecting earlier findings that parents frequently direct their children's educational trajectories (Leung et al., 2010; Ren & Pope Edwards, 2015). While MGEs can help young musicians build skills and confidence, their impact appears contingent upon the extent to which engagement is self-initiated (Sloboda, 1994; Tse, 2004). In the Chinese context, autonomy is frequently understood not as individual choice, but as the fulfillment of responsibilities and expectations established by parents and teachers (Guo et al., 2020; Long & Pang, 2016; Ren & Pope Edwards, 2015).

The widespread engagement in MGEs, despite children's silence on personal motivation, indicates a high level of externally regulated behaviours. Such motivation may lead to short-term compliance but is less likely to support long-term musical engagement (Deci & Ryan, 1985). When students undertake MGEs primarily to satisfy parental expectations or to meet external benchmarks, the activity risks becoming pressurised, which can undermine intrinsic interest in music (Dong & Xu, 2016; Zhao et al., 2015).

Nevertheless, MGEs may contribute positively to motivation if students internalise the value of these assessments. For example, if students perceive examinations as meaningful to their development and integrate them into their personal goals, the motivation becomes more self-determined (Hidi, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Although this was not explicitly expressed by the children interviewed, Wang's case implies a degree of internalisation: he saw the MGE as both a motivational tool and a way to track personal growth. This suggests a potential pathway towards integrated regulation, where extrinsic motivations become aligned with personal values.

6.2.4.2: The Influence of MGE on Children' Musical Motivation

MGEs appear to have a strong effect on students' motivation. Teacher Zhao demonstrated the effect of the certificate on children's practice habits:

I think MGE is a method to encourage a student to practise because students are happy to get a certificate. I do not need to be strict in those few months, most of the students take the MGE seriously, and they will also take the initiative to practice. (Zhao - Qin, Wang and Liu's teacher)

Similarly, teacher Zeng has served as an MGE examiner, reflected on the examination's role in motivating students:

I have been an examiner for the MGEs many times. I suppose the MGE is a good method to test a student's skills because we provide students with feedback from an objective perspective. Moreover, the certificate is regarded as a reward, to confirm the student's achievement by an official organisation which is helpful for them to know their level of expertise. I suppose it is also a good way to motivate students to put in more effort. (Zeng, Chen's teacher)

The above quotations from Zhao and Zeng highlight that MGEs function as clear indicators of progress and achievement. These findings align with previous research (Boyu, 2016; Sloboda, 1994; Tse, 2024), which suggests that MGEs reinforce motivation by offering positive feedback

on student progress. Teacher Zeng suggested that students may be externally motivated by earning a certificate, as it provides positive reinforcement regarding their musical progress.

While MGEs can serve as a motivational tool, private music tutoring for exam preparation may also negatively impact on students' intrinsic motivation. Interviewed students reported that preparing for exams often required extended hours of repetitive practice, leading to boredom and disengagement. For example, Qin's mother observed the time demands of exam preparation: "Qin spends most of his music time practising the MGE repertoire." Qin himself admitted that the routine became monotonous over time:

I was quite interested in and felt excited at the beginning, but currently, practice makes me feel bored. (Qin)

These responses illustrate how exam-driven practice can lead to frustration and diminished intrinsic motivation, a finding supported by previous studies (Hallam et al., 2021; O'Neill, 2003).

Parental anxiety further compounds this pressure. Many parents view MGE outcomes as benchmarks for evaluating their child's success relative to peers. This comparison often fosters a competitive atmosphere. Qin's mother admitted:

Many of my son's peers have already attained the highest level in graded music examinations. This has, at times, led me to feel considerable anxiety, particularly when I compare my son's progress with that of other children. I worry that he may fall behind his contemporaries if he does not advance at a similar pace. (Qin's mother)

Wang's mother offered a similar reflection:

Wang's mother: ...there are too many children who can play their instruments really well.

I: Really?

Wang's mother: Yes, for example, one of his classmates is really good at playing the piano. He has already achieved high expertise in graded examinations.

These responses suggest that MGEs are not only seen as individual accomplishments but also as tools for social comparison, reinforcing external pressure.

Some parents even changed private tutors when progress was perceived as too slow. Qin's mother recounted:

The most important reason [we changed teachers] was the progress of learning. We thought that the progression was slow. My husband and I thought that we should try a new teacher, who may improve the situation. We did not see good results because our son did not pass the graded examination. That is why we changed the Erhu teacher. (Qin's mother)

This finding supports previous research (Boyu, 2016; Huang and Gove, 2015b), which demonstrates that many Chinese parents engage in frequent comparisons between their children and others, striving to ensure their child remains competitive. The phrase “good children in another family” (别人家的孩子) is a common cultural reference, indicating the widespread parental tendency to measure their child's success against peers (Meng-ying, 2021; Zhang, 2020).

Children reacted differently to the pressure associated with MGEs. Some, like Wang, displayed resilience and persistence, while others, like Qin, felt burdened by the expectations set by their parents and peers. Wang's mother explained how she and her husband encouraged Wang to persist in learning Erhu, despite his relatively slow progress compared to his peers:

I: Does Wang feel pressure from his friends?

Wang's mother: I do not think so. Most of his friends have already given up. He also has two cousins who previously learned instruments, but both of them stopped. This is why I feel that, although my child progresses more slowly, he continues to persevere. If one day Wang becomes tired of practising and no longer enjoys the Erhu, then we would consider stopping as well. For this reason, my husband and I try to encourage him. We believe it is more important for our child to learn how to persist with one activity, as sustained effort will eventually bring rewards. Parents play a crucial role in this process: if parents become discouraged and give up, the child is likely to do the same. For example, last summer, Wang achieved Grade 4 and expressed a desire to stop learning after the examination. However, I did not agree, and he has since continued his studies.

I: How did you respond when Wang said he wanted to stop?

Wang's mother: I spoke with him and emphasised that it is important to persevere with one activity.

In contrast, Qin felt discouraged by peer competition and parental pressure:

I: Does Qin feel pressure from his friends?

Qin's mother: Yeah, many Qin's friends are studying musical instruments, but they all gave up after achieving grade 10. Besides, their school also has a mandatory Chinese musical instrument lesson from Year 1 to the Year 6.

I: How did Qin respond when his friends stopped learning instruments?

Qin's mother: He asked me whether he could stop learning the Erhu. I told him that he could, but only after he had achieved Grade 10. At that point, we could reconsider whether he should continue. He felt somewhat disappointed, but as parents, we believe it is our responsibility to recognise his potential. Therefore, I try to encourage and, to some extent, push him to realise that potential.

Qin's experience illustrates how external pressure to obtain MGE certification may undermine motivation. When examinations are treated primarily as competitive, high-stakes assessments, they function as external demands that may limit students' sense of choice and reduce their engagement in musical learning (Deci et al., 1999; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

6.2.4.3: Conclusion

In general, the findings suggest that MGEs can serve as both a motivator and a source of stress for students. While certificates provide recognition, reinforce competence, and encourage practice, excessive parental pressure, peer comparisons, and repetitive exam-driven practice can undermine intrinsic motivation. This aligns with previous research, which indicates that high-stakes assessments in music can create pressure that reduces student enjoyment. Such pressures may undermine autonomy and reduce intrinsic motivation over time, particularly when participation in MGEs is perceived as compulsory. Therefore, to foster enduring musical engagement, it is essential that MGE participation is framed in ways that support students' autonomy, emphasise personal growth and respect individual pace.

6.2.5: Music Teachers

A good teacher can promote students' interest in learning music, where a higher level of interest leads to students demonstrating a higher level of motivation towards musical learning (Davidson & Burland, 2006; Hidi, 2000). This section is focused on how teachers' expertise, instructional methods and personalities influence children's musical motivation.

6.2.5.1: Teachers' Expertise

Teachers' expertise can be viewed from multiple perspectives, including performance and instructional competence. All the interviewed teachers expressed a high level of skill in these areas. For example, consider teacher Shen, who introduced his experiences at the beginning of the interview.

Shen: I started learning violin at the age of four and a half. My father was a violin teacher, so I went to the junior department of Shanghai Conservatory to study violin. I obtained my undergraduate and master's degrees in Hannover, Germany. After my studies, I returned to China to teach violin. I have now been teaching violin for about five or six years.

I: Have you taught at Shanghai Conservatory?

Shen: Yes, although I have also worked as a freelance soloist in Europe for a while. I also formed an ensemble with my classmates, toured Europe, and then returned to China.

Shen's background reflects not only technical mastery but also rich performance experience. To gain further insight into his teaching, I posed the same question "Can you describe Shen?" to both Li and her mother to hear their evaluation of the teacher:

I think Mr. Shen is a bit lazy. He is professional and his teaching pedagogy is excellent...
(Li)

He is a good teacher, strict and has high techniques. (Li's mother)

Similarly, Teacher Zeng was praised for balancing expressive guidance with technical precision:

She is good at teaching Chen in musical expression, but she is rigorous when it comes to technical issues. Chen is fortunate to have met Zeng. (Chen's mother)

Chen regarded Zeng as both a skilled educator and a role model:

I am deeply impressed by and motivated by my teacher Zeng's professionalism. As we have known each other for a long time, she is well aware of my difficulties. She possesses a strong understanding of music history, composers, and repertoire, and is therefore able to explain the pieces clearly, which helps me develop a deeper understanding. She is a role model for me, and I hope that one day I can become someone like he (Chen)

These quotations reflect that when teachers combine technical expertise with personal engagement, they can inspire students and strengthen their feeling of connection and belonging in the music classroom. This finding was supported by prior research (Ballantyne et al., 2012; Dwyer, 2015; Pitts, 2012).

Survey responses about school music teachers also reflected strong performance, pedagogy, and music appreciation skills (Table 16).

Table 16

Teachers' Expertise

Dimension of expertise	Evidence
Performance and teaching pedagogy skills	"The teacher was nice and taught us to sing 'Moli flower'" (Anonymous)
	"A lesson, the teacher sang first, and then we followed" (Anonymous)
	"The teacher taught me to sing my favourite song" (Anonymous)
	"The teacher taught us professional music knowledge by playing games" (Anonymous)
Instrumental performance skills	"...teacher taught me how to pluck the string, it was impressive" (Anonymous)
	"I remembered a lesson, no one was naughty, our new teacher

	played the piano all lesson” (Anonymous)
	“I performed ‘Canon’ with the teacher” (Anonymous)
Music analysis and appreciation skills	“The teacher introduced one of Beethoven’s famous symphonies and analysed the structure” (Anonymous)
	“In the appreciation lesson, our teacher told us a story about the music” (Anonymous)

This study reaffirms that school music teachers are essential in children’s musical motivation, echoing findings from prior research (Creech, 2009; Dwyer, 2015; Pitts, 2012; Sichivitsa, 2007; Yu & Leung, 2019). In the present context, many Chinese school music teachers were described by students as possessing musical expertise and pedagogical skills, qualities that made lessons both engaging and effective. Such teaching approaches appeared to sustain students’ interest and encourage continued participation in music learning (Hidi, 2000). However, while teacher quality is consistently identified as a key determinant of successful music education (Creech, 2009; Pitts, 2004; Sichivitsa, 2007), the reliance on individual teacher excellence raises questions about systemic consistency.

Sun and Leung’s (2014) study raised concerns about the quality of music teachers in mainland China, presenting a contrast to the findings of the present research. Two factors may explain this difference. First, Sun and Leung’s data were collected a decade ago, and the intervening years have seen rapid economic growth alongside educational reforms and reported improvements in teacher training (Yu & Leung, 2019). Second, regional variation may have influenced the results. The current study was conducted in urban areas of Zhejiang Province, one of China’s most economically developed regions, whereas Sun and Leung’s (2014) study focused on rural areas of Northeast China, where disparities in resources and training opportunities are likely to be more pronounced.

6.2.5.2: Instructional Methods

The instructional methods used by teachers are not a factor that can be ignored when considering children’s motivation. Many students described how their teachers’ instructional methods impressed them. Some students described highly structured, teacher-led school music lessons:

The teacher played a song, and everyone sang a phrase in turn. (Anonymous)

The teacher plays the music and lets us imagine and draw a picture. (Anonymous)

Li's mother outlined a similar structure in private tutoring:

Every time, he [teacher Shen] asks Li to perform the homework pieces first. Then, Shen would provide a few comments and give some suggestions, and Li plays the pieces again from beginning to end. (Li's mother)

These examples indicate a predominantly teacher-centred learning environment, with the teacher occupying the central position of authority, a pattern also reported in previous research (Yeh, 2001). These teacher-centred practices reflect broader cultural and educational traditions in China, particularly those rooted in Confucian values that emphasise teacher authority and respect (Hwang, 2013; Shim, 2008; Tan, 2015). Within this context, instruction tends to be didactic, prioritising knowledge transmission over student exploration. While this can foster efficiency, it may also limit opportunities for student to make choices and direct their own learning (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

However, not all teachers in this study adhered strictly to a teacher-centred model. Some adopted more humanistic, student-centred practices. For example:

We chose the topic of the lesson and selected the related music. We gave a presentation and then discussed it with our classmates. It felt very rewarding (Anonymous).

Everyone recommends their favourite songs, which allows us to appreciate a wide range of music. It is both interesting and meaningful. (Anonymous).

These two quotations reflect that rather than passively listening to teachers talk, the students in this study engage in discussion and group work to support their understanding and focus on active learning strategies such as inquiry-based learning and collaborative projects. Compared to the students who described the teacher-centred approach, the students' responses describing the student-centred approach are more positive, using phrases such as "interesting", "good" and

“meaningful”. These students have greater autonomy to pursue their interests, ask questions and take ownership of their learning in collaboration with their peers.

The findings suggest that instructional methods in Chinese music education cannot be simply categorised as entirely teacher-centred or student-centred. Instead, they reflect a transitional pedagogy. While many teachers maintain traditional authority-based approaches, others are incorporating student-centred strategies, influenced by curriculum reforms since 2001 that emphasise learner autonomy (Liu, 2023), in line with global educational trends (Smit et al., 2014; Torrisi-Steele, 2020; Zhang et al., 2023; Zhang & Leung, 2023).

This distinction is also evident in the differences between private tutoring and school-based music lessons. Private tutoring, delivered on a one-to-one basis, is highly individualised, with pacing and content tailored to a student’s specific abilities and goals (Bray, 1999, 2013; Hultberg et al., 2021; Zhang & Bray, 2016). In contrast, school lessons cater to a diverse group within a standardised curriculum set by the MoE (see Section 3.3.3.2), where the pace of learning flexibility is limited. These structural differences shape the degree of learner autonomy and students’ motivation.

6.2.5.3: Personalities

In this study, students’ evaluations of their teachers highlight personality characteristics as a key factor. The relationship between a teacher’s personality and children’s motivation appears to be both significant and multifaceted. For instance, Chen’s mother reflected on her experiences and offered an evaluation of Zeng:

When I first met Zeng, I found her to be both warm and approachable. She even introduced us to her two dogs, which created a welcoming atmosphere. Chen also made a strong effort to perform several pieces at that time. Perhaps Zeng was moved by our sincerity, and she eventually accepted Chen as her student. From then on, Chen began taking regular piano lessons with Zeng every Saturday. On many occasions, Chen continued practising despite experiencing pain in her fingers. Zeng was deeply touched by Chen’s dedication, she has never increased the tuition fees and has consistently taught her with great care. (Chen’s mother)

Chen also shared her experiences and feelings about Zeng:

Whenever I feel discouraged or believe that I am unable to master difficult technical skills, I turn to my teacher, Zeng. She is supportive and provides clear guidance on how to approach these challenges. She is also very patient; even when I fail repeatedly, she continues to encourage me to try again. Her encouragement motivates me, and I do not want to disappoint her (Chen)

These quotations illustrate how teacher Zeng's interpersonal warmth and guidance helped students feel connected and build confidence in their abilities. Such relationships can boost children's confidence and promote sustained engagement in musical learning.

Furthermore, many students in the survey emphasised their teachers' personalities. For example, a participant described that their music teacher had "humour and enjoys interacting with us" (Anonymous). Moreover, the parents and children especially emphasised the importance of the teachers' sincerity and kindness. Another participant mentioned that their music teacher liked smiling, and "taught us patiently" (Anonymous). These findings are consistent with previous research indicating that teachers' positive traits, such as extraversion, agreeableness, and openness are positively associated with higher students' motivation (Asmus, 2021; Wubbels et al., 2016).

In summary, the findings highlight the significant role of teacher personality in shaping students' motivational experiences. Interpersonal qualities such as warmth, patience and approachability appear to foster emotional connection and support students' confidence, thereby encouraging sustained engagement in musical learning. However, the data also suggest that such motivation may be closely tied to relational dynamics, particularly students' desire to meet teachers' expectations. This indicates that while positive teacher-student relationships are highly influential, their long-term effectiveness may depend on the extent to which they also support the development of more self-directed forms of engagement.

6.2.5.4: Conclusion

This section has explored how music teachers influence students' motivation through their skills, instructional methods and personalities. The findings suggest that teachers with strong musical and pedagogical skills foster students' motivation. While traditional teacher-centred methods remain prevalent, the emerging student-centred approaches was associated with higher motivation. Furthermore, teachers' personal personality traits, such as empathy, patience and sincerity, were found to positively enhance motivation. In general, this study highlights the importance of teachers in students' musical motivation.

6.2.6: Parents

The belief that parents are important to their children's academic success and motivation is supported by decades of educational research (Cui, 2023; Davidson et al., 1995; Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994; Lerner et al., 2022; Luo et al., 2021; Margiotta, 2011; Tang et al., 2018). In the domain of music, the question of how families influence their children's motivation has been a preoccupation of many researchers. This section investigated a wide range of factors that impact on children's motivation from four perspectives: (a) parental background, (b) parenting style, (c) parental support, and (d) different roles in musical learning.

6.2.6.1: Parents' Background

Parental background can be categorised into two main dimensions: (a) education and (b) socio-economic status (SES). In this study, parents shared similarities and differences in these aspects. Notably, all parents had attained higher education qualifications, ranging from bachelor's degrees to doctoral degrees. As discussed in Section 6.2.4.1, all interviewed parents expressed high academic expectations for their children, which may be closely linked to their own educational backgrounds. Previous research suggests that well-educated parents are more likely to set ambitious career goals for their children and to exhibit positive attitudes towards

education, academic achievement, and upward social mobility (Dell et al., 2014; Dini et al., 2019).

Despite the consistently high educational backgrounds among the interviewed parents, the children's motivation levels varied considerably (see Table 17). This contrasts with prior research that found a positive correlation between higher parental education and children's achievement motivation (Dell et al., 2014; Dini et al., 2019). Acharya and Joshi (2009) explain that parental education alone may be less influential than factors such as parental interaction, involvement, and expectations.

Table 17

Children's Motivation Levels and their Parents' Education Levels

Children	Motivation Level (High to low)	Parental Education Levels
Chen	6.13	Mother: Master's Degree Father: Master's Degree
Wang	5.27	Mother: College Graduate Father: Bachelor's Degree
Qin	5.18	Mother: Master's Degree Father: PhD Degree
Liu	4.43	Mother: Bachelor's Degree Father: Bachelor's Degree
Li	3.98	Mother: College Graduate Father: College Graduate

Socio-economic status appeared to exert a more nuanced influence. Some families, such as Liu's, had stable financial resources and could invest heavily in their child's education without hardship:

I: What do you know about your daughter's progress in Erhu learning?

Liu's mother: To be honest, I do not have a clear understanding of her progress. My husband and I are both very busy with work, and we are therefore unable to supervise her practice regularly. As a result, we decided to hire a private tutor to come to our home and supervise her daily practice. I believe that specialised tasks should be handled by professionals. Since neither my husband nor I have a background in music, Teacher Zhao is better equipped to provide appropriate guidance and professional advice for Liu.

I: Does this require a significant financial investment?

Liu's mother: Yes, it does. Parents tend to worry about their children constantly, and raising a child requires considerable financial and emotional investment. Fortunately, my husband and I have a stable income, and we both agree that this is a necessary and worthwhile expense.

Conversely, some families with lower SES also made significant sacrifices to support their children's musical learning:

Most of our family income is used to pay for Li's tuition, and we often rely on financial support from Li's grandparents. (Li's mother).

Similarly, Chen's parents shared the impact of music education on their family's life quality:

I: So you and Chen moved to Hangzhou after that [the decision to learn music]?

Chen's mother: Yes, we moved to Hangzhou and rented a small studio, where we lived for two years.

I: what was your life like after moving to Hangzhou?

Chen's mother: Our quality of life declined considerably after the move. To reduce expenses, we rented a small and poorly equipped studio. It had no television, washing machine, refrigerator, or microwave. The bathroom was also extremely small—barely enough space to turn around. However, Chen is a considerate child; she never complained and was very understanding.

Despite criticism from friends and relatives, Chen's mother insisted:

To this day, we do not regret this decision, and if we had the opportunity to make it again, we would choose the same path. We gave up many things, such as quitting our jobs, leaving behind a stable life, and lowering our standard of living. Everything we did is to support our child's musical learning. I know it may sound unreasonable, but as parents, we hope our children will excel and stand out among their peers. We do this out of our deep love for them. (Chen's mother)

The findings of this study suggest that Chinese parents, regardless of their socioeconomic background, demonstrate a strong commitment to supporting their children's musical education, often involving substantial personal and financial sacrifices. This observation echoes previous studies (Caro, 2018; Jarrett & Coba-Rodriguez, 2015; Tan, 2019). Such commitment appears to extend beyond practical support, reflecting deeply embedded cultural expectations surrounding children's success and parental responsibility, as highlighted in earlier research (Chen, 2016; Huang & Gove, 2015a, 2015b).

Children in this study expressed varied attitudes towards financial expenditure. For example, Li was acutely aware of her family's financial pressure, which affected her motivation:

I: Why you don't you like him [teacher Shen]?

Li: His private tuition is so expensive, and our family income is not stable or high. I know my family finds it difficult to afford. However, if I don't study with him, I can't get attached to a junior department.

I: How do you know his private tuition is expensive?

Li: My mother asks me to personally deliver the payment in cash [to Teacher Shen] after each lesson. That is how I know the exact cost per session.

Li's quotation reveals a strong awareness of the financial burden her lessons imposed. She felt caught between her aspiration to join the junior department of the conservatory and the knowledge that each class strained her family's resources. This tension turned her parents' support into a source of pressure rather than pure encouragement. Compared to Li, Liu experienced less financial pressure, as described by Teacher Zhao:

I: Is Liu eager to be admitted to a conservatoire, or is this primarily her parents' aspiration?

Zhao: From what I understand, both parents strongly support this goal, and Liu herself also expresses a desire to be admitted to a conservatoire. However, she lacks discipline and tends to have low self-esteem. She can also be somewhat rebellious, which may affect her performance and reduce her chances of being admitted to junior department of the conservatoire. I have observed that she attends school for only half a day and spends the remainder of her time at home, where she receives multiple one-to-one lessons in subjects such as mathematics, English, and music. There is a Chinese saying, "the heart of parents is pitiable under heaven," which I think aptly describes her parents' situation. Private tutoring is expensive, yet they continue to invest heavily in her education. For instance,

they even purchased a house near the school to make commuting easier. Liu's parents are making considerable efforts, but she does not seem fully aware of their sacrifices.

Zhao's observations suggest that Liu, unlike Li, did not feel financial pressure and thus did not fully recognise the value of her learning opportunities. The survey results indicate that Liu's motivation level was higher than Li's, supporting the argument that students' motivation may decrease when they engage in expensive, pressure-filled activities. This aligns with prior studies suggesting that fee-based educational activities can lead to increased stress and reduced intrinsic motivation (Bray, 2013; Lei, 2005; Parveen et al., 2022). At the same time, it complicates evidence from Hornby and Blackwell (2018), who link intrinsic motivation to cognitively stimulating home environments and note that higher-SES families are more likely to provide such stimulation, thereby fostering motivation. Rather than supporting a uniform advantage of greater resources, the present findings highlight how the financial and psychological pressures undermine children's motivation.

While this may explain Liu's relatively higher motivation compared to Li, the present findings also suggest that cultural values surrounding education, particularly those rooted in Confucianism, drive strong parental commitment across SES levels (Bahtilla & Xu, 2021; Huang & Gove, 2015a, 2015b; Zhang, 2020). Confucius emphasised learning as a means of achieving success, and Shek (2006) argues that in Chinese culture, education is synonymous with social mobility and financial success, shaping parental attitudes towards academic and extracurricular activity pursuits.

6.2.6.2: Parenting Style

Parenting style significantly influences children's motivation through the balance of control and support. In this study, all interviewed parents reflected on their parenting approaches, revealing a range of styles. Li's mother exemplifies an authoritarian parenting style, placing high expectations on her child's musical learning:

As a parent, I naturally hope that my child can excel. If possible, I would like her to become a professional musician, perhaps even a second Lang Lang. (Li's mother)

To achieve this goal, Li's mother imposed strict practice routines and used physical punishment as a disciplinary measure. Li described her experiences:

I: Why does your mother punish you?

Li: There are many reasons. Sometimes it is because I do not play the pieces well, and at other times because she thinks I am not concentrating during practice.

I: Could you describe one of your punishment experiences?

Li: I remember one time she used my spare bow to hit me. I did not expect the wooden bow to be so fragile, it broke with a loud sound. I could not help laughing, which made her even angrier. She then became more aggressive, striking me repeatedly with nearby objects until I fell to the ground and could not move, but she continued.

I: What was your reaction to this?

Li: I cried. On one occasion, I tried to hide in my bedroom and held the door shut to avoid being hit. My mother shouted outside, threatening me if I came out.

I: How did your father respond?

Li: My father would try to stop her, but he is often busy and not at home. My mother is usually the one who stays with me during my violin practice.

Li's statements suggest that his home environment reflects authoritarian parenting characteristics. His survey responses revealed the lowest motivation level among the interviewed children, which was further echoed in his interview comment "because of violin, my mother sometimes beats me, and my family is chaotic." Such expressions of distress align with research linking physical punishment to psychological harm and diminished motivation for learning (Santrock, 2014). Although some studies in Western contexts have suggested that authoritarian parenting can increase motivation through fear- and anxiety-based compliance (Gonzalez & Wolters, 2006; Silva et al., 2007; Tang et al., 2018), Li's reported experiences and low engagement align more closely with scholarship on Asian parenting, which cautions that practices perceived as controlling are likely to undermine intrinsic motivation (Chao, 1994, 1995; Peng et al., 2024; Peng & Wright, 1994).

In contrast, Chen's parents demonstrated an authoritative parenting style, fostering a respectful and supportive learning environment. This approach is evident in their communication:

We can talk about everything, I think we are best friends. Because my life is centred on my daughter, and my schedule is arranged according to her routine, to a certain extent, I am the person who is most familiar with my daughter. Every day, she also shares with me what happened at school that day, any happy things, or conflicts with her classmates, and then I will offer my opinions and ideas. (Chen's mother)

This statement illustrates a nurturing, communicative environment in which Chen feels valued. Such positive interactions have been linked to increased intrinsic motivation and engagement in musical learning. Moreover, Chen's parents actively involved her in decision-making:

My husband and I realised that our daughter might have musical talent when she achieved Grade 4 with distinction after only one year of formal learning, which is unusual in China. Her teacher then discussed her potential with us and suggested that we seek more professional guidance and consider her future pathway. We reflected carefully on this advice and discussed it with Chen on multiple occasions. We asked her whether she was willing to dedicate more time to practising the piano and whether she aspired to become a pianist. At that time, she clearly expressed that she wanted to pursue this path. As parents, we believe that once Chen has expressed her wishes, it is our responsibility to support her. Therefore, we contacted Professor Zheng at the Zhejiang Conservatoire. (Chen's mother)

The above quotation suggests that Chen's parents not only provided support but also encouraged autonomy and responsibility. The survey findings showed that Chen had the highest motivation level among the children interviewed, supporting the argument that authoritative parenting fosters intrinsic motivation by creating a sense of competence and self-determination (Fadlillah & Fauziah, 2022; Santrock, 2014).

Compared to Li and Chen, Wang's parenting employed a mixed style, incorporating elements of both authoritative and authoritarian approaches. Wang's parents described their approach to encouragement:

I: You listen to his practice, right? Have you ever punished or encouraged him?

Wang's mother: We mainly praise him...very enthusiastically.

I: So you never punish him?

Wang's mother: Not in terms of musical learning. Before formal lessons, he taught himself music online, so in a way, he was self-motivated. I can play a little piano, but I do not know how to play the Erhu, and I feel it is more difficult to learn. I am grateful that he can perform at his current level. From my own experience learning piano, I believe that criticism can

damage a child's enthusiasm. Although we do not have professional knowledge of the erhu, we think that as long as he persists, it is acceptable even if his progress is slower.

I: I understand. Some parents I have spoken to seem quite anxious about their child's progress.

Wang's mother: In fact, if parents expect their child to become a professional musician, they themselves should ideally have a musical background. For example, Teacher Zhao can teach her child every day. However, since my husband and I do not have such a background, we do not expect our son to pursue music professionally.

I: ...but your child said you would sit behind him when he is practising.

Wang's mother: Yes, I really enjoy it.

The above quotation reflects that Wang's parents provided warmth, encouragement, and autonomy in musical learning, which aligns with authoritative parenting. However, Wang's mother also exhibited controlling tendencies:

I once considered installing a camera to monitor my child, Wang. However, my husband strongly opposed the idea. He argued that, if he were a child, he would not accept being constantly monitored. He believed that such surveillance would be harmful and could hurt Wang. He also pointed out that it is normal for children to lose concentration at times when doing homework, and that, as parents, we should not adopt measures that might negatively affect him. (Wang's mother)

This quotation suggests an inclination toward authoritarian control, though Wang's father opposed it. Ultimately, Wang's parents combined authoritative warmth with occasional authoritarian tendencies. Wang expressed a positive attitude when I asked him whether he enjoyed Erhu or not: he answered "Yes, I enjoy it." Combined with his survey answer, his motivation ranked second among the interviewed children, and it is reasonable to assume that a combination of authoritarian and authoritative parenting style has a positive impact on children's musical motivation.

By comparing the experiences of Li, Chen, and Wang, this study underscores the significant influence of parenting styles on children's motivation. The findings suggest that while in general children raised by authoritative parents tend to exhibit higher levels of intrinsic motivation. Such children are often self-driven and possess a strong sense of autonomy. They are more likely to persist through challenges and achieve higher academic outcomes. These findings are consistent with previous research (Fadlillah & Fauziah, 2022; Santrock, 2014). In contrast, children raised in authoritarian households may show lower intrinsic motivation, complying with parental

demands primarily to avoid punishment rather than out of genuine interest or personal value. This dynamic can diminish their sense of autonomy (Baumrind et al., 2010; Holden, 2010; Peng et al., 2024).

However, the application of these distinctions requires careful consideration in the Chinese context. The binary categorisation of parenting styles may obscure the ways in which control and care are closely intertwined. In many Chinese families, strict supervision and high expectations are not necessarily experienced as purely controlling but may be understood as expressions of parental responsibility and commitment to the child's development (Chao, 1994, 1995). Under such conditions, externally guided behaviours may still be gradually internalised, particularly when they are accompanied by emotional support and a sense of relational closeness.

These findings must also be interpreted within broader cultural frameworks. Traditional Chinese parenting, influenced by Confucian values, places strong emphasis on discipline, effort, and the moral obligation of parents to guide their children towards success (Chao, 1994; Chen, 2014; Huang & Gove, 2015a, 2015b; Leung et al., 2010). Therefore, while Western parenting frameworks provide a useful analytical lens, they should be applied with caution and supplemented by culturally sensitive interpretations.

6.2.6.3: Parental Support

6.2.6.3.1: Parental Behavioural Support

Participants in this study described various forms of parental support. The most common was the purchase of musical instruments at the beginning of their children's musical education. For instance, Wang's parents recounted:

He learned piano for a period during kindergarten. At that time, we were living in Binjiang [a district of Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province]. Later, as we were planning to move to a new area, we decided not to purchase a piano, and he stopped practising. We intended to buy one after moving into our new home. My husband even joked that we would have to buy a piano regardless of whether our son continued learning, as we had already set aside space for it. After purchasing the piano, we naturally hoped he would resume learning. However, we also believed that the final decision should depend on our son, as buying a piano is a

significant investment. In the end, he chose to learn the Erhu instead, and we supported his decision. (Wang's mother)

Similarly, other participants noted that their parents purchased instruments to support their musical journey:

My parents drove me to private music training institutions and bought me a drum set and harmonica. (Anonymous)

They bought a cello for me and encouraged me to take part in school musical activities. (Anonymous)

Therefore, purchasing instruments could be regarded as a form of behavioural support, a finding consistent with previous research (Caro, 2018; Cui, 2023; Creech, 2010; Davidson et al., 1996; Suk, 2014; Zdzinski, 2021). This also echoes the findings discussed in the Section 6.2.3.1, where financial investment may create some economic pressure, influencing students' musical motivation.

Beyond purchasing instruments, home supervision was another commonly mentioned form of behavioural support. Parents frequently played an active role in their children's daily practice. Wang's mother, for example, described how she engaged with his practice session:

I: Do you simply sit and listen [while he practises]?

Wang's mother: Some pieces are more challenging, so when he plays, I sing along. I believe this makes practice more engaging and encourages him.

Li's parents also discussed their approach to home supervision:

I sit beside her throughout her practice. Although I have no formal music training, I take notes during her lessons to develop a basic understanding of violin technique. Practising the violin requires constant refinement. If a problem arises, solving it often leads to new challenges, necessitating patience and repetition. For instance, when the teacher pointed out a section of demisemiquavers, Li struggled initially. She had to slow down, internalise the rhythmic structure, ensure proper finger positioning, and maintain pitch accuracy. Once she mastered the passage at a slow tempo, she gradually increased the speed until she

exceeded the required pace. While I cannot assess her pitch, I can monitor rhythm and phrasing, and if necessary, I impose discipline. (Li's mother)

In addition to home supervision, some parents supported their children by attending music lessons and taking notes. Chen's mother reflected on her consistent involvement:

From the first piano lesson, I was by her side. Not only piano lessons but also during all the competitions she attended, I accompanied her all the time. (Chen's mother)

The findings align with existing literature describing parents as home teachers (Creech, 2010) or practice supervisors (Caro, 2018; Margiotta, 2011; Zdzinski, 1996, 2021). Most parents in this study recognised the importance of home supervision and sought to improve their effectiveness by attending lessons and taking notes. This behaviour likely stems from an awareness of the strong correlation between children's musical progress and regular, structured practice (Brokaw, 1982; Bugeja, 2009; Creech, 2010; Davidson et al., 1996; Suk, 2014; Zdzinski, 2021). Davidson and Pitts (2001) propose that "parents of the most successful young musicians have been shown to invest enormous personal energy in their children's musical learning" (p. 161). Such involvement represents a form of meaningful support, which can sustain engagement (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

Interestingly, the effects of parental behavioural support on student motivation were not universally positive. Some students reported that their parents' involvement positively influenced their engagement:

I was more engaged in music when my parents appeared in the music activities in which I was involved. (Anonymous)

This suggests that visible parental involvement can enhance motivation through strengthening the parent-child bond and boosting the child's confidence. When children feel emotionally supported, they are more likely to remain engaged and motivated in their learning (Brokaw, 1982; Cui, 2023; Davidson & Pitts, 2001; Sosniak, 1985). However, not all experiences were positive. Some students reported negative emotional responses, particularly when supervision was accompanied by physical punishment. For example, Li expressed dissatisfaction with the strict disciplinary approach taken by her parents during practice. This aligns with Howe and

Sloboda's (1991) caution that while parental involvement is beneficial, overcontrol can result in adverse outcomes.

These findings indicate that the relationship between parental behavioural support and student motivation is not linear. While parental involvement can be empowering, excessive supervision may become burdensome, potentially leading to resistance or decreased motivation. This contrasts with earlier studies that report a positive correlation between parental support and student achievement, motivation and attitudes (Gonzalez-DeHass et al., 2005; Macmillan, 2004). However, it aligns with recent research by Peng et al. (2024), who proposed that parental involvement can function as a double-edged sword, offering both benefits and challenges depending on the intensity and nature of the support provided. Furthermore, Bamberger (2016) and Zdzinski (1996, 2021) emphasise that parental supervision should evolve with a child's age and maturity. While younger children may benefit from structured oversight, older students often require greater autonomy to develop intrinsic motivation. Therefore, the most effective approach is to balance guidance with independence, allowing children feel both supported and empowered in their musical learning.

6.2.6.3.2: Parental Emotional Support

The findings of this study reveal varying degrees of parental emotional support, with some parents providing significant encouragement while others demonstrating limited emotional involvement. Parents such as those of Chen and Wang exemplify high levels of emotional support, offering unconditional love, acceptance and reinforcement. For instance, Wang's parents actively nurtured their child's self-esteem and confidence through encouragement:

I praise him while also supervising him... Sometimes, I say, 'You can do better; let's try again.' His father, although often busy, praises him when he hears him practise, saying things like, 'Wow, that's really great! It sounds wonderful. You've done so well in such a short time.' He encourages Wang. (Wang's mother)

This response highlights Wang's parents' use of positive reinforcement by acknowledging their child's efforts and abilities. Even though Wang did not exhibit exceptional talent in playing the

Erhu, his parents continued to provide emotional support through comfort, understanding, and validation:

The most important thing is that he likes it and enjoys it. (Wang's mother)

Furthermore, Wang's teacher, Zhao, observed that his parents maintained a calm and pressure-free approach to his musical education:

Wang's parents maintain a relaxed attitude towards his musical learning. They do not impose pressure but genuinely care about his well-being. Their primary hope is for him to grow up happily, and therefore they set relatively low expectations. (Zhao, Wang, Qin, and Liu's teacher)

Another example of strong emotional support is found in parental guidance in decision-making, as seen in Chen's case. Chen's parents played an active role in discussing her career aspirations while allowing her autonomy:

My husband and I carefully considered Chen's career path, consulted her teacher, and had multiple discussions about it. We asked whether she was willing to dedicate more time to practising the piano and whether she aspired to become a pianist. She responded clearly that she wanted to pursue this path. (Chen's mother)

By involving their child in discussions and respecting her choices, Chen's parents fostered a supportive and positive learning environment that reinforced her self-confidence.

In contrast, Qin and Li's parents displayed limited emotional support, often relying on strict discipline and criticism rather than encouragement. Qin's mother described their approach to his musical education:

I: What happens if you punish him [during musical learning]?

Qin's mother: I think he is still somewhat afraid of me. I have never physically punished him, but I do criticise him quite seriously at times. I stay with him during practice, and if he does not perform something well, I ask him to repeat it.

I: Does his father ever punish him?

Qin's mother: Yes, when Qin was younger, we did. However, we now believe that this approach is no longer appropriate. Instead, we try to communicate with him, for example, explaining why we ask him to learn the erhu and what we expect from him.

While Qin's parents recognised the need for communication, their approach lacked emotional reassurance and encouragement, potentially limiting his intrinsic motivation. Similarly, Li's mother detailed an even stricter approach:

Li's mother: Sometimes, I hold a hanger beside her while she practises. If she plays poorly, I hit her.

I: Isn't this too severe for a child?

Li's mother: Well... I believe that pain helps create muscle memory and reinforces the correct technique. I was careful during her practice. Honestly, she basically grew up being beaten while learning the violin.

I: What was Li's reaction?

Li's mother: She's a wonderful and independent girl. Despite everything, she still respects and admires me. When I punished her, she would cry, beg me to stop, and promise to practise better. I know it's harsh for a child, but I did it for her future. If she succeeds, she will appreciate my sacrifices, I have dedicated my life to her.

Li's mother's response reflects a disciplinarian approach that prioritises strict control over emotional well-being. By focusing on punishment rather than nurturing, encouragement, and guidance, her actions may have had negative psychological consequences for her child.

Children responded differently depending on the level of parental emotional support they received. Those with consistent emotional reinforcement, such as Chen and Wang, developed strong self-confidence and positive self-perception. Chen, for example, expressed firm belief in her abilities:

I believe that I can realise my dream [of becoming a professional musician] and gain admission [to the junior department of the Shanghai Conservatory]. (Chen)

Both Chen's and Wang's parents strengthened their children's sense of achievement and feelings of being supported, which seems to enhance their motivation. Conversely, children receiving low emotional support, such as Qin and Li, struggled with self-doubt and uncertainty.

When asked about the entrance exam for the Shanghai Conservatory, Li responded with hesitation, “I don’t know.”

This contrast suggests that higher levels of parental emotional support are associated with enhanced self-esteem and self-efficacy, which may, in turn, contribute to sustained motivation. Conversely, limited emotional support may undermine children’s confidence and weaken their motivation. Overall, the findings indicate that parental emotional support plays a key role in fostering intrinsic engagement, consistent with previous research (Bamberger, 2016; Creech, 2009, 2010; Oliveira et al., 2023).

The findings also reveal a strong association between emotional support and parenting style, broadly aligning with Baumrind’s (1989) typology as well as studies in music education (Creech, 2009, 2010; Lerner et al., 2022; Oliveira et al., 2023). Higher levels of emotional support are typically associated with an authoritative parenting style, characterised by warmth, responsiveness, and balanced guidance. In contrast, lower levels of emotional support tend to align with an authoritarian style, marked by high control and limited emotional warmth. However, as discussed in Section 6.2.6.2, the applicability of these Western-derived parenting categories requires careful consideration in the Chinese context.

The motivational impact of parental emotional support appears to depend not only on its presence, but also on how it is experienced by the child. When support is embedded within a warm and responsive relational context, it is more likely to be internalised, fostering a sense of personal endorsement, competence, and sustained engagement. Conversely, when parental involvement is perceived as controlling, motivation may remain externally driven, shaped by pressure or the desire to meet expectations, thereby limiting children’s sense of ownership over their learning (Gonzalez-DeHass et al., 2005; Gonzalez & Wolter, 2006; Holden, 2010; Silva et al., 2007; Tang et al., 2018).

6.2.6.4: Different Roles in Musical Learning – Tiger Mother, Panda Father

6.2.6.4.1: Different Division of Work

In this study, all interviewed parents were mothers, which suggests that when it comes to their children’s music learning, Chinese mothers are more proactively involved than their fathers.

Table 18*Parents' Occupation Details*

Children	Parents' occupation details
Chen	Mother: Former doctor, now a full-time housewife. Father: Medical doctor.
Wang	Mother: Works in cross-border e-commerce. Father: Businessman.
Qin	Mother: Former editor, now a full-time housewife. Father: Senior management role in a consultant company.
Liu	Mother: Lawyer. Father: Government employee
Li	Mother: Full-time housewife, has previously been employed. Father: Factory worker.

Table 18 provides a summary of the details of the parents of the interviewed children. Among the five mothers, three are full-time housewives, devoting their time to supporting their children's musical learning and managing household responsibilities. The remaining two are employed; one in cross-border e-commerce and the other practising law. In contrast, all five fathers hold demanding jobs, limiting their direct involvement in their children's daily musical learning activities. Chen's and Qin's mothers highlighted this work division:

He is busy working, sometimes, he comes over [to Hangzhou] at weekends when he is free.
(Chen's mother)

Basically, I supervise my son and show more concern for him. My husband often works and must travel a lot. (Qin's mother)

These statements indicate that because of fathers' work commitments, mothers often play leading roles in providing behavioural and emotional support. Mothers' behaviours directly meet children's needs for relatedness and competence. In contrast, fathers were generally less

involved in day-to-day interactions but contributed primarily through financial support, particularly in households where the mother was a full-time caregiver (such as those of Chen, Li and Qin). This finding is consistent with prior research showing that mothers are more likely than fathers to be directly involved in their children's education, while fathers may provide support in other forms, such as financial contributions (Hernawati & Hernawati, 2020; Macmillan, 2004; Margiotta, 2011; Suk, 2014; Svane et al., 2021).

The observed division of parental roles in children's musical education may be rooted in historical and cultural traditions. Traditional gender values influenced by Confucianism have historically shaped Chinese family structures. In this framework, a wife's role was complementary, to support her husband's productivity (Huang & Gove, 2015a, 2015b; Tan, 2019). Women were primarily responsible for reproductive functions, including childbirth (preferably of male heirs) and child-rearing. This division of labour reinforced the domestic sphere as secondary to the economic and productive roles assigned to men (Armstrong, 2014). Consequently, women were expected to manage household responsibilities, while men focused on career-based and financial activities (Huang & Gove, 2015a, 2015b; Tan, 2019).

However, societal and economic transformations have led to significant shifts in gender roles. Liu's mother described their family's work division as follows:

I: Who pays more attention to your daughter? You or your husband?

Liu's mother: We are half and half because we are all busy working. From my perspective, my husband is quite concerned with Liu and is a responsible father. We don't have a clear division of work towards Liu, whoever is free will take care of it.

This statement suggests that contemporary Chinese families are experiencing a shift towards a more balanced division of labour, where both parents share responsibilities. Several factors contribute to this phenomenon, including rapid economic growth and government policies. China's rapid economic expansion has increased employment opportunities for women, contributing to a rise in dual-income households (Fong, 2002; Lee, 2012; Rosenzweig & Zhang, 2009). As more women enter the workforce, traditional family structures are gradually evolving to accommodate shared responsibilities. The Chinese government has implemented policies, such as the compulsory education law and the one-child policy, which promotes gender equality (Du & Leung, 2022; Jiang, 2020; Lee, 2012; Veeck et al., 2003). Therefore, although Confucian

values continue to influence societal expectations, there is a trend towards more egalitarian family roles.

6.2.6.4.2: Parenting Style

This study reveals that fathers and mothers show different expectations and requirements for their children's education. For example, Qin's mother described an argument with Qin's father:

I often feel angry and doubt myself when I took over his [Qin's] education at the beginning, I doubt myself and ask why Qin couldn't do so many things well. I thought he was fighting against me on purpose, at that time, I also had conflicts with my husband, he didn't understand me, he thought that it was not a big problem, but from my perspective, I thought he ignored Qin's study. (Qin's mother)

Qin's mother reflected that she places greater emphasis on academic achievement than Qin's father. Similarly, Wang's mother highlighted the differing expectations between herself and Wang's father:

Wang's mother: From my husband's perspective, I shouldn't pay lots of attention on details, I should trust Wang, he can do it on his own. Furthermore, my husband thinks that it is more important for boys to cultivate their self-confidence. Moreover, my husband thinks if a boy would like to improve his academic score, there are many ways to improve, but self-confidence is hard to cultivate. I think my boy has good habits; he really enjoys reading. My husband thinks it is better to read rather than doing academic exercises. Therefore, my husband has pointed out that if I can identify some key points, that will be better for Wang, rather than doing academic exercises.

This statement suggests that Wang's father prioritises his child's overall development, emphasising self-confidence and personal growth rather than purely academic achievement. When discussing their roles, Wang's mother elaborated on the different approaches she and her husband take:

I: Does your husband play a different role in your child's learning?

Wang's mother: Yes, we play different roles. My husband is busy. He returns home at 9 p.m., and when he sees Wang still doing homework, he becomes frustrated, saying, "Why are you still doing homework? Why haven't you gone to bed?" If Wang is still working at

9:45 p.m., my husband gets even more upset. Later, he discussed with me that reading is more important than excessive academic exercises because reading benefits Wang's long-term development.

These differences suggest that while mothers tend to have higher academic expectations, fathers prioritise their children's emotional well-being and overall development, consistent with Chen and Ho (2012) and Trehub (2003). Fathers and mothers also display different behaviours and responses towards their children. Qin's mother reflected on her authoritative approach:

I: Does Qin see you as authoritative?

Qin's mother: Yes. Compared to my husband, I am less flexible. My husband might be persuaded by Qin, but I am not. For instance, if I ask him to practise, he must complete it, no matter how late it gets. When we make a commitment, we must follow through. If I allow him to negotiate, he will learn that my rules are not absolute.

Similarly, Wang's mother discussed how she and her husband take on different parenting roles:

I: It seems that Father prefers to encourage Wang?

Wang's mother: Yeah, Father will not be so aggressive with him, while on the contrary, I will be aggressive with him occasionally.

I: Traditionally, in Chinese culture, fathers are stricter with sons.

Wang's mother: Yes, I know, but our family is different. My husband is patient and gentle, so I have to be stricter, it balances things out.

I: So one parent is the "good cop," and the other is the "bad cop"?

Wang's mother: Exactly. My husband believes that test scores are not crucial for a child in primary school.

This dynamic illustrates how different parenting styles coexist within a family. Wang's father adopts a more authoritative and nurturing approach, while Wang's mother exhibits authoritarian tendencies. Wang's mother also described how she and her husband handle conflicts with their child:

I: What do you do if both of you (Wang's father and Wang's mother) are angry about Wang?

Wang's mother: Two things can happen. One is to wait for my husband, and the other is to wait for us both to calm down. When I am angry, my husband will take over my role and supervise Wang, my husband is more patient than me. He was less likely to be angry or annoyed. He seldom loses his temper because of his child's learning. That's better than me.

I: Father is quite patient, right?

Wang's mother: Yes, my boy thinks that his mother is irritable, and his father is gentle. In fact, whoever takes care of the children is more irritable. Everyone is the same.

This illustrates in Chinese families, fathers often softer while mothers are strict, contrasting with patterns more commonly reported in Western contexts (Cabrera, 2020; Yaffe, 2023). The finding supports recent studies showing that Chinese fathers tend to be more authoritative, while mothers lean toward authoritarianism (Chuang & Su, 2009; Luo et al., 2021; Xie & Li, 2019).

Fathers and mothers also differ in their views on discipline. Li's mother described how her husband reacted when she punished Li:

When he [Li's Father] was at home and saw Li was crying, he would stop me, quarrel with me, and let me beat him first. We often argue about Li's education, but he has to admit that because of my strictness, Li has so many achievements, such as winning competitions. (Li's mother)

Similarly, Wang's mother recounted her husband's disapproval of physical punishment:

I: Have you punished Wang before?

Wang's mother: Sometimes, but my husband strongly disagrees with it. Occasionally, I lose my temper and spank him, but my husband insists that children should not be forced. He believes we should tailor our parenting approach to Wang's personality.

Wang's father advocates for emotional communication as a disciplinary method:

My husband supposes we should communicate with our children. He thinks I should be calm and not be emotional, because emotions can be contagious. If both my boy and I are emotional, then we can't achieve effective communication, and things will only get worse. (Wang's mother)

This reflects an authoritative parenting approach, emphasising open dialogue and emotional support. The current study suggests that Chinese fathers generally adopt an authoritative parenting style, while mothers are more authoritarian, a dynamic that can be summarised as “Tiger Mother, Panda Father.” This contrasts with the traditional stereotype of *stern father and compassionate mother* (慈父严母) model (Ho, 1987; Littlejohn, 2010; Shek & Sun, 2014). Recent studies attribute such shifts to broader sociocultural transformations (Chuang & Su, 2009; Yaffe, 2023). For instance, increased exposure to Western educational and parenting philosophies, which emphasising autonomy, emotional support and positive reinforcement, has contributed to the emergence of more hybrid parenting practices within Chinese families (Xie & Li, 2019).

However, as discussed in Section 6.2.6.4.1, parenting practices in Chinese families often remain centred on maternal roles, as mothers typically assume primary responsibility for children’s daily care and educational supervision. While economic reforms and evolving social norms have encouraged greater paternal participation, mothers continue to play a dominant role in monitoring and regulating children’s learning. As a result, the overall parenting style within the family may be disproportionately shaped by maternal practices, particularly in relation to discipline and academic expectations. This suggests that the notion of a “Tiger Mother, Panda Father” may risk oversimplifying the distribution of parental influence. Rather than representing a clear division of roles, parenting practices appear to be negotiated within asymmetrical structures of responsibility, in which mothers retain primary authority over children’s learning. Consequently, shifts in paternal involvement may coexist with, rather than fundamentally transform, established gendered patterns of parenting.

6.2.6.5: Conclusion

In general, parents, as external influencing factors, can stimulate both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in children. First, all interviewed parents expressed strong support for their children’s musical learning, a commitment that appears to be shaped by their educational and cultural backgrounds. This finding contrasts with patterns observed in other academic subjects (Long & Pang, 2016; Şengönül, 2022) but aligns with previous studies in music education (Caro, 2018; Elpus & Abril, 2011).

Second, parents employed a range of parenting styles, including authoritative, authoritarian, and hybrid approaches. Parenting style was closely associated with children's motivation: supportive and responsive practices were linked to higher levels of intrinsic engagement, whereas more controlling approaches were associated with lower intrinsic motivation and greater reliance on external regulation (Gonzalez-DeHass et al., 2005; Macmillan, 2004; O'Neill, 2023).

Third, both behavioural and emotional parental support were strongly associated with students' musical motivation. However, the effectiveness of such support depended on how it was experienced by the child. Support embedded within a responsive relational context was more likely to foster sustained engagement, whereas support perceived as controlling could diminish its motivational value (Creech, 2010; Cui, 2023; Macmillan, 2004; Margiotta, 2011; Sichivitsa, 2007; Zdzinski, 2021).

Finally, maternal and paternal roles differed in relation to both the division of labour and parenting style. While both parents contributed to children's musical learning, mothers more frequently assumed controlling roles, whereas fathers tended to adopt more supportive or mixed approaches. This "Tiger Mother, Panda Father" pattern reflects an interplay between structure and support, but also highlights persistent gendered responsibilities, with mothers often exerting greater influence over learning practices.

These findings must be understood within the broader Chinese cultural context, where education is viewed as a collective family responsibility and children's achievements are closely linked to family honour and social mobility (Huang & Gove, 2015a; Pires & Duarte, 2019; Zhang, 2020). Within this framework, parental authority and guidance are often normalised as expressions of care. Consequently, children's motivation emerges not solely from individual choice, but through relational processes shaped by cultural expectations, family dynamics, and the interplay between support and control.

6.3: Chapter Summary

This chapter has examined six environmental influencing factors shaping Chinese children's musical learning environments: the National College Entrance Examination (NCEE) policy,

school music education, private music tutoring, music graded examinations (MGEs), music teachers, and parents.

Each theme revealed a range of contextual and relational key factors influencing students' motivation to learn music. Policy-related pressures, such as the NCEE and MGEs, acted as both extrinsic motivators and potential sources of stress. School music education provided important initial exposure to music, yet its limited resources and relatively low status often constrained its motivational impact. Private tutoring served as a means of supplementing formal instruction, while also reflecting broader social and economic disparities. Music teachers emerged as key figures, with their professionalism, instructional methods, and personalities having a substantial influence on students' motivation. Finally, the chapter explored parental influence through background, parenting style, support and gendered roles, revealing complex and nuanced dynamics.

Overall, the findings indicate that Chinese children's musical motivation arises from multifaceted interactions between societal contexts and interpersonal relationships. Motivation is not driven by a single factor but is constructed at the intersection of policy, pedagogy, family values, socioeconomic status, and cultural expectations. Furthermore, the chapter underscores the relevance of Self-determination theory in explaining these findings, particularly in highlighting the importance of fulfilling the three basic psychological needs for fostering intrinsic motivation.

The next chapter will offer a broader discussion of the implications of these findings. It will emphasise the role of government in supporting children's musical education and explore strategies for creating learning environments that nurture and sustain students' motivation.

Chapter 7: General Discussion

This chapter synthesises and critically reflects on the study's key findings, situating them within the broader social and cultural context. It identifies the characteristics of the Chinese music education environment and examines how various determinants interact to shape children's musical motivation. Particular attention is given to the complex and, at times, conflicting roles these determinants play. In doing so, this chapter not only reinforces the study's central arguments but also considers their wider implications for educational practice and policy. It concludes by presenting evidence-based recommendations for fostering and sustaining children's musical motivation.

7.1: Learning Environment of Chinese Music Education

The previous chapter critically identified the six environmental influencing factors (NCEE, school music education, private music tutoring, MGEs, music teachers, and parents). In addition, these environmental influences also reveal the framework of Chinese music education and the importance of the government.

7.1.1: Learning Environment Framework of Chinese Music Education

As illustrated in Section 3.3.1, Yan (2017) proposed a framework for Chinese music education comprising three interrelated learning environments: family, school and society (conceptualised in this thesis as the wider learning environment). The findings of this study, examined through six environmental influencing factors, largely support this framework, while also revealing the tensions and inequities embedded within it. Each theme reflects a distinct dimension of the Chinese music education environment and illustrates how these contexts interact to shape children's musical learning.

Among these environments, school and family emerged as the most influential in shaping children's preparation for the NCEE. Government authorities define the educational objectives and policy frameworks for the NCEE, which schools then operationalise through examination-oriented music programmes. Families, in response, invest in private tutoring and encourage participation in school music activities to enhance their children's competitive standing. Rather than functioning independently, these environments interact dynamically, sometimes reinforcing each other's aims, but at other times creating conflicting pressures on students.

School music education illustrates this duality. Although music is formally embedded in the national curriculum under quality-oriented education reforms, its actual delivery is often shaped by constrained local resources. Parents also influence children's participation in school music education, either strengthening or undermining school participation depending on whether parents perceive music as contributing to broader academic achievement.

Private music tutoring and MGEs further reveal the interplay between education policy, family expectations, and educational inequality. The policy-driven emphasis on measurable outcomes has fuelled the rapid growth of the private tutoring market. However, participation in these opportunities is highly dependent on family SES, reflecting and perpetuating wider social disparities. In this way, the policies intended to improve educational quality risk exacerbating inequities in access and outcomes.

Music teachers are similarly shaped by government policies. Government policies have raised the expectations for teacher qualifications in public schools while also stimulating the demand for highly qualified private tutors. Therefore, both school music teachers and private tutors must adhere to educational policy-driven standards and meet the competitive expectations of students and parents. This situation risks narrowing their pedagogical focus to exam preparation, potentially lowering students' self-expression, and intrinsic motivation.

Parents represent another critical component of the children's learning environment, with their involvement shaped by the intersection of government policy, prevailing social norms, and school expectations. High-stakes policies such as the NCEE, coupled with the legacy of the one-child policy, have intensified parental investment in children's education. In children's musical learning, parents play multiple roles. For example, they act as key decision-makers regarding private tutoring, MGEs, and participation in school music activities, while also serving as supporters and home supervisors during daily practice. Although such engagement can be highly

beneficial, it may also create pressure and restrict autonomy, particularly when parental strategies prioritise control over encouragement.

In general, the Chinese music education environment is shaped by the interdependence of family, school and the wider learning environment influences, but also by structural inequalities and competing priorities. Government policy plays a central role in both coordinating and distorting these relationships. This study expands existing theoretical frameworks by identifying the government as a distinct and central force, rather than treating it as background context. While Yan (2017) emphasised family, school, and society, these findings critique that framework for underestimating structural and policy-level determinants. Government involvement actively mediates the effectiveness of school practices, parental strategies, and societal attitudes towards music education. The next section examines its role as the primary driver of music education for Chinese children.

7.1.2: Government as the Primary Driver for Chinese Musical Education

A key finding of this study is the important role of government in shaping the landscape of Chinese music education. While the government does not directly influence children's intrinsic motivation, its indirect impact is profound.

The Chinese government shapes the school learning environment through policies, regulations, and initiatives that promote music education and ensure its integration into the school curriculum. For example, this study highlights how the Compulsory Education Law and music curriculum reforms have reinforced the importance of school music education. In primary schools, music is regarded as an essential component of humanities and quality-oriented education, as emphasised in the national curriculum (MoE, PRC, 2001). At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the Chinese government emphasised the importance of music education, notably through the Third National Education Conference, which promoted the concept of Quality-oriented Education across different educational levels, families, and societal education (MoE, PRC, 2001). Moreover, the Chinese government has implemented measures to enhance the professional competency of school music teachers, including stringent qualification requirements and rigorous recruitment processes for public school educators (Gao, 2005; Lee et al., 2019; MoE, PRC, 2011). Through national policies such as the NCEE, compulsory

education laws, and music curriculum reforms, the government exerts top-down control that permeates every level of the music education system.

Government policy has also reshaped the family learning environment. The one-child policy (1979-2015) altered family structures and reduced traditional patriarchal norms, placing unprecedented emphasis on the educational development of a single child, regardless of gender. Meanwhile, the high-stakes nature of the NCEE has intensified competition, encouraging families to invest in private tutoring, graded examinations, and music competitions as strategies to enhance university admission prospects. This has created a paradox: while government policies have raised the profile of music education among parents and children, they have also amplified stress, reduced children's autonomy, and reinforced exam-oriented motivations over intrinsic enjoyment.

Beyond schools and families, the government has influenced the wider learning environment for music education. Economic reforms and sustained growth have increased disposable household income, facilitating greater investment in extracurricular activities such as private lessons. Simultaneously, state emphasis on cultural development has legitimised music education as part of national cultural identity. However, these developments also highlight inequalities: while middle- and upper-class families are able to capitalise on these opportunities, children from lower SES backgrounds remain disadvantaged, with limited access to private tutoring and competitive music activities.

In sum, this study supports Ho and Law's (2004) view that the government acts as the primary driver of music education in China. Its involvement has been both enabling and constraining. Policies have expanded opportunities for music education and elevated its cultural status, but they have also entrenched exam-driven practices and exacerbated educational inequalities. The challenge for Chinese music education lies in balancing policy-driven objectives with the cultivation of creativity, autonomy, and equitable access to meaningful musical experiences.

7.1.3: Towards a Different Perspective Echoing Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1977)

Although Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1977)¹⁸ was not the framework directly used to design and test this study, the overall pattern of findings aligns with its central proposition: children's development is shaped through reciprocal relationships between the child and multiple, nested environmental systems. From this perspective, children's musical motivation is an outcome that emerges from the dynamic fit between children and the relational, institutional, and cultural contexts in which they grow.

Bronfenbrenner (1977) conceptualises development as taking place within an “ecology” of interconnected systems. At the microsystem level, children's immediate settings, particularly family relationships, are important. In this study, parent–child relationships appear especially salient to children's musical motivation because they structure everyday experiences such as emotional support, encouragement, shared music-making, and the routines that sustain practice and persistence. These close interactions can function as the “proximal processes” through which motivation is built, maintained, or undermined over time.

At the mesosystem level, Bronfenbrenner (1977) draws attention to the links between a child's immediate settings (for example, the relationship between home and school, or between family practices and music learning environments). The findings suggest that children's musical motivation is likely strengthened when expectations and support are consistent across contexts, for instance, when home encouragement aligns with teachers' goals and learning experiences. Where demands conflict (e.g., competing priorities between music competition and overall development), motivation may be more vulnerable.

The ecosystem further highlights impacts that shape children's experiences indirectly, even when children are not active participants in those settings (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). For musical motivation, this includes factors such as parents' working conditions and time availability,

¹⁸ Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1977) conceptualises human development as a process shaped by a series of nested and interrelated environmental systems. These range from immediate interpersonal contexts (the microsystem), through connections between these settings (mesosystem), to external environments that indirectly influence the individual (exosystem), and finally, to the overarching societal and cultural structures (macrosystem). Additionally, the chronosystem incorporates the dimension of time, acknowledging how changes and continuities across the lifespan and socio-historical context further shape developmental pathways.

access to community music resources, affordability of lessons, and institutional decisions that determine opportunities for participation. These influences can constrain or enable what happens in the microsystem, shaping the practical conditions under which motivation can develop.

At the macrosystem level, wider cultural values and policy environments inform what music learning “means” and how strongly it is supported (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). Chinese norms about academic achievement, the perceived value of music education, and curriculum or assessment priorities can shape family expectations and school practices, which then filter into children’s everyday motivational experiences.

Finally, the chronosystem introduces the time dimension, emphasising that development is influenced by both life-course changes and historical shifts (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). In this study, musical motivation is better understood as something that can fluctuate across developmental stages and transitions (e.g., increasing academic pressure, changing peer influences), as well as in response to broader educational or curriculum reforms that alter children’s learning environments and priorities.

Overall, although Bronfenbrenner’s theory (1977) was not explicitly operationalised or tested in this study, the findings align closely with his ecological view of development. Specifically, the conclusions support an ecological interpretation in which children’s musical motivation reflects interlocking influences across relationships, interconnected settings, broader structural conditions, cultural expectations, and change over time. Future research could build on this work by more precisely articulating and empirically examining these multilevel processes within diverse Chinese contexts. The next section therefore considers, from an ecological perspective, how children’s musical motivation can be sustained.

7.2: Creating a Supportive Learning Environment for Children’s Musical Motivation

This section provides insight into what constitutes a supportive learning environment for children’s musical learning and its implications for educators, parents and policymakers. A good environment for musical motivation requires coherence across structural, institutional, and

interpersonal levels, where government policy, school practice and family support function in complementary ways rather than at cross-purposes.

7.2.1: Creating a Supportive School Learning Environment

This study suggests that school music education is often represents children's first structured encounter with music, providing lessons, diverse activities, and opportunities for collaboration and performance. Beyond imparting foundational skills and knowledge, school music fosters interest, encourages exploration, and offers a social context where peer interaction creates a sense of belonging. Through collaboration, modelling, and healthy competition, students are motivated to strive for excellence. These findings are consistent with prior research (Creech, 2009; Dwyer, 2015; Pitts, 2012; Sichivitsa, 2007). This also indicates that several recommendations would be beneficial for building a supportive school learning environment.

First, schools could improve teaching quality by encouraging the adoption of student-centred pedagogies and diverse instructional strategies that stimulate intrinsic motivation. Without such innovation, excessive emphasis on exam preparation risks narrowing pedagogy and restricting creativity, as also noted in previous studies (Creech, 2009; Macmillan, 2004; O'Neill & McMahon, 2005; Smit et al., 2014). Teachers should be recognised not only as instructors but also as mentors and role models. This study demonstrates that even simple actions, such as taking time to talk with students and offering reassurance, can reduce anxiety, strengthen teacher–student relationships, and foster a more positive learning climate, which is highlighted in Creech and Hallam's (2003) study.

Second, regular and systematic professional development, supported by local education authorities, is critical for maintaining teacher expertise and responsiveness. Without such investment, teachers' risk being constrained by exam-oriented instruction, thereby diminishing educational quality (Li et al., 2022; Yu & Leung, 2019; Zhang et al., 2021). Although the teachers interviewed in this study did not explicitly mention professional development, the evidence suggests that training opportunities organised by local authorities are essential to support teacher growth. As prior research emphasises, well-trained and motivated teachers are fundamental to creating effective and inspiring learning environments (Creech, 2009; Creech & Hallam, 2003; Pitts, 2004; Sichivitsa, 2007).

Third, schools could prioritise collaborative and peer-based learning. Ensemble participation and group music-making have consistently been shown to enhance motivation, confidence, and achievement (Schmidt, 2005). Such activities contribute to higher musical achievement, greater engagement (Asmus, 1986; Asmus & Harrison, 1990), and more positive attitudes towards music education (Larson, 2010). Furthermore, this study highlights that boys' musical engagement is particularly influenced by friendship groups, suggesting that incorporating more collaborative and peer-oriented opportunities could be especially effective in motivating boys to actively participate in school music activities.

Finally, schools could provide regular performance opportunities. Students' sense of competence develops when they perceive progress and mastery in their skills, and public performances offer a tangible means of experiencing success and building confidence in their musical learning (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000). The motivational value of performance has also been emphasised in prior research (Asmus & Harrison, 1990; Larson, 2010).

In general, school music education plays a foundational role in children's musical development. Its effectiveness depends not only on curriculum provision but also on teaching quality, professional support, peer collaboration, and opportunities for performance. Schools must therefore balance exam-oriented demands with practices that foster autonomy, competence, and relatedness, ensuring music remains both meaningful and motivating.

7.2.2: Creating a Supportive Family Learning Environment from Parents' Perspectives

This study emphasises the critical role of parents in shaping children's musical motivation, highlighting their multifaceted functions as expectation setters, collaborators, supervisors, and financial supporters. By adopting a series of balanced and responsive approaches, parents can create a nurturing family environment that sustains children's intrinsic motivation.

First, parents could support their children by setting realistic and achievable expectations for musical progress that take into account individual interests, abilities and developmental stages. Clear expectations provide children with a sense of purpose and direction, reinforcing autonomy and competence (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Long & Pang, 2016; Guo et al., 2020). However, excessive expectations risk producing stress and anxiety, leading to burnout and diminished

enjoyment (Dong & Xu, 2016; Zhao et al., 2015). Therefore, parents should balance their children's aspirations with sensitivity to their needs, creating an environment that prioritises effort, growth, and intrinsic enjoyment over achievement alone.

Second, parents can act as collaborators and advocates within the broader learning environment to support children's musical education, a role highlighted in previous research (Creech & Hallam, 2003; Pitt & Hargreaves, 2017). As collaborators, they may engage with teachers and other stakeholders by attending lessons, monitoring practice, and providing constructive feedback. As advocates, they can secure resources, promote high-quality instruction, and seek opportunities to enhance their children's musical development. When parents adopt these roles proactively, they contribute to positive educational outcomes by strengthening children's motivation and engagement. These findings align with prior studies that emphasise the significant impact of parental involvement on both musical and academic success (Ang et al., 2020; Creech, 2009; Cui, 2023; Guo et al., 2019).

Third, effective home supervision is essential, particularly with daily practice. Structured routines promote discipline and responsibility, while active parental involvement supports skill development and reinforces competence (Davidson et al., 1996; Deci, 2000). Beyond technical guidance, encouragement and praise in daily practice strengthen relatedness by nurturing the parent – child bond and enhancing confidence (O'Neill, 2003). Crucially, the nature of supervision should evolve as children mature. Younger learners benefit from structured oversight, while older students require greater autonomy to develop self-regulation (Zdzinski, 1996, 2021). An optimal approach therefore balances guidance with independence, supporting competence, relatedness, and autonomy in line with SDT principles (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Fourth, parents could be mindful of financial pressures associated with music education. While providing instruments, lessons, and performance opportunities is essential for access (Dell et al., 2014; Long & Pang, 2016; Şengönül, 2022), financial investment can also generate feelings of obligation. When children perceive their learning as a repayment of financial investment, motivation may shift from intrinsic enjoyment to performance orientation, undermining long-term engagement (Benckwitz et al., 2022). Parents should therefore balance financial commitments with sensitivity to their children's emotional well-being.

Finally, parents could tailor their support to children's internal determinants, such as gender and personality traits. This study suggests that girls' attitudes towards musical practice are more

strongly influenced by parental involvement, indicating the need for greater sensitivity in supporting daughters compared to sons. Moreover, the findings show that children with higher levels of conscientiousness and neuroticism often demonstrate stronger self-efficacy, which in turn fosters motivation, a pattern also supported by prior research (Schunk, 1991). By recognising these traits, whether through careful observation or the use of established personality trait scales, parents can adapt their strategies to align more closely with their children's strengths and developmental needs. Such tailored approaches enable parents to reinforce motivation in ways that are both responsive and developmentally appropriate.

In general, parents play multiple roles in children's musical learning. The most effective parental role balances guidance with encouragement, creating a nurturing and responsive environment that sustains children's intrinsic motivation in music.

7.2.3: Creating a Supportive Wider Learning Environment

This study highlights the important role of the wider learning environment in shaping children's musical motivation through private tutoring, tutor–parent partnerships, and public performance opportunities. Several measures are therefore essential to building a supportive wider learning environment.

First, while the growth of private music tutoring has expanded access to personalised instruction tailored to children's needs and learning styles (Bray, 1999), its impact is not unambiguously positive. Excessive practice demands and performance-oriented goals may foster stress, burnout, and declining intrinsic motivation (Bailey, 2006; Benckwitz et al., 2022; Schmidt, 2005; Schmidt et al., 2006). Furthermore, the high financial costs of tutoring can create pressure to justify parental investment, shifting motivation away from enjoyment towards obligation (Benckwitz et al., 2022; Bray, 2003). Thus, private tutoring should be carefully managed to balance high standards with emotional support, avoiding the reproduction of parental pressure in professional instruction.

Second, effective partnerships between tutors, parents, and students are critical for sustaining motivation. As discussed in Section 7.2.2, parents are the primary expectation setters, but tutors play a key role in tailoring instruction to individual needs and interests. Collaborative goal-setting fosters student ownership, while ongoing communication ensures that expectations

remain both challenging and achievable (Lueder, 2000). Research further shows that tutor–parent collaboration enhances home practice routines and student progress (Cooper & Hedges, 2014), while tutor–student partnerships grounded in trust and open communication foster self-expression and engagement (Creech & Hallam, 2003).

Third, tutors themselves act as role models whose enthusiasm and passion for music strongly influence students’ values, confidence, and long-term commitment. Their influence extends beyond technical instruction, shaping identity and intrinsic motivation by modelling dedication and emotional connection to music (Ballantyne et al., 2012; Dwyer, 2015; Pitts, 2012). As Gaunt (2008) notes, tutors serve as both educators and musical agents, inspiring students through their professional practice and personal example.

Finally, extracurricular institutions should provide diverse and accessible performance opportunities, including concerts, competitions, and MGEs. Such events validate children’s progress through public recognition, strengthening competence and persistence (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2021; Schunk & Usher, 2012). However, performances also introduce risks of stress, peer comparison, and diminished self-esteem, particularly when linked to parental or tutor expectations (Hendricks, 2014; O’Neill & McPherson, 2002). To mitigate these effects, performance environments should prioritise encouragement, learning, and personal growth alongside achievement.

In sum, a supportive wider environment balances the benefits of private tutoring, tutor – parent partnerships, and performance opportunities with safeguards against pressure, inequality, and competition-driven stress. When designed inclusively and holistically, these elements can reinforce intrinsic motivation and help children sustain long-term engagement in music.

7.2.4: Managing Conflicts between Parents and Teachers

While the relationship between parents and teachers is ideally collaborative, this study reveals that differing backgrounds, expectations, and positions often generate misunderstanding and conflict. Prior research similarly highlights that tensions between parents and teachers can undermine effective collaboration and, in turn, children’s motivation (Ang et al., 2020; Hughes & Kwok, 2007; Miretzky, 2004; Serpell & Mashburn, 2012; Sheridan et al., 2012).

One source of conflict arises from divergent priorities. Parents frequently emphasise academic achievement and exam success, framing music education primarily as a credential-building exercise. This performance-oriented perspective risks undermining children's intrinsic motivation by reducing music to a tool for academic advancement. Teachers, by contrast, often prioritise holistic musical development, creativity, and self-expression. This is also supported by prior research (Ang et al., 2020; Pitts & Hargreaves, 2017).

Another key factor contributing to role conflict is the transactional nature of the parent-teacher relationship. This study finds that parents often perceive themselves as consumers while tutors act as service providers: parents expect a direct return on their financial investment in their children's private music tutoring. When parents pay for private tutoring, they may demand specific outcomes, such as higher exam scores or competition success. This consumer-minded approach aligns with findings by Davidson and Scutt (1999), who observed that parents expect tangible results when investing in their children's music education. However, this financially driven perspective can create tension for tutors, who may feel that their pedagogical integrity is being compromised by the pressure to meet parental demands. This tension may result in role strain, which may cause the tutors to function inadequately. The focus on meeting transactional demands can compromise the quality of teaching, potentially diminishing children's motivation and enjoyment of their musical learning.

To mitigate these conflicts, three key strategies are essential. First, open and consistent communication between parents and teachers is paramount. Regular dialogue regarding learning goals, instructional methods, and expectations can establish shared understanding and reduce misunderstandings (Creech, 2010; Miretzky, 2004). Second, parents and teachers should strive to balance academic and artistic aims. While acknowledging parental concerns about credentials, teachers should also advocate for the long-term benefits of music education in fostering creativity and resilience (Ang et al., 2020). Third, transparency in financial arrangements and educational objectives is necessary to prevent misaligned expectations. As Bray (1999) notes, clarity in both contractual and pedagogical agreements strengthens trust and cooperation.

7.2.5: A Government Perspective

As discussed in Section 7.1.2, the government serves as the primary driver of Chinese music education. While the preceding sections examined how families, schools, and extracurricular activities contribute to supportive learning environments, these domains are themselves strongly shaped by government policy. The findings of this study therefore highlight several key measures that policymakers could adopt to strengthen children's musical motivation.

First, embedding music more firmly within the national curriculum and aligning it with broader educational objectives would legitimise its value and highlight its contribution to competencies such as creativity, resilience, and self-discipline. Although the government has repeatedly emphasised the importance of music education through a series of National Education Conferences and curriculum reforms (MoE, PRC, 2001, 2011), music continues to be undervalued in schools and extracurricular activities. Many parents remain reluctant to support music participation, perceiving it as irrelevant to academic success. Policymakers must therefore advocate for music's broader value, both by linking it to skills essential for future careers and by drawing on cultural traditions that associate music with moral cultivation and character development, which are highlighted in Hargreaves's (2003) study.

Second, reform of high-stakes examinations, particularly the NCEE, is critical. The exam strongly shapes student and parental priorities, often to the detriment of music education. Even students in specialist arts schools report restrictions on practice time due to exam demands. To counter this, policymakers should reduce the dominance of rote memorisation and narrow performance metrics, shifting instead towards assessment systems that value autonomy, creativity, and broader competencies.

Finally, the government could work towards more equitable access to music education. Societal and economic transformations, including the one-child policy, economic reforms, and sustained growth, have increased disposable household income and intensified family investment in private tutoring. While such investment can broaden exposure to music and enhance motivation, it has also deepened educational inequality. This not only exacerbates inequality but also risks undermining social cohesion. Policymakers must therefore regulate the tutoring market and ensure that public schools remain the primary and equitable providers of quality music education. The government's Double Reduction Policy (MoE, PRC, 2021), which prohibits public school teachers from engaging in private tutoring, is a step in this direction, but

unregulated markets persist, such as university students, self-employed tutors, and other individuals offering one-to-one tutoring services. Stronger enforcement and alternative provisions are necessary to mitigate inequities and protect the integrity of public schooling. In addition, sustained investment in the professional development of public - school music teachers is essential to ensure the quality and consistency of music education across schools.

7.3: Chapter Summary

This chapter critically examined the determinants of children's musical motivation in China, situating them within family, school, wider learning environment and governmental contexts. The analysis extended Yan's (2017) framework by identifying the government as the primary driver, shaping education policy, school practice, parental involvement and social norms. Findings revealed that while schools provide foundational access to music, their potential is constrained by exam pressures and limited resources. Parents play multiple roles, supporting and pressurising, where expectations, financial investment, and supervision can either sustain or undermine motivation. A wider learning environment, including private tutoring and MGEs, offer enrichment but risk intensifying education inequality and stress.

These conclusions resonate conceptually with Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1977), which posits that human development is shaped by nested and interacting environmental systems, from the immediate contexts of daily life (microsystem) to the broader cultural and policy milieu (macrosystem), with time (chronosystem) further mediating these interactions. While not employed as a primary analytical framework, this theoretical perspective helps to contextualise the multi-layered influences observed in the study.

This chapter further argued that, grounded in an ecological perspective, sustaining children's intrinsic motivation requires a coherent, multi-level strategy. Schools must balance exam demands with creativity, collaboration, and performance opportunities. Parents and teachers need to navigate their multiple roles and manage conflicts to foster a supportive environment. Most critically, the government must reform assessment systems, regulate the tutoring market, and strengthen teacher professionalism to address structural inequalities. Overall, the findings highlight that children's musical motivation is not an individual attribute but the outcome of

dynamic and often conflicting interactions across government policy, family, school, and wider learning environments.

Chapter 8: Conclusion and Evaluation

This chapter reviews the research as a whole, summarising the key findings and their relationship to the research aims. It then evaluates the original contribution of the study, together with the methodological approach and methods employed. Finally, it discusses the implications of the findings, outlines the limitations of the research, and proposes directions for future study.

8.1: Overview of the Current Thesis

This thesis has explored the key determinants of children's motivation in musical learning within the Chinese context. Data were collected through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, making this study one of the first empirical studies (to the best of my knowledge at the time of writing) to examine the key determinants influencing Chinese children's motivation to learn music.

The findings suggest that demographic, psychological and learning environment determinants shape children's motivation. These findings address the overarching research aim by responding to the following research sub-questions:

- How do demographic and psychological determinants influence Chinese children's motivation to learn music?
- How do different learning environments influence Chinese children's motivation to learn music?
- How do determinants interact with each other?

Taken together, the findings provide insight into the ways in which individual characteristics and multiple learning environments jointly inform children's motivation. In particular, the study highlights the interconnected nature of learning environments, demonstrating that it is difficult to isolate the influence of any single environmental factor without considering its interaction with others. The following sections summarise these findings in more detail and relate them explicitly to the research aims and questions set out in Chapter 4.

8.2: Summary of Findings

8.2.1: How do Demographic and Psychological Determinants Influence Chinese Children's Motivation to Learn Music

This study examined key demographic and psychological determinants of children's musical learning, focusing on age, gender, expertise level and personality traits. In doing so, it provides a clearer understanding of how these determinants shape children's motivation to learn music.

The findings indicate that personality traits and motivational levels differ by gender, and that children's motivation is highly related to specific personality traits. Chinese boys and girls exhibit distinct personality profiles: girls tend to score higher in conscientiousness and neuroticism, whereas boys score higher in extraversion, openness and agreeableness. Motivation levels are positively associated with conscientiousness and neuroticism, and negatively associated with extraversion and openness to new experiences. Moreover, these relationships are moderated by gender, suggesting that the same personality trait may have different motivational implications for boys and girls.

The findings also show that girls demonstrate higher motivation for learning music than boys. Compared with boys, girls report greater enjoyment of musical activities, perceive stronger social support and affirmation and achieve higher levels of musical expertise. These patterns highlight the need to consider gendered expectations and socialisation processes when interpreting motivational differences.

Finally, the study confirms a strong positive association between children's motivation levels and their expertise level in music, supporting previous research that identifies motivation as a critical driver of achievement (Hallam et al., 2016). Together, these findings underscore the importance of demographic and psychological determinants in understanding individual variation in musical engagement within the Chinese context.

8.2.2: The Role of Learning Environments in Children's Motivation

This study investigated how learning environments influence children's motivation in musical learning. Six environmental influences were identified: the National College Entrance Examination policy, School music education, Private music tutoring, Music graded examinations, Music teachers, and Parents. From these themes, four types of learning environments emerged: government, family, school and a wider learning environment. This thesis analysed not only the influence of each of these environments on children's musical motivation, but also the ways in which they interact with one another, drawing on the integrated findings presented in Chapters 6 and 7.

8.2.2.1: The Role of Government

This study indicates that the Chinese government is a central determinant of children's musical motivation, exerting influence both directly and indirectly across multiple learning environments. As Ho and Law (2004) also observe, government policy in China has long been the driving force behind the provision and status of music education. The government shapes not only the school curriculum, but also social expectations, parental priorities and wider learning environments, thereby structuring many of the conditions under which children encounter and engage with music.

At the school level, government policies and curriculum guidelines determine whether music is taught, how it is assessed and the extent to which it is positioned as integral to holistic education rather than as a peripheral subject. Where policy mandates regular music lessons and emphasises aesthetic and cultural development, it can create opportunities for sustained exposure, competence-building and positive motivational experiences. However, where accountability frameworks prioritise examinable subjects linked directly to the NCEE, music risks being marginalised in practice, with reduced teaching time and limited resources. In this way, the same policy environment can simultaneously endorse music education in principle while constraining its implementation in schools.

Government policy also shapes the family learning environment. The legacy of the one-child policy has intensified parental investment in a single child's educational trajectory, often amplifying expectations of high achievement. Coupled with the high-stakes nature of the NCEE, this has encouraged many families to view music strategically as a potential advantage in school admissions, rather than solely as an individual pursuit. This can increase participation in private music tutoring and graded examinations, but it may also orient children's motivation towards extrinsic rewards, performance credentials and competition, with possible implications for enjoyment, autonomy and long-term engagement.

More broadly, economic reform and government emphasis on cultural development have contributed to a rapid expansion of the wider musical environment. Increased household income, combined with policy support for the cultural industries, has normalised investment in extracurricular music lessons, competitions, and examinations. These developments reinforce the social value attached to musical accomplishment and make structured musical opportunities more widely available. Yet, they can also intensify social comparison and widen inequalities between those families who can afford extensive musical provision and those who cannot.

In summary, the Chinese government plays an important role in shaping children's musical motivation. Through school curriculum design, examination structures, population policies and cultural initiatives, the Chinese government configures the opportunities, pressures and value frameworks within which families, schools and wider learning environments make decisions about music learning. Recognising government policy as a key and central influence is therefore essential for interpreting the motivational patterns identified in this study and for considering how future reforms might better balance access, equity and the cultivation of sustainable, intrinsically oriented musical engagement among children in China.

8.2.2.2: The Role of Schools

This study indicates that school is a fundamental learning environment for children's musical motivation, particularly for those who do not receive private tutoring. School music education often provides the first systematic encounter with music, offering structured lessons, exposure to a range of musical activities and initial opportunities for ensemble work and performance.

Through this formal provision, children acquire basic skills and musical knowledge, which can stimulate interest and lay the groundwork for continued engagement.

Within this setting, peer interaction and collaboration emerged as important motivational influences. Participation in ensembles, class performances, and group activities fosters a sense of belonging and shared purpose, encouraging children to persist with musical learning. Peer modelling and healthy forms of comparison can further reinforce effort and aspiration, as students are inspired by the achievements of their classmates.

The role of school music teachers is also central. As specialists who often have sustained contact with students over time, they can function simultaneously as educators, mentors and role models. By creating a supportive, well-structured and musically rich classroom environment, teachers are well placed to nurture intrinsic motivation, build confidence and cultivate a lasting appreciation of music that extends beyond the classroom.

Overall, the findings suggest that school-based music education plays a critical role not only in providing fundamental musical knowledge and skills, but also in shaping children's motivation and sense of possibility in relation to music learning.

8.2.2.3: The Role of the Extracurricular Activities

For students who receive private tutoring, extracurricular contexts constitute an essential learning environment shaping their musical motivation. This environment encompasses private music lessons, performance opportunities, the influence of private tutors, and the wider cultural norms associated with graded examinations and competitive achievement.

Compared to the school learning environment, the extracurricular activity aims to provide children with personalised instruction and skill enhancement. It brings children benefits as well as drawbacks to their musical motivation. Peer pressure and anxiety are characteristics of the wider learning environment, which is the most influencing factor for children's musical motivation. Interestingly, compared to children, parents are more impacted by peer pressure in the wider learning environment, which causes anxiety and pressure for their children. This pressure and anxiety have been identified as a double-edged sword for children's musical motivation.

The role of private tutors emerges as especially significant. Unlike school music teachers, private tutors often work on a one-to-one basis and may develop close, sustained relationships with their students. In this study, they were perceived as occupying multiple roles simultaneously, such as professional musicians, pedagogues, service providers, partners in education and aspirational role models. The quality of these relationships can either support autonomy, confidence and internalised motivation, or reinforce externally driven, examination-oriented goals.

Overall, the wider learning environment provides important opportunities for advanced musical learning, but its impact on children's motivation is ambivalent. It has the potential both to enhance and to erode motivation, depending on how expectations, competition and tutor-student relationships are negotiated within this context.

8.2.2.4: The Role of Parents

This study highlights that parents have the powerful and multifaceted impact on children's motivation to learn music. The analysis considered parental background, parenting style, patterns of involvement and the different roles adopted by mothers and fathers.

The findings indicate that Chinese parents' educational and socioeconomic backgrounds shape both their expectations and the nature of their involvement in children's musical learning. Across the sample, parents provided high levels of support, including behavioural support (e.g., purchasing instruments and supervising practice) and both positive and negative forms of emotional support. This thesis further highlights the influence of predominant Chinese parenting styles. Characterised by high aspirations and close monitoring, these approaches can foster persistence and achievement, however, when insufficiently balanced with autonomy, they may generate excessive pressure and promote performance-oriented rather than learning-oriented motivation. Clear differences also emerged between paternal and maternal roles. Fathers were often positioned as financial providers and long-term decision-makers, while mothers more frequently undertook day-to-day supervision and emotional support. Notably, mothers tended to adopt more controlling approaches, whereas fathers displayed more supportive or mixed strategies, reflecting a "Tiger Mother, Panda Father" dynamic. Taken together, these findings suggest that children's musical motivation is shaped not only by the presence of parental

support, but also by how it is structured and experienced within family relationships, with important implications for fostering sustainable engagement in learning.

Synthesising these findings, parental roles are expectation setters, home supervisors, supporters, consumers, providers and partners in children's musical learning. Together, these roles illustrate how parents frame musical learning as part of broader academic and developmental goals, sometimes prioritising academic achievement above sustained musical engagement. Overall, parents function as key gatekeepers in the family learning environment, creating conditions that can either nurture or constrain children's musical motivation depending on how expectations, support and pressure are negotiated within the home.

8.2.2.5: Conclusion

The findings of this thesis demonstrate that children's musical motivation in China is embedded within a multi-layered ecosystem encompassing schools, families, extracurricular settings, and governmental policy frameworks. These environments do not operate in isolation but intersect dynamically to jointly facilitate or restrict children's sense of autonomy, competence and relatedness in music learning. These observations align conceptually with Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1977), which emphasises the nested and interactive nature of developmental contexts. Grounded in this ecological perspective, the following section outlines actionable implications for policymakers, parents, and educators, proposing ways to align these interacting systems towards consistently nurturing, rather than inhibiting children's long-term motivation for musical engagement.

8.2.3: Building Up a Supportive Learning Environment for Children's Musical Learning

This study has shown that children's musical motivation in China is not the product of isolated influences, but of an interconnected ecosystem comprising schools, families, extracurricular settings and government policy. Each environment offers opportunities for engagement, yet each also introduces constraints, tensions and inequities that can undermine intrinsic motivation.

This thesis has also highlighted the findings to outline how more supportive learning environments might be constructed, while acknowledging the structural and cultural challenges involved.

At the school level, music education provides children's first systematic encounter with music, offering structured lessons, ensemble participation and performance opportunities. A supportive school environment is therefore fundamental. The findings of this study suggest that student-centred pedagogies, diverse instructional strategies and opportunities for collaboration are central to sustaining motivation. When music teachers are able to function as educators, mentors and role models, they create classrooms in which students feel known, encouraged and challenged appropriately. Such environments reduce anxiety, build confidence and help students experience progress as meaningful. However, these practices are vulnerable to being undermined by exam-oriented pressures and limited curriculum time. Regular, well-resourced professional development for music teachers, supported by local education authorities, is therefore important to maintain pedagogical innovation and resist the narrowing of music education to test preparation.

Within the family learning environment, parents emerge as the most powerful and multifaceted influence on children's musical motivation. They set expectations, supervise practice, provide emotional and financial support, and act as intermediaries between school, tutors and children. A supportive family environment is characterised by realistic and developmentally appropriate expectations, active but flexible supervision of practice, and encouragement that prioritises effort, growth, and enjoyment over narrow performance outcomes. The findings indicate that parental involvement must be responsive to children's demographic and psychological determinants, including gender and personality traits. For example, girls' attitudes towards practice appeared particularly sensitive to parental involvement, while children high in conscientiousness and neuroticism often displayed strong levels of self-efficacy. Tailoring parental strategies to such characteristics allows support to be experienced as enabling rather than controlling, thereby reinforcing intrinsic motivation.

The wider extracurricular environment, including private tutoring, graded examinations, and performance opportunities, offer both significant benefits and notable risks. On the one hand, private lessons provide personalised instruction and close tutor-student relationships that can deepen musical understanding and commitment. On the other hand, high financial costs, intensive practice demands, and competition-driven goals can shift motivation from enjoyment to obligation, especially when tutoring is justified primarily as a return on investment.

Supportive wider environments therefore require careful balancing: tutors and institutions should uphold high musical standards while explicitly attending to students' emotional well-being and long-term engagement. Collaborative partnerships between tutors and parents, grounded in shared goal-setting and transparent communication, are crucial to prevent the unreflective reproduction of pressure in professional instruction. Performance opportunities, similarly, are most constructive when framed as occasions for growth, reflection, and artistic expression rather than as high-stakes tests of worth.

Across these environments, the relationship between parents and teachers is a critical nexus. The study shows that conflicting priorities, for example, parents often emphasising credential-building and teachers emphasising holistic musical development can generate mistrust and role strain. A supportive learning ecosystem depends on moving this relationship from a transactional, consumer-provider model towards a collaborative partnership. Regular dialogue about goals, methods, and expectations, alongside shared recognition of both academic and artistic aims, can reduce misunderstanding and align efforts in ways that benefit children's motivation.

Finally, the Chinese government provides the structural backdrop against which all other learning environments operate. Curriculum policies, the dominance of high-stakes examinations, regulation of the tutoring market, and cultural initiatives collectively shape the opportunities, pressures, and value frameworks surrounding music education. A genuinely supportive environment for children's musical learning therefore requires policy measures that embed music more firmly within the national curriculum, recognise its contribution to wider competencies, and mitigate inequalities arising from uneven access to private provision. Reforms that temper the influence of the NCEE, ensure equitable resourcing of public-school music education, and regulate tutoring practices are particularly important in balancing excellence with fairness and sustainability.

In summary, building a supportive learning environment for children's musical learning in China demands coordinated action across school, family, extracurricular settings and government. When curriculum provision, pedagogical practice, parental involvement, tutor-parent partnerships, and policy frameworks are aligned around the promotion of autonomy, competence, and relatedness, children are more likely to develop an enduring, intrinsically oriented motivation for music. The challenge, and opportunity, lies in transforming the current ecology – marked by high aspirations, strong cultural traditions, and significant structural

pressures – into one that consistently nurtures curiosity, creativity, and long-term engagement in musical learning.

8.3: Research Evaluation and Limitations

8.3.1: Contribution to the Motivation Theory

This study contributes to understanding Chinese children's musical motivation by offering a context-specific conceptualisation of their learning environment. Rather than framing motivation primarily as an individual psychological construct, the findings suggest that it emerges from a dynamic ecosystem in which psychological drivers interact continuously with family expectations, societal values, and cultural norms. Although Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1977) was not directly applied or tested, the conclusions align with its central proposition that development is shaped through reciprocal interactions across nested systems. Accordingly, the study highlights the importance of integrating individual, socio-cultural, and systemic factors to explain how musical motivation is fostered and sustained in situated learning environments.

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) provides a powerful lens for understanding these dynamics. Within the Chinese context, where Confucian traditions, parental authority and exam-oriented schooling exert a strong influence, SDT helps to explain how intrinsic interest interacts with external pressures. Unlike narrower motivational frameworks, SDT offers a multidimensional and flexible perspective. It acknowledges that extrinsic motivators, such as parental expectations or high-stake examinations, can either undermine or be internalised into more autonomous forms of motivation when psychological needs are supported (Deci et al., 1999; Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Vallerand, 2000). This nuance is essential for interpreting Chinese students' musical learning, which often begins under strong external influences but can develop into more self-sustaining engagement when conditions are supportive.

SDT is also better suited to understand students' motivation in a Chinese context than purely cognitive-process theories such as Achievement Goal Theory and Expectancy-value Theory,

because it explicitly emphasises social and environmental factors (Ryan and Deci, 2000). These are central to the Chinese context, where learners' experiences of autonomy, competence and relatedness are strongly mediated by family obligations, exam-oriented schooling and teacher authority. Furthermore, this study demonstrates the practical utility of SDT. It provides insights into how teachers, parents and policymakers can create learning environments that foster long-term motivation while reducing burnout.

At the same time, this study highlights the need to refine SDT's constructs for collectivist contexts. Developed largely in Western settings, SDT often conceptualises autonomy in terms of independence and personal choice. In China, however, autonomy may be experienced through fulfilling obligations or aligning with family expectations (Guo et al., 2020; Long & Pang, 2016; Ren & Pope Edwards, 2015). Rather than undermining the theory, these cultural nuances point to its adaptability and the importance of extending its constructs to account for different cultural interpretations of motivation.

In conclusion, the theoretical contribution of this study lies in two areas. First, it advances understanding of musical motivation in China by demonstrating how cultural and social conditions shape the balance between intrinsic interest and external pressures. Second, it extends SDT itself by illustrating how its principles operate in a collectivist educational setting. Together, these contributions position SDT as the most comprehensive and culturally adaptable framework for future research on musical motivation in non-Western contexts.

8.3.2: Contribution to the Existing Literature

This study makes several contributions to the literature on Chinese children's motivation to learn music by offering new insights into the combined influence of demographic, psychological and learning environment determinants. Whereas much previous research has tended to examine these determinants in isolation or has focused on single contexts (for example, school or family alone), this thesis adopts an integrated perspective that foregrounds the interplay between individual characteristics and broader socio-cultural and structural conditions.

Drawing on empirical data and extending Yan's (2017) framework, the study underscores the centrality of government policy in shaping children's musical experiences, and clarifies the interconnected roles of schools, families, extracurricular provision and the wider policy

environment. In doing so, it moves beyond micro-level analyses of classroom or family practices to show how these are embedded within, and constrained by, national education priorities and examination systems. The thesis also highlights the influence of socio-economic factors, such as parental education, financial resources and school infrastructure, thereby presenting a more nuanced account of inequality in terms of access to, and persistence with, musical learning than has been offered in prior work.

In addition, the findings generate practice-oriented implications for fostering more effective learning environments. By identifying specific environmental and familial factors that enhance or undermine motivation, the study provides a basis for targeted interventions by educators, policymakers and parents. It offers concrete insights into how family, school and wider learning environments can be better supported to create cohesive, supportive ecosystems for musical learning, thereby strengthening children's motivation to engage with music over time. At the same time, it underscores the importance of balanced support, opportunities for autonomy and sustained, meaningful engagement as key conditions for nurturing long-term interest in music. In this way, the thesis contributes not only to academic scholarship on musical motivation in non-Western contexts, but also to the refinement of music education policy and the development of more informed, reflective forms of parental involvement in China.

8.3.3: *Limitations*

This study presents several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the sample size and demographic scope may limit the generalisability of the findings to other regions or age groups within China. While its participants are engaged in a variety of musical activities, the study's demographic scope restricts its applicability to broader educational contexts.

Second, the parental sample was limited to mothers, potentially introducing maternal bias. Although mothers often serve as primary caregivers and can provide comprehensive insights into children's educational experiences, the exclusion of fathers may result in a partial understanding of parental influence. This gender imbalance is well documented in educational research (e.g., Creech, 2010; Cui, 2023), often attributed to societal norms, caregiving roles, and availability for participation. Moreover, the phenomenon of maternal gatekeeper may further

contribute to the underrepresentation of fathers in research samples (Fagan & Barnett, 2003; Mitchell et al., 2007).

Third, personality was assessed using a single measure based on the Big Five personality traits. While this model is widely recognised as comprehensive, it does not capture all personality dimensions. For example, adult attachment styles were not included in the analysis (Ghadampour et al., 2020; Shiota et al., 2006). Future research could explore additional personality traits to further examine gender differences and their impact on musical motivation.

Despite subjecting the data to systematic quantitative and qualitative analysis, the potential for researcher bias cannot be entirely eliminated. My own background in music and personal commitment to the value of music education may have influenced the framing of the research questions, the interpretation of the data, and the emphasis placed on particular findings. Future studies could address this by involving multiple researchers, using cross-validation procedures for coding, and forming collaborative, cross-cultural research teams to enhance reflexivity and mitigate individual bias.

Despite these limitations, the study offers a substantive and integrative contribution to understanding the motivational landscape of music education among Chinese children. It provides a platform for future empirical work and offers evidence that can inform policy development, educational practice and family engagement in musical learning.

8.4: Areas for Future Research

Given the practical implications of this study and the limited prior research on this topic, several promising directions for future research are proposed, as outlined below.

8.4.1: Wider Range of Personality Traits

While this study has identified gender differences in personality and motivation levels, the underlying causes of these differences remain an open question. Although previous discussions have proposed possible explanations, the impact of cultural factors on personality development remains a complex issue that warrants further investigation.

Future studies should adopt a broader and more representative sample to enhance the generalisability of findings. As highlighted in the limitations (see Section 8.3.3), increasing the number of participants through stratified sampling would allow for a more comprehensive comparison of personality traits across various regions of China. This approach would provide deeper insights into the influence of regional and cultural factors on children's musical motivation.

Additionally, future studies should expand the questionnaire scope to include a wider range of personality traits, enabling a more nuanced exploration of their relationship to children's musical engagement. Incorporating additional psychological dimensions would help refine current theoretical models and contribute to a more holistic understanding of the factors shaping children's motivation in music.

8.4.2: Follow-up Research

8.4.2.1: Does Student's Motivation Encourage Parental Involvement

This study has argued that parental involvement influences student motivation, as most prior research on this relationship has been correlational in nature. However, an alternative explanation is also possible: student motivation may drive parental involvement. Parents may become more engaged when they perceive their child as motivated, or motivated students may actively seek greater parental support and involvement (Ames, 1993).

According to Bandura et al. (1977), an individual's behaviour affects the environment, which in turn shapes and modifies behaviour through reciprocal interaction. It suggests that student motivation and parental involvement may be mutually reinforcing, forming a bidirectional relationship rather than a one-way causal link. Research further supports the child-to-parent pathway in student outcomes. Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994) propose that children who feel confident in their academic abilities may actively encourage parental involvement. They note:

Children who are confident in school and feel in control of school outcomes may actually push parents to become actively involved in school... It is not inconceivable that more motivated children may suggest activities such as going to the library to their parents. (p. 249)

Findings from this study suggest that parental involvement fuels student motivation, which in turn reinforces further parental engagement, creating a reciprocal cycle of influence. Based on these insights, future research should explore the following key questions:

- (1) How does student motivation influence parental involvement?
- (2) Which variable is dependent, namely is student motivation a result of parental involvement or vice versa?

8.4.2.2: When Do Anxiety and Pressure Enhance Children's Motivation

This study has identified that children often experience anxiety and pressure in performance-evaluative contexts, such as exams and competitions, which can lead to music performance anxiety (MPA). While MPA has been extensively explored among adult professional musicians (Barro et al., 2022; Kenny, 2005, 2011), research on MPA in children remains limited, particularly in relation to its impact on motivation.

Existing studies examining the relationship between anxiety and motivation in musical learning have yielded inconsistent findings. A considerable number of researchers suggest that anxiety negatively correlates with motivation (Bećirović, 2020; Li et al., 2021). For example, Magelinskaitė et al. (2014) explored the relationship between learning motivation, school anxiety, and social competence in primary-school students, concluding that reducing anxiety levels can enhance learning motivation. Similarly, Kirova et al. (2012) argued that lowering anxiety is an effective strategy for improving motivation. However, recent research suggests that anxiety may also have a positive correlation with motivation, as some individuals become more self-motivated when under pressure (Strack & Esteves, 2015; Strack et al., 2017). While not specifically focused on musical learning, Wang et al. (2018) provided evidence that anxiety and motivation may be positively linked in certain learning contexts. This raises the question of whether anxiety and pressure can, in some cases, enhance children's motivation in music

education. Given the contradictory findings in existing literature, future research should explore the following key questions: (1) Under what conditions do anxiety and pressure enhance children's motivation in musical learning? (2) Which variable is dependent, namely is motivation a part of anxiety or vice versa?

8.4.2.3: How Gender Influences Children's Musical Learning

This study has identified Chinese parenting styles and differences between paternal and maternal parenting styles as factors influencing children's motivation. However, it does not consider how a child's gender influences Chinese parenting styles in musical learning.

Existing research suggests that child gender moderates the relationship between parenting styles and child outcomes. Studies indicate that fathers tend to exercise greater authority over their sons than their daughters (Gryczkowski et al., 2010; Yaffe, 2023). Meanwhile, mothers exhibit more authoritarian behaviour towards daughters than sons, whereas fathers adopt a more authoritative and training-oriented parenting style with daughters (Conrade & Ho, 2001; Cowan et al., 2014). Moreover, research suggests that same-sex versus cross-sex parent-child relationships can lead to different developmental and motivational outcomes (Hernawati & Herawati, 2020; Schumm, 2016). Given these distinctions, future research should examine the influence of four specific parent-child dyads: mother and daughter, mother and son, father and daughter, and father and son, to assess how gender-based variations in parenting styles impact children's musical learning.

Additionally, existing literature has primarily focused on maternal roles in children's musical education, often overlooking or underreporting the influence of fathers (Creech, 2010; Montagu, 2017). Many studies use the term "parent" interchangeably with "mother", leading to an absence of paternal perspectives in educational research (Morgan et al., 2017; Tamis-LeMonda & Song, 2012). Similarly, this study highlights that maternal influence is more frequently observed in children's musical learning, yet it does not extensively explore the paternal role. Although research confirms that a child's home environment plays an essential role in musical learning, few studies have specifically examined musical fatherhood (Custodero, 2006; Scarlato, 2021). Given this gap, future studies should investigate the influence of fathers

on children's musical education, considering how paternal engagement, teaching styles, and support mechanisms contribute to children's motivation and success in music learning.

8.4.2.4: Testing Bronfenbrenner's Ecological System Theory (1977) in a Chinese Context

As Section 7.1.3 demonstrated, although Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1977) was not explicitly operationalised or empirically tested in the present study, the findings align closely with his ecological view of development. A logical next step, therefore, is to move beyond interpretive alignment and develop a more precise, testable account of the multilevel processes through which children's musical motivation is formed and sustained across diverse Chinese contexts.

Bronfenbrenner's framework (1977) is useful for specifying how motivational development is shaped through reciprocal interactions between the child and their everyday environments over time. Future research could operationalise musical motivation as an outcome of repeated daily life within the microsystem (e.g., practice routines, teacher feedback, parental involvement, peer interaction), while also examining how these processes are enabled or constrained by linkages across settings in the mesosystem (e.g., coordination between home and school, private music tutoring, and graded examination preparation). Beyond these immediate settings, ecosystem factors such as parental work demands, access to quality tuition and educational policy providers may indirectly shape the conditions under which musical learning takes place. At the broader level, macrosystem influences, including cultural norms around educational achievement, credentialism, and socially valued forms of competence, may frame the meaning of musical study and the perceived consequences of persistence or withdrawal. Finally, the chronosystem draws attention to developmental and historical change, including transitions across schooling stages, shifts in examination pressure, and policy reforms that may change how children experience and sustain motivation over time.

Overall, future research grounded in Bronfenbrenner's theory would allow the present study's ecological interpretation to be refined into an explicit explanatory model. By specifying mechanisms at each system level and examining how they interact across time and context, such

work could clarify not only what shapes children's musical motivation in China, but also how it is cultivated or undermined within nested learning environments.

8.4.3: A Comparison Study: Differences and Similarities Between Music Education in the United Kingdom and China

As discussed in the introduction, music education in China follows a pyramid structure, where the number of student learners decreases with age (Xie & Leung, 2011). A similar trend has been observed in the United Kingdom, where participation in music education declines beyond GCSE level (ABRSM, 2014; Carroll & Gill, 2017). This decline has been identified as a challenge for UK music education (Burland, 2020)

The nature and quality of the music education system in these two countries share both similarities and differences. For example, music is recognised as a core subject at the compulsory education stage in both countries (MoE, PRC, 2011; Department for Education, 2011). However, the Chinese government has actively promoted and expanded music education, increasing the emphasis on school music education. In contrast, British schools have reduced music instruction due to government policies that prioritise core subjects such as reading and numeracy (Santry, 2018).

This study has also examined the influence of Confucian values on Chinese students' learning environment and motivation. As discussed in the literature review and results, Confucian principles shape educational expectations by emphasising self-discipline, academic success, good manners, and respect for elders (Chan & Tan, 2004; Dong & Xu, 2016; Shek & Sun, 2014). In contrast, British parents may place less emphasis on academic success as a singular measure of achievement (Faircloth, 2020). This distinction highlights fundamental cultural differences in parental expectations for children's development, reflecting the contrasting educational philosophies of Chinese and British societies.

Social economic factors may influence parental attitudes towards education. In many Asian countries, significant salary differentials exist between highly educated and less educated individuals, making investment in education a high-return strategy for families (Donou-Adonsou et al., 2021). Given this economic reality, Chinese parents may view music education as a competitive advantage for their children's academic and career prospects. Conversely, in

the UK, where salary differentials are smaller, parents may place less emphasis on academic performance as determinants of career success.

Given these cultural and economic distinctions, future research should explore whether the motivational factors influencing music learning in China can be generalised to British students or whether intrinsic and extrinsic motivational influences in Chinese culture are uniquely distinct. A comparative study examining how sociocultural and economic factors shape musical engagement in both countries could provide valuable insights into cross-cultural perspectives on music education.

8.5: Concluding Remarks

This thesis set out to address one overarching research aim: to identify the key determinants of children's musical motivation in China. Using a pragmatic, mixed-methods design, it integrated quantitative and qualitative evidence to examine how demographic, psychological and learning environments interact to shape children's engagement with music. The combination of survey data and in-depth interviews enabled both statistically informed insights into patterns of motivation and rich accounts of children's and parents' lived experiences.

The quantitative analyses (Chapter 5) demonstrated that gender, expertise level and personality traits are significantly associated with children's motivation to learn music. Girls reported higher levels of motivation and musical expertise than boys, while conscientiousness and neuroticism showed positive associations with motivation (i.e., children scoring higher on these traits reported higher motivation), whereas extraversion and openness showed negative associations (i.e., higher scores on these traits were linked to lower motivation). These findings extend existing work on musical motivation by foregrounding the complex role of internal determinants in a non-Western context, and by highlighting the need to consider how personality interacts with culturally specific expectations and opportunities.

The qualitative findings (Chapters 6 and 7), developed through thematic analysis of six environmental influencing factors (see Section 6.2), underscored the centrality of the learning environments. Building on Yan's (2017) framework, the study conceptualised the roles of government, school, family and the wider learning environment as interlocking layers that

structure children's musical experiences. In doing so, it positioned the Chinese government as a powerful but ambivalent driver of music education, shaping curricular priorities, examination pressures and access to extracurricular provision. Similarly, schools, parents and private tutors emerged as both enablers and potential sources of pressure, capable of nurturing intrinsic engagement but also of reinforcing performance-oriented, exam-driven motivation.

Taken together, these findings provide a critical foundation for rethinking how supportive learning environments for musical engagement might be constructed. The thesis offers concrete implications for families, educators and policymakers (see Section 7.2), arguing that sustainable motivation depends on balancing high expectations with autonomy, emotional support and equitable access to quality music education. It also identifies several directions for future research (see Section 8.5), including broader investigations of personality, more nuanced analyses of parental involvement, anxiety and gender, and comparative work between China and other national contexts.

In sum, this thesis has provided an empirically grounded account of children's musical motivation in contemporary China. It advances theoretical understanding, contributes a refined framework for analysing Chinese music education, and critically illuminates the structural and cultural conditions under which children's motivation to learn music is fostered or constrained.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Ethics Approval

18/02/2020

Dear Luqian

Title of study	The role of learning environment in children's motivation and decision to learning music in China
Ethics reference	FAHC 19-016

Thank you for submitting the newest version (Response 2) of your Ethics Application for the above study. I am pleased to inform you that this has now been reviewed by the AHC Committee and I can confirm a favourable ethical opinion based on the documentation received at date of this email.

Please retain this email as evidence of approval in your study file.

Please notify the committee if you intend to make any amendments to the original research as submitted and approved to date. This includes recruitment methodology; all changes must receive ethical approval prior to implementation. Please see http://ris.leeds.ac.uk/downloads/download/179/amendment_form or contact the Research Ethics and Governance Administrator for further information (AHCResearchethics@leeds.ac.uk) if required.

Ethics approval does not infer you have the right of access to any member of staff or student or documents and the premises of the University of Leeds. Nor does it imply any right of access to the premises of any other organisation, including clinical areas. The committee takes no responsibility for you gaining access to staff, students and/or premises prior to, during or following your research activities.

Please note: You are expected to keep a record of all your approved documentation, as well as documents such as sample consent forms, risk assessments and other documents relating to the study. This should be kept in your study file, which should be readily available for audit purposes. You will be given a two week notice period if your project is to be audited.

It is our policy to remind everyone that it is your responsibility to comply with Health and Safety, Data Protection and any other legal and/or professional guidelines there may be.

I hope the study goes well.

Best wishes

Erin

Erin Pickles

FREC | University of Leeds

Phone: +44 (0)113 34 32430

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Web: http://ris.leeds.ac.uk/AHC_FREC

Appendix B: Letter to teachers/ headmasters

Letter to Teachers/Headmasters

Dear Teachers/Headteachers,

Please find attached details of a research project currently being conducted at the University of Leeds. As outlined in the accompanying information sheet, this study aims to explore the determinants of children's motivation in music learning.

The purpose of this research is to understand how children's demographic characteristics, personality traits, and learning environment influence both their decision to learn music and their experiences during the learning process. I would be very grateful if you would consider allowing children at your school to take part by completing a short questionnaire. The questionnaire will take approximately 5–10 minutes to complete and will be administered in the classroom, or in a nearby suitable space if preferred.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Parents or guardians will be asked to provide informed consent prior to participation.

If you have any questions about the study, please do not hesitate to contact me by telephone at +44 7519 636813 or by email at mclz@leeds.ac.uk

.Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Kind regards,

Luqian Zhao

Postgraduate Researcher

University of Leeds

Appendix C: Information Sheet for Parents/Guardians

The Title of the Research Project:

The Determinants of Children's Motivation in Musical Learning – An Exploration in China

Your children are being invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not your child wishes to take part.

What is the purpose of the project?

With the development of the economy China has gradually shown increasing awareness of the value of music education. The promulgation of Nation Music Curriculum Standard for full-time School Compulsory Education demands all levels in the primary school should comprise compulsory music courses once or twice a week. Chinese government pointed out the importance of music education in children's overall development (i.e. cognitive, intellectual, emotional and social development). Many Chinese students start to learn music in early childhood but withdraw when they get older. Thus, understanding how students are motivated to sustain their music learning is important to reduce the withdraw rate. Because of the unique culture, the learning environment is especially essential for Chinese children to learn music. Thus, this study aims to explore the role of learning environment in children's motivation and decision to learn music in China.

Why has my child been chosen?

Your child has been invited to participate because he/she:

Attends school music lessons

Is familiar with music lessons

Takes part in musical activities

Has musical learning experiences

Can understand questions clearly

Can express their opinions clearly

I am interested in hearing the different perspectives of children from elementary Chinese schools because they attend music class/ music activities/ extracurricular musical training.

Does my child have to take part?

Prospective participants will be invited to fill in the questionnaire in the schools. Participants will be given the opportunity to ask any questions and will make a decision about whether they are willing to be involved in the study. Additionally, participants will be informed that they can withdraw at anytime during the study. Thus, I am inviting your child to take part in my study, but it is not necessary for your child.

What will happen to my child if he/she take part?

If you agree for your child to participate, please sign and return the consent form. On the day, your child will also be asked if they themselves agree to take part in a short interview, lasting about 5-10 minutes. The interview will be carried out in your child's school, during class time. The interview will be conducted in Chinese. Your child's responses to interview questions will be recorded using a tape recorder. The researcher will ask your child some questions about musical learning, practice, his/her extracurricular musical learning and also about how they feel about their learning environment. The research aims to get children's perspectives and is non-judgemental: children will be reminded that families are different and do things in different ways. In the unlikely event that large numbers of children want to take part, please note that while all will be accommodated, due to time pressures some children may be interviewed for a shorter time than others.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

There are no known risks to your child participating. Every effort will be made to put children at their ease by the researcher, who is experienced at working with young children. Please

discuss the study with your child so that they are aware of it and know what to expect. If you feel that your child would not like to take part, or could become upset at being interviewed, then perhaps you will decide not to have your child participate. If you think your child would like to have the opportunity to participate, but you would like to inform us of any special needs, please feel free to do this on the consent form provided, so that we can take that into account. If you give your permission, we also ask you to give us some basic information about who your child lives with, so that appropriate adjustment to wording can be made when interviewing your child.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

There is unlikely to be any direct benefit to participants from taking part in this study. It might be fun and participants might discover the influence of learning environment in the musical learning. I hope the results will have a beneficial impact for Chinese music education in the future.

Use, dissemination and storage of research data

All data transferred immediately to a password-protected computer. The audio files on the smartphone will then be erased. All of the resultant transcriptions and the quantitative database will also be kept securely on this computer. This will not be accessed by others, except for the supervisors for the reasons of assisting with the data analysis. In citing segments of the interviews in the report, pseudonyms will be used and the real names of schools, musical training institutions (including children, parents and teachers) omitted. Any other potential breaches to confidentiality that arise will be discussed with the supervisor.

What will happen to my child's information?

The questionnaire data will be presented as descriptive statistics and thus be anonymous. No single numerical response will be linked to a participant's real name in the thesis. In citing segments of the interviews in the report, pseudonyms will be used and the real names of schools, musical training institutions (including children, parents and teachers) omitted. Any other potential breaches to confidentiality that arise will be discussed with the supervisor.

What will happen to the results of the research project?

The results will be used to investigate the role of learning environment in children's motivation and decision to learn the music in China. When the interviews are complete, they will be analysed by the researcher. All the results will be written and presented in the researcher's PhD thesis.

What type of information will be sought from me and why is the collection of this information relevant for achieving the research project's objectives?

The data from the questionnaire will present children's attitudes, opinions, perceptions and preferences towards their learning environments. The data from the additional interviews will contain further information about the interaction between each of the learning factors.

Will I be recorded, and how will the recorded media be used?

The semi-structured interviews with participants will be audio recorded. The data from interview will be transferred immediately to a password-protected computer. The audio files on the smartphone will then be erased. All of the resultant transcriptions and the quantitative database will also be kept securely on this computer. This will not be accessed by others, except for the supervisors for the reasons of assisting with the data analysis. In citing segments of the interviews in the report, pseudonyms will be used and the real names of schools, musical training institutions (including children, parents and teachers) omitted. Any other potential breaches to confidentiality that arise will be discussed with the supervisor.

Contact for further information

If you have any questions about this study, please do not hesitate to contact me, Luqian Zhao (email: mclz@leeds.ac.uk). You can also contact my supervisor, Prof. Karen Burland (email: K.Burland@leeds.ac.uk).

Thank you.

Thank the individual for taking the time to read the information sheet and considering taking part in the research.

Appendix D: Script of the recruitment video content (English and Chinese)

[Opening shot of a university campus with students walking around]

Hi everyone,

Are you interested in music learning? Have you ever considered giving up learning music? Are you curious to better understand yourself? If so, I would be delighted to invite you to take part in a research study.

My name is Luqian, and I am a PhD student at the University of Leeds. My research explores the factors that influence children's motivation to learn music. The study involves completing a short survey, which takes approximately 10 minutes. Upon completion, you will receive a brief summary of your personality traits and motivation levels.

I will be visiting your school next week. If you are interested in participating or would like to learn more about the project, you are very welcome to find me at XX. Please be assured that all data will be collected and analysed in strict confidence.

Thank you very much for your time, and I look forward to hearing from you.

同学们好，

你是否对音乐学习感兴趣？是否曾经想过放弃学习音乐？或者是否希望更好地了解自己？如果是的话，我诚挚地邀请你参与本次研究。

我叫赵璐倩，是英国利兹大学的一名博士研究生。我的研究主要探讨影响儿童音乐学习动机的因素。本研究需要你完成一份简短的问卷，大约需要 10 分钟。完成问卷后，你将获得一份关于你的人格特质和学习动机的简要反馈。

我将在下周到访你们学校。如果你有兴趣参与，或想了解更多有关本研究的信息，欢迎在 XX 找到我。请放心，所有数据都将严格保密，仅用于学术研究。非常感谢你的时间，期待与你交流！

Appendix E: Survey Verbal Consent Form

Consent to take part in The Determinants of Children's Musical Learning – An Exploration in China	Add your initials next to the statement if you agree
I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet/ letter dated [] explaining the above research project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project.	
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without there being any negative consequences. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline. If you have any problems, please contact the researcher Luqian Zhao (telephone number: 07519636813; email address:mclz@leeds.ac.uk)	
I give permission for members of the research team to have access to my anonymised responses. I understand that my name will not be linked with the research materials, and I will not be identified or identifiable in the report or reports that result from the research. I understand that my responses will be kept strictly confidential.	
I agree for the data collected from me to be stored and used in relevant future research.	
I understand that other genuine researchers will have access to this data only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form.	
I understand that other researchers may use my words in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs, only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form.	
I understand that relevant sections of the data collected during the study, may be looked at by auditors from the University of Leeds where it is relevant to my taking part in this research. I give permission for these individuals to have access to my records.	
I agree to take part in the above research project and will inform the lead researcher should my contact details change during the project and, if necessary, afterwards.	

Appendix F: Questionnaire (English and Chinese)

Introduction (English)

Dear Participant,

You are invited to take part in a research study entitled “The Determinants of Children’s Motivation in Musical Learning: An Exploration in China.” This study is being conducted by Luqian Zhao, a PhD researcher at the University of Leeds.

The purpose of this study is to explore how demographic factors, personality traits, and different aspects of the learning environment influence children’s motivation in music learning. Participation involves completing an online questionnaire, which will take approximately 10 minutes.

Your participation is entirely voluntary. You are free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason, and you may choose not to answer any questions you do not wish to respond to.

There are no known significant risks associated with this study. However, as with any online activity, there is a minimal risk related to data security. All data will be handled confidentially and stored securely. Your responses will be anonymised, and no personally identifiable information will be collected or reported.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information.

Very best wishes,

Luqian Zhao

I. Demographic Information:

1. Gender:

- 1) Female
- 2) Male
- 3) Prefer not to say

2. Grade:

- 1) Grade 4
- 2) Grade 5
- 3) Grade 6

3. Age:

4. What musical activities have you been engaged in?

- 1) Please write down school musical activities you take part in:
- 2) Please write down out-of-school musical activities you take part in:
- 3) If you play an instrument, which instrument do you play/ If you dance, what types of dance?
- 4) If you have taken part in any MGE, please tell us the grade:

II. Pictorial Personality Traits Questionnaire for Children (PPTQ-C): (C1-C15)

 On my own	1. I usually play... <table border="1"> <tr> <td></td> <td>It depends</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>		It depends		 with others
	It depends				
 I am worried	2. When I usually go to school <table border="1"> <tr> <td></td> <td>It depends</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>		It depends		 I am calm
	It depends				
 I don't notice it	3. When I see birds flying... <table border="1"> <tr> <td></td> <td>It depends</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>		It depends		 I notice it
	It depends				
 Willingly	4. I usually do my housework.... <table border="1"> <tr> <td></td> <td>It depends</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>		It depends		 unwillingly
	It depends				

	I	5. When my classmate needs something...			
ignore it			It depends		I am willing to help
	I	6. When others are having fun...			
play with them			It depends		I will stay alone
	I	7. When something goes wrong..			
keep clam			It depends		quickly get nervous
		8. In a trip, I prefer			
discover something new			It depends		just relax

 _____ is a mess	9. My room... <table border="1"> <tr> <td></td><td>It depends</td><td></td></tr> </table>		It depends		 _____ is tidy
	It depends				
 _____ I help	10. When I am able to help somebody... <table border="1"> <tr> <td></td><td>It depends</td><td></td></tr> </table>		It depends		 _____ I don't help
	It depends				
 _____ I don't think it is funny	11. When someone is joking... <table border="1"> <tr> <td></td><td>It depends</td><td></td></tr> </table>		It depends		 _____ I laugh with them
	It depends				
	12. Usually....				

 I am a clam person		It depends		 I am worried about something
 I don't like to learn	13. When I learn new and difficult things...			 I am happy to learn
 I like saving	14. When I have pocket money...			 I spend them quicky
	When I have a new toy...			

 I am not willing to share it with my friends		It depends		 I share it with my friends
---	--	------------	--	--

III. Levels of Motivation: Items are rated on a scale form 1, disagree strongly, to 7, agree strongly. (D1-D18)

	1=Disagree strongly	2=Disagree	3=Somewhat disagree	4=Neither agree or disagree	5=Somewhat agree	6=Agree	7=Agree strongly
1. My teachers at school like me to play a musical instrument							
2. I can achieve anything I want on							

my instrumen t if I practice enough							
3. Most people think that I play my instrumen t well							
4. My parents want me to play an instrumen t							
5. My relations (e.g. grandpare nts, aunts and uncles) like me playing a musical instrumen t							
6. Playing an							

instrument is an important part of my social life							
7. I enjoy going to concerts to listen							
8. I think it is valuable to play a musical instrument							
9. I have many friends who play musical instruments							
10. Playing in concerts gives me a real thrill							
11. I find it very satisfying							

to play in concerts							
12. I have the potential to be a good musician							
13. I have musical ability							
14. I am successful in what I attempt to do on my instrumen t							
15. I hate having to play a musical instrumen t							
16. I find practice boring							
17. I enjoy my instrumen tal lessons							

18. I enjoy playing in musical groups, orchestra and bands							
--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

IV. Can you describe your feelings according to questions below:

1. Can you describe one of your favourite school music lesson?

2. Can you describe how your parents support your musical learning?

If you are interested in further interview, please write down your parents' contact number:

Questionnaire (Chinese Version) 问卷

同学们，谢谢你参加这项“中国儿童音乐学习动机的决定因素”课题研究。这项研究由利兹大学的赵璐倩进行。这项研究的目的是发现学习环境对音乐学习的影响，大约需要 10 分钟才能完成。您参与这项研究完全是自愿的，所以您可以随时退出。您也不必回答任何您不想回答的问题，可以选择性回答。最后，这份问卷下的答案没有对错，请根据你自身的情况如实填写就好。

通过利兹大学伦理委员会审核，我们认为这项研究没有已知的风险；在一周之前，也告知了你们的家长和老师这项研究的进行。但是，与任何在线相关活动一样，违规风险始终存在。我们将尽最大努力对您参与这项研究保密，并且只会发布匿名数据。我们将通过保密将任何风险降至最低。您的调查答案将保持匿名。没有人能够识别您或您的答案，也没有人知道您是否参与了这项研究。再一次感谢您的参与！

1. 姓名：
2. 班级：
3. 性别：
4. 年龄：
5. 你参加过什么音乐活动？
 - 1) 请写下你曾经在校内参加过的音乐活动：
 - 2) 请写下你曾经在校外参加过的音乐活动（如果没有，可以不写）：
 - 3) 请写下你学过的一样乐器/舞蹈/声乐项目（如果没有，可以不写）：
 - 4) 请写下你考级的项目和级数（如果没有，可以不写）：
6. 父母职业分别是：

i. 请根据你自己的性格来打勾偏左还是偏右（也可以选择看情况而定），答案没有对错：

 自己一个人玩	10. 我经常... 看情况	 和别人一起玩
 心情比较烦躁	11. 我上学的时候... 看情况	 心情比较平静
 它们看 我不会盯着	12. 当我看到鸟在飞的时候... 看情况	 我会盯着它们看一会
 我是自愿的	13. 通常，我帮着家里干家务时... 看情况	 我不愿意
	14. 当我同桌需要尺子的时候...	

 我不愿意借给他/她		看情况	 我愿意借给他/她
 我喜欢和他们一起玩	15. 当小伙伴抱团时...	 我喜欢自己一个人静静呆着	
 我沉着应对	16. 当有突发状况时...	 我会脑子一片空白	
 我喜欢去探索大自然	17. 在假期时...	 在家好好休息	

 以乱为美	18. 我的房间...		 非常干净
 我十分乐意帮忙	10. 当别人需要我帮助时...		 我会装作没看到，走开
 我不认为很好笑	15. 当别人开他人玩笑的时候...		 我会迅速和他们一起笑
 我是心情比较平静的人	16. 通常情况下...		 我是一个比较容易焦虑的人
	17. 当我学习比较难的知识时...		

 我不喜欢学		看情况		 我乐于学 习		
 我会把他们存起来	18. 我这样安排我的零花钱...			看情况		 我选择花掉
 我会先自己玩，然后和朋友们分享				看情况		 我会立刻和我的朋友们分享

ii. 请根据你的情况，从 1-7 中选择一个，1 为非常不同意，7 为非常同意

	1= 非常不同意	2= 不同意	3= 有点不同意	4= 普通	5= 有点同意	6= 同意	7= 非常同意
19. 学校音乐老师鼓励我们学习音乐							

20. 只要我练习的够多，我就能弹/跳/唱的最好							
21. 很多人表扬过我弹的好/唱的好/跳的好							
22. 我的父母想要我学器乐							
23. 我的亲戚们（爷爷奶奶，外公外婆，叔叔阿姨）非常赞成我学器乐							
24. 我花了很多课余时间在学习音乐上							
25. 我喜欢去听音乐会							
26. 我觉得学音乐是有用的							
27. 我很多朋友也学器乐/跳舞/唱歌							

28. 我渴望在舞台上表演							
29. 当我表演的时候，我有种满足感							
30. 我认为自己以后能成为一个音乐家							
31. 我觉得自己有音乐天赋							
32. 我弹的很棒/ 唱的很棒/跳舞跳的很棒							
33. 我讨厌学习音乐							
34. 我觉得练琴/ 练声/练舞很枯燥							
35. 我很喜欢我的器乐课							
36. 如果有机会的话，我十分乐意尝试							

在乐团中表演							
37. 我喜欢练习							
38. 我很享受弹琴或跳舞或唱歌							
39. 我很喜欢听音乐							
40. 你需要有天赋才能在音乐上成功							
41. 有一些天，我不想练习							
42. 我觉得练习很枯燥很无聊							

iii. 请描述一节你最喜欢的音乐课？

iv. 请描述一下你的父母如何支持你学习音乐？

Appendix G: Interview introduction and schedule

Interview Introduction

Hello, my name is Luqian Zhao, and you can call me Luqian. I am a PhD researcher at the University of Leeds. I am currently conducting a research project on children's motivation to learn music, and I am particularly interested in understanding what encourages students in China to continue learning music as they grow older. I would really value hearing your thoughts and experiences.

This interview will take approximately 10 minutes and will be audio-recorded. Your participation is voluntary, and this conversation will remain confidential. All data will be stored securely on the University of Leeds server and will only be accessed by the researcher. Any identifying information will be removed, so that you cannot be identified from your responses.

If at any point you feel uncomfortable, you are free to stop the interview or withdraw your participation without giving a reason. You may withdraw your data up until 01/10/2020. After this date, the data will be analysed and it may no longer be possible to remove your responses.

Thank you very much for your time and participation.

Interview schedule for children

Domain	Question	Sub-questions
General	Name	
Background	Age	
	Which activities have you participated in within school or outside of school?	
	What is your favorite musical activity?	
	Why did you want to learn/ start playing your musical learning? (parents, siblings, friend, teacher, other)	
	How was your playing been going recently?	
Society	Have you taken part in private music lesson?	What type of musical training have you been doing? (Solo, ensemble, choir, band.....) How much are you enjoying the private music lesson? How have your lessons been? How was your playing been going recently? What has your teacher said about your playing? Have you had a lesson that has been particularly good or bad?

		How do you feel about the music teacher?
	Have you taken part in any competitions/auditions/exams recently?	What was the result for the competitions/auditions/exams?
		How do you feel about the result of the competitions/auditions/exams?
		How helpful has your teacher been in the competitions/auditions/exams?
		How helpful has your parent been in the competitions/auditions/exams?
		How do you feel about the participation in the competitions/auditions/exams? (Happy, self-accomplishment, confident, negative...)
School	How is your school music lesson?	How much are you enjoying the module?
		Can you describe one your favorite music lesson?
		What is your favorite part in a music lesson?
		Which part is the most difficult to learn?
		Have you had a lesson that has been particularly good or bad?
Family	How is your home practice?	How much time have you spent practicing in the last week?

		Can you describe how you practice? (Technical, improvisatory....)
		How do you feel about the practice at the motherent (negative/positive/ bored/ frustrated...)
Ending questions	What are your parents' attitudes to your musical learning?	What your parents do during your practice? (Sit behind, just listen, supervise...)
		Do your parents hope you keep practicing?
		How your parents motivate you to practice? (encourage/ punish)
	How do you feel about learning music?	How does this compare with other things you do? (sports, painting...)
		Do you want to find a job in music in the future?
		Have you ever thought of giving up and why?

Interview schedule for parents

Domain	Question	Sub-questions
General	Name	
Background	Education level	
	Job	
	Family income	
	How many children do you have?	
	What type of musical activities does your child participate in?	
	Why does your child choose to learn this type of musical activity?	
	When did your child begin to learn music?	
	Parents' attitudes and aspiration to study music	Why did you decide to support your child to learn music? What do you think studying music can provide for your child? How do you think about peer pressure? Has there been some turning points that has influenced your decision to support your child's musical leaning? Are there any negative aspects to study music? Do you hope your child to have a job in music in the future?
Society	How is your child's private music lesson?	How often does your child has private music lesson per month?

How does you find the private music teacher?

How do you think your child's private music teacher?

How would you describe your relationship with your child's teacher?
How does this influence your behaviour?

How about the learning progress?

How did you communicate with your child's teacher? (face-to-face, telephone, wechat...)

How teacher's feedback to guide your child's further musical learning?

How teacher's feedback to guide your child's further musical learning?

How does this compare to school music lesson?

Has your child ever taken part in any competitions/auditions/exams recently?	Why your child take part in competitions/auditions/exams?
--	---

How do you feel about competitions/auditions/exams?

How does your child's music teacher feeling about competitions/auditions/exams?

How helpful has your child's teacher been in the competitions/auditions/exams?

School	How is your child's school music lesson?	How do you evaluate your child's school music lesson?
		How about the school policy? Is there any school policy to support students' musical learning?
		How do you think about your child's music teacher?
		How does this compare with other subjects (maths, Chinese, science...)?
	How do you communicate with the school music teacher?	How did you communicate with your child's teacher? (face-to-face, telephone, wechat...)
		How often do you communicate with teacher about your child's musical learning?
		How would you describe your relationship with your child's teacher? How does this influence your behaviour?
Family	How is your home musical environments?	How teacher's feedback to guide you to supervise your child's musical learning?
		How teacher's feedback to guide your child's further musical learning?
		How often does your family attend musical activity (concert, opera, recital....)per month?
		How about your family members' musical background?

How is your child's home practice?

How often and how long does your child practice per week?

How your child's teacher require you to supervise your child?

How do you supervise your child?

What has your child's teacher said about his/her playing?

How you motivate your child to practice?

Is there any differences about division of work between you and your partner?

Interview schedule for teachers

Domain	Questions	Sub-questions
General background	Name	
	Education level	
	Salary	
	Working experience	
Society	How is the support from the government?	What is the differences since the implementation of the new curriculum reform?
		How is the policy to support the development of music education?
		How often do teachers receive continuous professional development training?
	How is the extracurricular music training?	What is the influence for the school music education? (positive/ negative)
		What is the influence for the parents? (positive/negative)
		What is the influence for the child? (positive/ negative)
School	How do you feel being a music teacher? (enjoy, tired....)	How much are you enjoying the working as a school music teacher?
		How many lessons you have per week?
	How is the support from the school authorities?	How is the hardware facilities in your school? How is the principle's attitudes to music education?

How about the music activities (choir, school orchestra, dancing group) in your school?

What are the music educational characteristics of your school?

What is your school has been achieved in music education?

How is your music lesson?

How do you implement teaching aims in your lesson?

What teaching content is the most attractive for children? How do you implement it exactly?

What teaching content is the most difficult for children? Why?

What is the biggest challenge for you in a lesson?

How is the textbook?

Have you ever tried any specific teaching pedagogy? How is the effect?

Have you ever tried adding extracurricular teaching materials in the lesson? How is the effect?

Have you had a lesson that has been particularly good or bad?

How is the relationship between you and your students?

How often do you communicate with your students?

How do you communicate with your students?

		How do you improve students' motivations to learn music?
		How about the feedback from students?
		How do you deal with the conflicts with students?
		Do you have any impressive students? Why?
Family	How are parents' attitudes to music lessons in general?	How do you think about the importance of parental involvement in music education?
		How do you increase parental involvement?
		How do you deal with parents who you perceive to be very uninvolved?
	How is the relationship between you and student's parents?	How often do you communicate with parents?
		How do you communicate with parents? (face-to-face, telephone, social media...)
		What is the influence of relationship for a child's performance?
		What relationship between teacher and parents do you think is the best?

Appendix H: Qualitative Analysis Example

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of the interview by Wang's mother

Soh

Interviewer: It seems you are quite attentive to the child's music learning and familiar with instrumental learning, for example, you mentioned that one-to-one lesson is better than group lesson for instrumental learning.

Family —

P1: Yeah, I think learning instrument is not suitable to choose group lesson. → parent's support for learning

Q. Family support

④ ~~knowledge about music~~ understanding about private tutoring

Interviewer: Have you learned it before? Is it from your own experiences? → understanding knowledge about music private tutoring

P1: No, I haven't learned music at all. → parent's musical background

⑤. parent's musical background

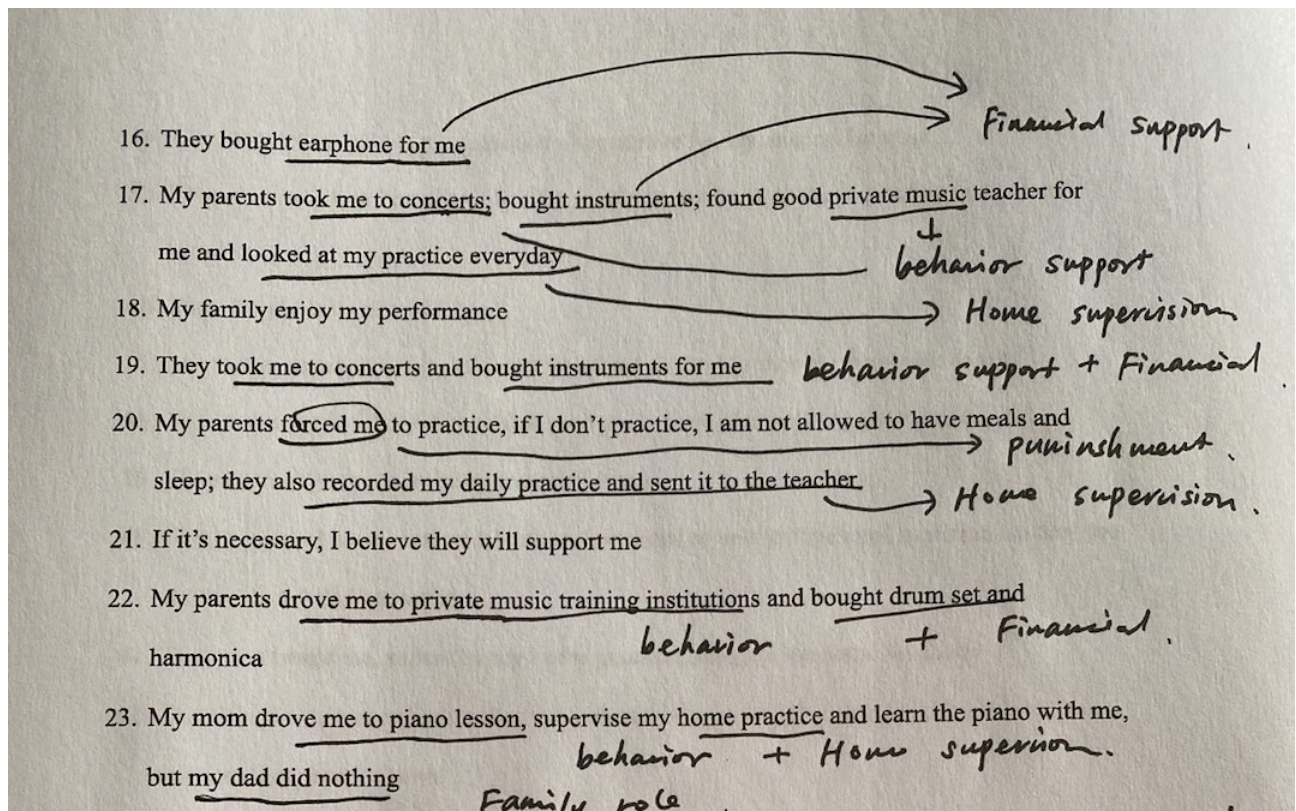
Interviewer: Because I think you are quite familiar with instrumental learning. Before our interview, I heard that you mention your child likes the song "Xi Song Gong Liang". You

Similarities and differences in Wang's group:

Themes	Wang's illustrative quotations	Parent's illustrative quotations	Teacher's illustrative quotations	Meanings
parents' aspiration	"I told my parents that I would like to learn Erhu, but my mother and father wanted me to learn the piano. Finally, they supported me to learn Erhu"	"As his parents, in fact, we don't want him to learn Erhu, but we can support if he would like to learn Chinese flute" "Wang stopped the Erhu class, then I asked whether he want to insist on or give up learning"		Parents could make decisions for their child, but they respected their child's choice
Parents' supervision	"Mother sits behind me"	"I will count how many times he practices" "You still need to watch him to do something, otherwise he will lose his concentration"	"Many children, they can learn well through group lesson. I found they have common thing, this type of children have highly supportive and cooperative parents, and this type of children tend to have high motivation to learn music. Parents remind them to practice, because they	Wang's mother tried to supervise her son, but from teacher's perspective, it is not effective to motivate Wang to practice

are too young to keep
a habit. A child needs
guardian's
supervision, right?

TA Example (From family support):



Appendix I: List of code and themes from open questions

Code and themes to question “Please describe one of your favorite music lessons”

Overarching themes	Sub-themes	Codes
Singing	Choral	Choral competition
		Choral rehearsal
	Popular songs	Qingren
		Denghua Liu’s and Tingfeng Xie’s songs
		Junjie Lin’s songs
	Songs from textbooks	Chinese national songs
		Moli flower
		Grandma’s penghuwan
		Mama Gelasang
	Electronic music	
	Film music	
	Hip-hop songs	
Appreciation	Musical theaters	Cat
		Les Misérables
		The lion king
		Background of music theaters
	Musical movies	The sound of music
		Beauty and the beast
	Opera	Rigoletto
	Symphony	
	Recital	Piano recital

		Violin recital
Dancing	Chinese dance	
	Ballet	
Instrument	Instrument lesson	Guitar
		Ukulele
		Flute
	Instrumental performance	
Analysis and theory		
Musical activities	Singing competition	
	Musical games	
	Public lesson	
	Arts lesson	
Music teacher	behaviour	Active interaction
		Encourage
		Professionalism
	Personality	Humor
		Patient
		Nice

Code and themes to question “Please describe how your parents support you to learn music?”

Overarching theme	Sub-themes	Codes
Financial support	Equipment investment	Instruments
		Recorder
	Private tutoring	Private tutoring institutions

		Private tutor
	Public performance fee	Competition
		Recital
Behaviour	Help child to improve	Home supervision
		Accompany
		Record the video
		Drive child to lessons
	Requirement	Graded examination
		Public performance
Oral	Encouragement	Praise
		Suggestion
	Punishment	Shout
		No meals
	Communication with teacher	Message
		Face-to-face