

Parental involvement in music learning: A qualitative study from the perspectives of parents, music teachers, and music students in Tawau, Sabah

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Abstract

This qualitative study aims to gain a deeper understanding of parental involvement in children's one-to-one piano learning from the perspectives of parents, teachers, and students in Tawau, Sabah. A purposive sampling of 15 participants to form five groups of parent-teacher-student triads was recruited. Narrative data were collected through semi-structured interviews. Findings indicated that parents, teachers, and students have both similar and diverse perceptions of parental involvement in the one-to-one piano lesson in terms of attendance at piano lessons, home environment and home practice, and communication. The findings indicated that the parents in Tawau rooted their practice and belief of parental involvement in the traditional values that put emphasis on responsibilities, co-operation, respect, and trust, in supporting their children in music learning and musical wellbeing. Some noteworthy findings observed that parents instinctively assume their significant role in scaffolding and support their children's music learning, regardless of cultures, locality of residence and music lesson settings.

Keywords: parental involvement, lessons attendance, home environment and home practice, effective communication, one-to-one piano lesson

Introduction

Parental involvement plays a vital role for a child to gain proper education and knowledge. Parents who positively and actively engage in their children's music learning prefer to observe higher musical talent as a reason for offering music education. Such 'parental' concepts are intricately linked to the notion that the aim of music education is to contribute to the broadening in the realisation of their child's

musical potential and musical ability. Some parents also believe that other than attaining the certification in examinations, other benefits of music learning is to cultivate children's "good temperament and self-discipline" (Leong, 2008, p. iv).

As stated by Beck (2018), the more the parents understand their children, they are presumably able to identify the characteristics of their children's learning attitudes and musical behaviours. Thus, enable to encourage more musical activities through developing strategies and to consider and facilitate the music development of their young children. It was indicated that effective parental involvement has an influence on the learning outcome, including music appreciation, motivation, self-esteem, self-efficacy, and personal satisfaction with music lessons. These attributes and characteristics are evidenced in parents who seek and respect their children's opinions on effective parental involvement, communicating with their children on learning goals, providing a conducive home environment for practice, showing an interest in promoting good teacher-student relationship, communicating with the teacher on the progress of the child, and maintaining a supremely attentive audience (Creech 2010).

Previous studies have shown that musical achievement tends to be associated with elevated levels of parental involvement. The process of parental involvement can be quite complex in supporting a child's journey of music learning. In modern societies, parents' provision and support of the children's learning can be categorised into good guidances and degrees of involvement. Seifert (2017) indicated that parental educational background contributes significantly to their children's academic success and accomplishments. However, most non-graduate parents are similarly willing to direct their children to college (Brownstein, 2014). Similarly, parents' background in music training has its benefits in supporting their children's music learning. While some studies show that successful musicians do not typically have parents with expertise in musical knowledge, Margiotta (2011) argues that parents with a certain amount of musical training are able to: (1) provide more musically inclined support to their children; (2) engage them in more concerts and music-related activities; and (3) direct them more efficiently towards goals accomplishment in one-to-one music learning.

Goodall and Montgomery (2014) argued that when a child commences music learning, adequate parental involvement is critical regarding whether the child gives up or persists. Some of the children with outstanding musical achievements had parents who gave supportive involvement in classes, took notes, communicated with the music teachers, and persistently supervised home practice for around 15 years (MacIntyre, Potter, & Burns, 2012). Supervised home practice is optimal for skill acquisition and deliberate practice. Successful music learning requires a sustained commitment and initiative by the parents, music teachers, and child. Specifically, parents having children successful in music tend to have sufficient interest in music (Hayes, 2014). The parents of talented and capable children tend to be diligent, proactive, focused, and avoid wasting energy and time, they are also demanding and strict.

Bugeja (2009) concurs with all previous studies that parents play a significant role in children's musical achievements. However, she also stated that despite the emphasis of parental role in the Suzuki triangle of parent, teacher, and student, research in this area was not empirically investigated. Thus, two case studies were conducted to compare

the parental role in Suzuki method and the “traditional” approach in violin lessons. The participants were a parent-child duo from each method. Data were collected through a one hour semi-structured interviews where the participants reminisce of the learning progress over the span of 15 years, from the younger age through adolescent. The study concluded that parents play a vital role in music learning regardless of the pedagogic approaches.

Hewitt and Allan (2013) stated that children prefer appropriate parental involvement that provide adequate support in their music learning activities. They also indicated that parents who value independence and autonomy in their child’s development are more interested, involved, and curious in the learning, and thus enables them to be more confident and competent (Hewitt & Allan, 2013). In music learning, not all parents are musically adequate to assist their children’s music learning. They usually play the role as “non-participant observers” (Ang et al. ,2019a). Thus, there is a need to examine the vitality of parental involvement and how the parents can be the role models in coaching music to their children.

Purpose of the Study

The first author is a native piano teacher in Tawau with vast teaching experience of 35 years. She has immense experience interacting with parents on their children’s music learning. Based on her observations, she believes that though most parents are concerned with their children music learning and that most are keen to partake and contribute to their learning process and achievement, that nevertheless, there are different views and expectations of parental involvement among parents, teachers, and students. Creech and Hallam (2003) indicated that there are various aspects of parental involvement in music. Three most relevant key aspects include the parent attendance at piano lessons, home environment and home practice, and communication derived from the previous studies were chosen to compare parents, teachers, and students’ perceptions of parental involvement in the one-to-one piano lesson.

Methodology

Interview process

As stated by Jamshed (2014), interview is one of the most common procedures of data collection in qualitative research (p. 87). Yin (2003) stated that interview was one of the primary keys of information for research based on case studies. The process of data collection indicates that semi-structured, face-to-face interview is appropriate to provide a rich source of information and to acquire sufficient understanding of the research topic area. An interview guide was planned, developed, piloted, and improved to provide a guiding resource to be drawn from during the interview.

Each interview lasted about 30-45 minutes held in the evenings within 4 weeks, from 24 September to 25 October 2019. The interview took place at the researcher’s own music studio, which was a familiar and comfortable setting to all participants. The interview process was guided by a set of prior formulated specific open-ended questions listed in the planned interview guide. As indicated by Dörnyei (2007), the interviewer usually addresses same interview questions to all the participants, but

varied with flexibility in the sequence or wording (p. 136). The goal is to complement the key questions with a range of “probing and clarification” to the main questions (Mann, 2016, p. 102). Thus, this study adapted the suggestions by Dörnyei (2007) and Mann (2016), with the use of alternative wording to accommodate the understanding of the children. All interviews were recorded and later transcribed for further coding and analysis.

Participants

There were 15 participants which formed five parent-teacher-student triads. Each triad aimed to obtain a triangulated perspective of parental involvement. Data was obtained from five participating parents, their children, and their music teachers. These triads consisted of one male and four female parent-participants, five female teachers, and one male and four female student-participants of different cultural backgrounds. Parent participants were aged between 21- to 50-years-old, teacher-participants were between the ages of 21 to above 50 years old, and the student participants were between the ages of 6 to 11.

Triangulation and Data Analysis Procedure

Triangulation of the interview data was acquired through the five groups of participants of parents, teachers, and students. The interview data was transcribed, and further verified with member checked. All the participants reviewed the transcriptions and further necessary changes and clarification was made.

The verbatim transcription of the interviews with parents, students, and teachers was analysed for emergent themes within the three selected aspects of parental involvement. The data analysis procedure was based on Braun and Clarke’s (2006) 6-phase thematic analysis to identify key themes. The steps are as follows: (1) familiarise with the data; (2) produce initial codes; (3) search for themes; (4) evaluate themes; (5) identify themes; and (6) produce report.

Findings of the Study and Discussion

The following sections present the findings under the three selected key aspects in parental involvement that was stipulated in the purpose of study, which include: (1) parent attendance at one to-one piano lessons; (2) home environment and home practice; and (3) effective communication. Within each aspect, the participants spoke about their viewpoints and shared their personal perspectives on each of the three aspects in parental involvement in one-to-one piano learning context.

Parent attendance at one-to-one piano lessons

The participants in this study articulated their comments on the necessity of parent attendance at the one-to-one piano lesson. At the onset of the interview, all parent-teacher-student participants indicated their aspiration to gain good musical teaching-learning experience and to achieve desirable learning outcomes. Some participants indicated that it is this aspiration that sustains the long journey of music learning. It was also indicated that parent’s participation during music lessons together with their

children shown positive support and encouragement to both the music teachers and students. Their presence contributed to the “helpful instructions during home practice”.

Among the five parent participants, each expressed their own perception of parental attendance. Parent Participant 4 appreciated the possibility for her to sit in on the one-to-one piano class with her child. She enjoyed music and treasured the musical time “sitting quietly and passively” in class as a passive observer for self-enjoyment. She also indicated that these were “precious moments of sharing musical experiences” with her child. She indicated that these enjoyable experiences enhance the “pleasant conversation” and “bonding” with her child about music. Similarly, Parent Participant 5 also shared positive and encouraging experiences that attending the lesson is not merely a “waste of time waiting” but to “know the child better”, and “delightful” to observe the musical and other communicative interactions between the music teacher and the child in the teaching-learning sessions.

Conversely, other parent participants had opposing views on this obligation. One of the parent participants advocated that compliance or lack of confidence in the child would be the only justification for attending. Parent Participant 1 was certain of her child’s independence and was strongly convinced that learning is best without parental distractions. She complimented on her child’s “yearning” to be an independent and self-determined learner. She further elaborated that “overly enthusiastic” parental involvement may be a hindrance in developing accountability and responsibility towards children’s self-knowing and self-learning. Similarly, Parent Participant 2 reasoned that having two adults in the class can be distracting for the child. She affirmed that strong teacher-student bonding has a positive impact on effective learning and that children are somewhat more relaxed in learning without the parent’s “presence and commands”. Further, Parent Participant 3 indicated that weekly lesson attendance is time consuming, especially with the commitment of time and energy to other children at home.

Generally, there were opposing views in parental attendances in piano lessons. Each of the parent participants in this study had their own reason and intention to be or not to be in the lesson. Some parents chose to be present at the piano lessons primarily for their own enjoyment and appreciation of music. But shown no significant relation to the role and responsibility of parent attendance as advocated in the philosophy of Suzuki triangle, where mothers play vital role in taking notes in class to further assist the child to learn at home. Just as McMillan (2004) indicated, parents who never attended the lessons had diverse explanations for their abstention and dispute with the significance of their presence in music classes. Two of the parent participants in this study reasoned that the children must be entrusted with confidence and need to be given opportunity to develop and learn independence. Only one parent shares personal challenges in time and energy constraint.

From the music teachers’ perspectives, there are diverse views and contrasting responses regarding parent attendance at music lessons. Some music teachers perceive that the presence of parents who are not interested and attentive to the lesson contents, can be disruptive. One of the Teacher Participants commented that some parents engaged in “smartphone games” with sound effects and considered this behaviour as “annoying”. Other Teacher Participants also shared other disruptive behaviour like “

taking loudly” during lesson, “overly concerned” and “demanding”, or interrupting the lesson with too many questions. Yet, they also indicated that there are parents who provide “emotional support” and encouragement to their children in a “passive but constructive” manner throughout the teaching-learning session. In general, Teacher Participants’ attitude towards parents’ presence in the music lesson is that it is more disruptive than constructive. Nevertheless, most Teacher Participants shared that most parents are supportive of their children’s music learning regardless of the presence at the music lessons. Further, as stated by Teacher Participant 2, there are mutual “trust and respect” between the parent-teacher-student “partnership” that positively enhance the music teaching and learning.

When asked about the importance of parents’ lesson attendance, all five music teachers had diverse and contrasting responses. Some indicated that parent attendance has positive contributions towards the child’s achievement and create pleasant musical environment. Conversely, some teachers viewed that “overly enthusiastic” parents with “unrealistic expectations” could also diminish the child’s musical interest. Teacher Participant 2 felt that though parents play a significant role in shaping their children’s learning behaviours and characteristics and to provide encouragement and support in the music learning; however, “over parental involvement” and often “teaching and criticising” the child during music lessons can be “discouraging and frustrating” for both teacher and student. On the pleasant side, Teacher Participant 3 thought that parent attendance and knowing how to assist the child to accomplish learning goals is a great help in leading the child to achieve learning outcomes in “learning new repertoire in a short amount of time”. She further described that “both parent and student enjoys the sense of achievement when parents set realistic goals” and this strategic parental involvement “enhances the quality of the home-practice, also for self-enjoyment”. She grinned and said “this brings me joy too”.

On parent attendance, the students too had diverse and contrasting responses. An older student participant indicated that, parent can be a disruption with “extra critical and undesirable comments”. He commented that, at times, parents with high expectations may exhibit discouraging body languages that cause nervousness and the fear of “making mistakes in class”. Another older student participant also viewed the expansion and increased parental influence as “suppression” and “restricted”. She said that there is “no freedom” for her musical expression when the parents are in the class. Parent’s insistence may cause negative impact on the child’s musical development under enormous amount of pressure.

From a different perspective, Student Participants 4 and 5 both conveyed their appreciation of their parents who have “patiently” and “quietly” sat through their music lessons without “intervening”, but with much “reassurance and encouragement”. One of the younger student participants expressed that “I like dad to be in the music class”, and “learn better”. She indicated that she enjoys the moments when “dad is learning and playing music together with me”. Other student participants also indicated the significance of parents in their lives, which they saw as “helpful” in providing “emotional support”. Overall, most student participants said that parent attendance bring “pleasure and raise enjoyment” and contribution to the “accomplishment” and “achievement” in their music learning. In sum, the students’ participants of various ages indicated opposing notion of parent attendance at music lesson as support, assistance

and hindrance. Few students expressed negative responses towards parent attendance at lessons as disturbance.

As discussed, parents' purpose of attending music class is to help mitigate learning issues and also to "assist, coach and support" the child's music practice in between the weekly music lesson. A committed parental involvement is significant in the child's musical development and achievement, particularly in the early years. It involves parents attending classes, writing notes, observing the instruction and working with the child on a regular basis (Fisher, 2014). As indicated, ambitious parents with "high expectations" exhibited disruptive behaviours and interrupt the learning interaction in class.

Home environment and home practice

In general, parents are likely to provide a home environment that is suitable for learning, especially in cultivating meaningful musical experience (Cutietta, 2013). All parent participants in this study agreed that it is important to provide a suitable and conducive space at home for music practice, and time for musical activities. As indicated by one of the parents, music making at home is part of their family life and leisure. She elaborated that there are lesser social distractions in smaller town like Tawau, home music making is a social structure of domestic life. Several parents shared the challenges in the provision of suitable home environment and monitoring children's piano practice. Parent Participant 4 indicated that "it is an investment of time and money". All parent participants do their best in supporting the provision of musical resources, in their cases, a musical instrument, that is the piano. One of the parents exclaimed that "it is an expensive instrument" compared to other musical instruments like guitar or violin.

All parent participants shared that it is a great challenge to have home practice with minimised distractions from other home activities. Further, as so often, the piano is placed in the home living room. One of the parents shared that it is a great challenge to monitor one child's piano practice while being attentive to other children at home, keeping them from disturbing. Parent Participant 3 said that "it is a heavy demand to be attentive to all"!

The Teacher Participants shared some observations on the home environment. Teacher Participant 1 appreciates the parental support in providing place and finance to purchase and maintain the musical instrument. According to other teacher participants, they said that the parents purchased "in some cases, more than one musical instrument, piano and other", "and music books". Student Participants shared less information on home environment except some comments on the competing attention by other siblings at home. Teacher Participant 2 observed that other than providing musical resources and materials to enhance children's meaningful musical experience, parents also facilitate piano practice at home. She appreciated their time investment but empathised in their time constraints.

Time investment is the greatest challenge for all parents in this study. Some parents found it difficult to fulfil the regular practice commitment due to time constraints and other work and family commitment. Though, as suggested by Levitan (2017), a quality

time of 5 to 10 minutes practising together with the children could make a difference, most parents shared that it is a challenging task for parents to find time and to motivate a six-to nine-year-old child to practice regularly. Parent Participant 2 said that parental support diminishes when time is limited; and similarly, Parent Participant 1 agreed that as a working mother, she faced challenges in time management in allocating time for home supervision that requires parental attention. Teacher Participant 2 as a mother herself is empathetic with the parental challenges. She said that all parents have the best interests for their children, and aspired to provide the best for their children, despite all that, there are limitation in time and energy.

Parent and teacher participants in this study concurred that parental supervision of home practice is vital to build and maintain confidence and the determination to continue music lessons. However, this can be daunting tasks to some parents. Few parent participants indicated that parents' musical background and training is essential in supporting their children's musical learning and home practice supervision as compared to those with no musical training. Parent Participant 4 shared that her previous "three years of piano learning" is "invaluable assistance" to monitor home practice. But, Parent Participant 5 also shared that his child had progressed beyond the parents' level of music knowledge and that the music had become "more complicated" so he could not provide "useful and effective" coaching.

Parents with lesser musical experience indicated that their "musical incompetency" is a hindrance to supervise their children's home practice effectively. However, they indicated that they often take an interest to monitor and engage in "listening to the child's practice" as parental support. One of the parent participants who had no prior musical training stated that the quality of parent's supervision in home practice is not determined by "expertise" but is to show interest, engagement, and encouragement. Contradictorily, Parent Participant 5 shared her predicament due to "insufficient music knowledge" as she wished to offer more than just "motivation and encouragement" to support her child's music learning. Sustaining regular music practice is a challenging task for most parents. Parent Participant 1 was perplexed with the parent-child conflict management on the degree of supervision as her child yearns for independence in "freedom to learn" and accountability for the "quantity and quality of music practices". In view of attempting and "struggling" to balance home and work, few parents also revealed their frustration and impatience in their tasks of home practice supervision and at being the "assistant music teacher". This resulted in more stress and conflicts.

From the perspectives of the music teachers on the supervision of home practice, they had diverse and contrasting response on parent's assistance. Teacher Participant 5 expressed her frustration on the assumption and confusion regarding the parental role, responsibilities, and requirements in assisting home practice. She was adamant in her disapproval of the parents' attitudes and ways of navigating home practice. She said "they are not helpful", "not making effort to communicate with the teacher", and commented that some parents are "too eager" to help but often fail to provide "correct teaching". The teacher's expectation of parents role in home practice was especially challenging in terms of time constrain and inadequate musical competency. The other four teacher participants viewed parents' support at home as beneficial to the child. They indicated some of their expectations like "prompt", "ensure", "encourage", and "listen" to the child's daily practice to increase motivation. This support is understood to

be vital to maintain the routine and repetitive music practice in between weekly music lessons.

Most student participants viewed parents' supervision of home practice as helpful and "normal" as they also monitor their other learning activities. Particularly, Student Participant 5 appreciated the parent's timely advice and reminder on "playing with correct timing and fingering". However, Student Participant 1, an adolescent, shared that music practice can be more meaningful without "reprimand and confusion" if parents can "let go" and provide space for "self-managed" and "self-determined" learning. Some students viewed parents' assistance in home practice as inimical. They indicated that parent's insistence and assertion of enormous pressure may lead to stress and anxiety which eventually "give up" and "quit" and drop out from music lessons. However, the student participants perceived parental contributions to home practice differently, and also according to the needs of different age groups.

Overall, most parents made efforts to ensure the availability of the essential facilities, a place at home conducive for undistracted home practice; and the time commitment to sit over the daily practice with their children. Nevertheless, there are challenges in the fulfilment of this commitment due to time and energy constrains, thus, frustration and struggles are inevitable. Teachers appreciated the parental involvement which is evidenced in parental support and effort attempt to organise regular home piano practice, sitting through the repetitive playing with their children. There was, therefore, some mutual respect, appreciation, and empathy between parents and teachers despite some individual differing emphases. However, other than the acknowledgement of parental efforts at home, from the differing views, both teachers and students are also circumspect about the pressures and unpleasant experiences exerted on the children in consequent of immense involvement of some parents.

Effective communication

From the vast literature, it was highlighted that the crux of effective teaching and learning in children's education placed its emphasis on effective communication and strong relationships between parents, teachers, and students which allow feelings and opinions to be respected (Creech & Hallam, 2003). Communication is reckoned as the process of establishing a shared ground in emotion, thought, and manner between individuals (Karaca, 2016).

Similarly, most parent-teacher-student participants agreed that effective communication is the key in aspiring meaningful musical learning experience and to achieve desirable learning. Parents believed that their communication with their teacher is important as regular parent-teacher communication can boost the engagement and involvement of parents more effectively. Parent Participants 1 and 2 shared that they value teachers' advice and insights. They also emphasised the importance of maintaining regular communication to build strong parent-teacher partnership concerning children's music learning progress. Parent Participants 4 and 5 said that consistent communication is a "bridge" to build positive connections between parents, teachers, and students. This enables them to monitor the child's music learning progress and to clarify learning matters.

Though substantial evidence indicates the effectiveness of communication, Parent Participant 2 considered the timing constraints, and indicated that she couldn't see significant differences and a necessity for regular communication. She said that there is mutual trust and respect between her and the child's music teacher and that they communicate when necessary. She further appraised that the child's music teacher is a reputable and well sought after teacher and may not have time to keep in touch with all parents constantly. Similarly, Parent Participant 3 had shown much understanding, and stated that "demanding" for regular communication can be an "interruption" and "interference" to music teachers' busy schedule and personal space. Parent Participant 2 reflected that communication is made easy through technology, via digital devices. Though the music teacher may not respond to her WhatsApp messages promptly, she was confident with the teacher's professionalism and the child's independence and enjoyment in learning.

Teacher participants had similar views, which is that the parents that maintained effective communication to sustain strong parent-teacher partnership is vital to further enhance students' music learning and that encouragement can boost confidence in the parent-teacher-student triads. Teacher Participant 1 maintains a regular communication with parents and students to reinforce music knowledge, and practice routine in between weekly lesson. The other four teacher participants said that with their busy teaching schedule, they communicate when necessary. They agreed that timely advice and suggestions can help parents in monitoring and scaffolding children's music practice at home. Student participants had both positive and negative comments on parent-teacher communication. They viewed themselves to be placed at the centre of music learning and embrace constructive and trust-based comments which enhance self-confidence and promote positive enthusiasm. Student Participant 2 is pleased that her music teacher often gives her parents the sincere comments on her music learning progress. The compliments increase her "motivation and self-confidence" and "praises nourish her self-esteem". In contrast, two student participants shared negative comments on parent-teacher communication. Particularly, Student Participant 1 expressed her dislike about the parent-teacher's behaviour for "always whispering" about her with negative effects. Student Participant 4 complained that the teacher was "too talkative" as she was "chatting" with the mother continuously in the music lesson. Instead of constructive and effective communication dealing with enhancement in music learning, meaningless conversation can lead to distrust and destroy positive relationships. Student Participant 5 was annoyed by the music teacher "persistently complaining" to her father and "listing all the mistakes". Student Participants 3, 4, and 5 viewed the parent-teacher communication as a manner of meandering, interrupting, whining, irrelevant, and mere complaining.

The intention and quality of parent-teacher communication skills has an implicit effect on parent-teacher-student's relationship which is vital in positive parental involvement and the enhancement of student performance and the accomplishment of successful education (Tschannen-Moran, 2001; Virginia Department of Education, 2002). In this study, parents concur with the benefits of regular communication with the teacher, but parents also "confessed" of their own priority in their daily routine and show their mutual trust with the teacher. In view of the effectiveness in regular communication with the teacher, parents also noted that they want to be considerate in not imposing inconvenience and disruption to the teacher's personal life and routine. Similarly,

teachers also shared the notion of “communicate when necessary”. Nevertheless, student participants had “innocent” comments where some of them viewed the communication as “chatting” and “gossiping”. It was observed that the parent-teacher communication extended beyond professional partnership to personal friendship. According to the students’ perception, it is important to maintain the professionalism in the teaching-learning context.

The most noteworthy finding of this study is that, though the vast literature had emphasised the relevance and importance of lesson attendance, home environment and effective communication in parental involvement, underlying challenges and dialectic views were noted among the parents, teachers, and students in this local setting in Tawau. However, all participants are receptive with positive parental involvement. Certainly, whatever the similar and differences noted in the perception of parental involvement, the adult’s participants in this study aim to provide the best provision and assistance for the children. Terms like “supportive”, “encouraging”, “understanding”, “interested”, and “crucial” are spontaneous vocabularies from the participants’ narration. This reflects the constructive views of the participants on parental involvement which in accord with Sloboda and Howe’s (1992), notion of musical achievement and accomplishment are the results of meaningful participation of the parent-teacher-student triads.

Concluding Comments

Despite a vast and extensive literature on parental involvement in music learning, in terms of location, most studies focus on the urban and suburban context (e.g. Barnes et al., 2015, Upitis, et al., 2016; Zdzinski, 2013). The studies on parental involvement in music learning has increase exponentially in Malaysia (e.g., Ang, et al., 2019a, 2019b; Choo, 2017), but on group music lessons in urban and suburban areas. Furthermore, in the study of parental involvement in children’s music learning, there is a scarcity of research in the context of smaller town. To increase our understanding and to obtain deeper insight on the relation between student-parent-teacher relation, we need to also include studies in smaller town.

In this small-scale study, while generalisation of parental involvement cannot be regarded as conclusive, it is evident that the parents in Tawau have their traditional values rooted in their culture, which emphasise responsibilities, co-operation, respect, and trust, aiming to support their children in music learning. Parental involvement is imperative to the success in music learning (Sloboda & Howe, 1992). This expectation is also evidenced in this present study, but the findings also suggest that the parents in Tawau prioritise the children’s wellbeing in music enjoyment, music appreciation, and enjoyment rather than only focusing on musical achievement. Though dialectic views were noted among parents, teachers, and students, it was observed that parents assumed the significance of their role in scaffolding and supporting their children’s music learning, regardless of cultures, locality of residence and music lesson settings. With respect to the belief and practice, the parents and music teachers in Tawau hold to traditional values which place emphasis on education and enjoyment. Parents believe that they play a significant role in their children’s music learning. They take heed of their responsibilities to provide opportunities, facilities, and resources for piano lessons and making efforts to repeat daily practice routine at home. It was observed that some

working parents diligently battle with time management to fulfil this routine. Nevertheless, there was no evidence on the stereotype Asian parental involvement or the so call “Tiger Mom”.

The present study has its limitations where the findings apply to a relatively small sample of participants which may not indicative to larger and diverse groups of individuals. Though the findings may not address the general population, nonetheless, it provides insight from a local context comparing the viewpoints of parental involvement among the parents, teachers, and students. Future studies that build on the results presented in this study are therefore suggested, preferably with a larger sample. Future studies are recommended to compare the parental involvement in one-to-one piano lesson in different location of residence, the urban, suburban areas, and smaller towns. From the methodological point of view, future studies are suggested to consider mixed method research to include questionnaire to supplement the qualitative findings of this study.

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