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The Differences in Parents' Involvement Methods During Children's Piano Learning and Their Impacts

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Abstract

With the comprehensive implementation of quality education in China, piano learning has become an important choice for children's artistic enlightenment. As the core participants in children's piano learning process, parents' participation styles vary, and these differences have a profound impact on children's learning outcomes, interest development, and mental health. This paper combines literature review and empirical research to classify parents' participation styles into three types: controlling, accompanying, and permissive. Moving beyond descriptive categorization, this study systematically analyzes the multi-dimensional mechanisms through which these modalities mediate children's motivation, technical mastery, and emotional safety. By addressing the structural "feedback vacuum" inherent in early instrumental practice, the study deduces an optimal path for supportive participation. It argues that shifting the parental role from a technical micromanager to a meta-cognitive facilitator is crucial for sustained musical development, providing actionable insights for optimizing the family-based music education ecosystem. Multiple main body coordinated intervention can effectively promote.

Keywords: children's piano education, parental involvement, participation methods, musical literacy, multi-support system

1. Introduction

In Chinese piano education, over half of novice learners discontinue their studies within their first two years.[1] While this phenomenon is often attributed to declining interest or reduced motivation, it may also be linked to a structural challenge within early instrumental pedagogy: the disconnect between the technical demands introduced during weekly lessons and the realities of independent home practice. Unlike many classroom-based learning activities, piano study relies heavily on individual practice outside formal instruction. Because standard piano instruction typically provides only one to two hours of teacher supervision per week, most learning takes place at home, where immediate professional feedback and error correction are unavailable. This creates what may be described as a feedback vacuum—a learning environment in which students must practise without continuous expert guidance.[2]

The consequences of this situation are particularly significant for young beginners. Children often lack the self-regulatory skills required for effective independent practice, including the ability to monitor errors and

[1] Percival, G., Wang, Y., & Tzanetakis, G. (2007). Effective use of multimedia for computer-assisted musical instrument tutoring. *Proceedings of the International Workshop on Educational Multimedia and Multimedia Education*, 67-76.

[2] Wilson K and Pfeiffer PE. (2023). Feedback in augmented and virtual reality piano tutoring systems: a mini review. *Front. Virtual Real., 4*, 1207397.

evaluate their own performance.[1] Without appropriate support, inefficient practice strategies and technical mistakes may become reinforced over time. In this context, external scaffolding within the home environment becomes especially important.

Among the various forms of home-based support, parental involvement has consistently been identified as a significant predictor of children's musical achievement, persistence, and engagement, particularly during the early stages of instrumental learning (Cheung, 2020; Kong, 2021). Existing research has identified multiple dimensions of parental involvement, including behavioural supervision, emotional support, and cognitive guidance (Zhang et al., 2023). While supportive parental engagement is generally associated with enhanced motivation and skill development, excessively controlling parental behaviours may undermine intrinsic motivation and negatively affect long-term musical engagement (Cheung, 2020, p. 145).

Despite these findings, important gaps remain in the literature. First, parental involvement is often examined as a broad educational construct rather than within the specific context of piano learning. Existing classifications provide limited insight into how different forms of parental intervention operate during daily home practice.[2] Second, the psychological and cognitive mechanisms through which parental involvement influences learning outcomes remain insufficiently understood. Finally, relatively little attention has been paid to how non-musician parents can effectively support children's piano practice in the absence of specialist knowledge.

To address these gaps, this study investigates how different forms of parental involvement shape children's piano learning experiences and outcomes. Specifically, it examines how parental scaffolding influences motivation, technical development, psychological well-being, and learning persistence during home practice. By developing a context-specific framework of parental involvement in piano learning, this study seeks to clarify the mechanisms underlying effective parental support and provide practical insights for reducing early attrition in piano education.

2. Types of Parental Involvement in Children's Piano Learning

This section categorizes parental involvement in children's piano learning using Baumrind's parenting-style framework. Baumrind conceptualizes parenting along two core dimensions: demandingness, referring to the degree of control, expectations, and behavioural regulation imposed on the child, and responsiveness, referring to emotional support, sensitivity, and respect for autonomy.[3] Applying this framework to piano learning requires translating these general parenting dimensions into observable home-practice behaviours. Rather than viewing parental involvement simply as "helping with practice," the present study conceptualizes it as a structured pattern of interaction situated at the intersection of expectation and support. This approach yields three distinct forms of parental involvement: authoritarian (control-oriented), authoritative (autonomy-supportive), and permissive.

Table 1. A Classification of Parental Involvement in Children's Piano Learning

Dimension	**Control-Oriented (Authoritarian)**	**Autonomy-Supportive (Authoritative)**	**Permissive**
Demandingness	High	High	Low
Responsiveness	Low	High	Low
Practice Structure	Fixed and highly regulated	Structured but flexible	Unstructured
Communication Style	Directive and corrective	Collaborative and dialogic	Minimal
Feedback Pattern	Frequent monitoring and correction	Guided reflection and support	Limited feedback
Primary Learning Goal	External achievement	Skill development and engagement	Child-led participation

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

[2] Samantha Caffull & Caroline Waddington-Jones. (2025). Understanding the achievement goals of adolescent instrumental learners. *Music Education Research, 27*(3), 260-271.

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Parental Role	Supervisor	Facilitator	Observer

2.1 Control-Oriented Participation

Control-oriented participation corresponds to Baumrind's authoritarian style and is characterized by high demandingness and low responsiveness. Within piano learning, this form of involvement emphasizes obedience, compliance, and measurable outcomes. Parental support is primarily expressed through regulation and supervision rather than emotional responsiveness. This framework manifests in three dimensions:

Temporal and Structural Rigidity. Parents impose highly structured practice schedules with fixed durations and predetermined goals. Practice is treated as a non-negotiable obligation, and musical tasks generally take priority over leisure activities or alternative pursuits.

Continuous Micro-Monitoring. Parents remain physically present during practice and closely monitor observable performance indicators, such as hand position, rhythmic accuracy, and note correctness. Feedback is predominantly corrective and focuses on immediate error detection and elimination .[1]

Outcome-Driven Pressure. Practice is evaluated according to external indicators of achievement, including examination results, competition outcomes, and technical performance standards. Parents often place strong emphasis on measurable accomplishment, viewing these outcomes as primary indicators of learning success.[2]

2.2 Autonomy-Supportive Participation

Autonomy-supportive participation corresponds to Baumrind's authoritative style and is characterized by both high demandingness and high responsiveness. Rather than abandoning structure, parents combine clear expectations with emotional support and respect for the child's autonomy. The primary objective is to facilitate learning while maintaining motivation and psychological well-being. This framework manifests in three dimensions:

Cognitive-Paced Structuring. Parents organize practice according to the child's developmental characteristics and attention span. Practice is structured through manageable and achievable tasks rather than prolonged, highly intensive sessions.[3]

Dialogic Communication. Interaction is collaborative rather than directive. Parents encourage discussion, engage in joint goal-setting, and provide feedback in ways that support reflection and problem-solving. Error correction tends to focus on specific issues sequentially rather than correcting multiple problems simultaneously.

Autonomy Facilitation. Parents create conditions that encourage independent engagement with learning. Strategies may include progress-monitoring systems, practice logs, or informal performance opportunities that allow children to exercise choice and develop ownership of their learning process.[4]

2.3 Permissive Participation

Permissive participation corresponds to Baumrind's permissive style and is characterized by low demandingness and low responsiveness. In this model, parental involvement in home practice is minimal, and responsibility for learning is largely delegated to the child or the piano teacher. This framework manifests in three dimensions:

Delegation of Responsibility. Parents regard piano learning primarily as the responsibility of the teacher and the student. Although they provide material resources such as tuition fees and instruments, they rarely monitor learning progress or engage with the practice process.[5]

Absence of Structural Boundaries. Home practice is largely unregulated. Practice frequency, duration, and goals are determined by the child, with limited parental oversight or routine formation.

Feedback Withdrawal. Communication regarding practice and learning progress is limited. Parents rarely discuss

[1] Lu, Y., et al. (2025). Reciprocal Relationships Between Parental Involvement and Academic Performance in Early Adolescence: A Two-Year Longitudinal Study in China. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 54*, 876–889.

[2] Kyna Monga. (2024). Pressure and Exam Stress: The Price of Perfection — Exploring the Psychological and Cultural Dimensions of Parental Pressure in Adolescent Exam Stress. *International Journal of Science and Research (IJSR), 13*(12), 271-273.

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learning outcomes with either the child or the teacher, resulting in a lack of ongoing guidance and monitoring during home practice.

In many cases, permissive participation emerges not from opposition to music education but from practical constraints or educational beliefs. Some parents report limited time or energy for involvement, while others feel insufficiently qualified to provide musical guidance. Still others adopt a child-centred philosophy and deliberately minimise intervention in order to preserve the child's sense of autonomy.[1]

3. The Multiple Influences of Different Parental Involvement Methods on Children's Piano Learning

3.1 Impact on Motivation and Learning Outcomes

Through the lens of Self-Determination Theory (SDT), parental involvement influences children's motivation by either supporting or frustrating their basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness.[2] Different forms of parental involvement therefore shape not only children's willingness to practise, but also the quality and effectiveness of their learning outcomes.

Under the control-oriented framework, parents impose high levels of external regulation and place considerable emphasis on achievement-related outcomes. Although this approach may increase practice time and generate short-term behavioural compliance, it often undermines the child's need for autonomy. Motivation shifts from intrinsic interest towards introjected regulation, whereby children practise primarily to avoid criticism, punishment, or parental disappointment rather than for personal enjoyment or musical satisfaction.[3] From a learning perspective, intensive parental supervision may facilitate rapid improvements in observable technical behaviours, such as hand position and rhythmic accuracy, particularly during the initial stages of learning. However, because most parents lack professional pedagogical training, technical feedback may not always be accurate. Excessive intervention may also encourage dependence on external correction, making technical progress heavily reliant on parental supervision rather than the child's active engagement with learning.[4]

In contrast, the autonomy-supportive approach balances clear expectations with respect for the child's agency. By providing guidance while preserving opportunities for choice and self-direction, parents support both competence and autonomy needs. This form of scaffolding helps maintain intrinsic motivation and encourages children to view challenges as manageable learning tasks rather than external obligations. As a result, learners are more likely to persist through technical difficulties and maintain long-term engagement with piano study.[5] In terms of learning outcomes, autonomy-supportive parents tend to facilitate practice rather than directly teach technique. By maintaining communication with teachers, helping children establish effective practice routines, and encouraging reflection on difficulties encountered during practice, they create a supportive learning environment while allowing professional instruction to remain the primary source of technical guidance. Although progress may appear less immediate, this approach often contributes to more stable and sustainable technical development over time.[6]

Conversely, permissive involvement relies largely on the child's spontaneous interest while providing limited instructional or emotional support. Although children experience relatively high levels of autonomy, they often receive insufficient support for developing competence. Because piano learning requires sustained effort and gradual mastery of increasingly complex skills, the absence of appropriate parental scaffolding may lead to repeated experiences of frustration or stagnation. Over time, these experiences weaken perceptions of competence and reduce motivation to continue learning, increasing the likelihood of disengagement and early withdrawal from piano study.[7] At the technical level, limited parental monitoring and feedback may allow errors

[1] Upitis, R., Abrami, P. C., Brook, J., & King, M. (2017). Parental involvement in children's independent music lessons. *Music Education Research, 19*(1), 74-98.

[2] Güsewell, A., & Bailer, H. (2024). Who stays? Who goes? Motivation and tendency to drop out in music schools. *Frontiers in Psychology, 15*.

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[6] Yalan, Y., & Sabri, S. (2026). The role of family in early music socialization: A systematic review of parental involvement strategies within the Chinese 'piano craze' context. *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development, 15*(1).

[7] Evans, P., McPherson, G. E., & Davidson, J. W. (2013). The role of psychological needs in ceasing music and music learning activities. *Psychology of Music, 41*(5), 600-619.

to remain unnoticed between lessons. Without sufficient support in the home environment, ineffective practice habits can become established and difficult to correct, reducing the efficiency of skill acquisition and slowing overall technical development.[1]

3.2 Impact on Mental Health and Parent–Child Relationships

Drawing on Family Systems Theory, the psychological impact of parental involvement extends beyond learning outcomes and shapes the quality of parent–child interactions during piano practice.[2] Because piano learning requires long-term commitment and frequent parent-child interaction, patterns of parental involvement can significantly influence children's emotional well-being, family dynamics, and the overall learning experience.

Under the control-oriented framework, parents often impose rigid expectations and closely monitor the learning process. As a result, piano practice may gradually shift from a learning activity to a performance-oriented situation characterised by constant evaluation. Children may become increasingly concerned about making mistakes or failing to meet parental expectations, leading to heightened practice anxiety and emotional tension.[3] From a family systems perspective, repeated negative interactions during practice can generate recursive cycles of conflict, in which parental frustration and child anxiety reinforce one another. Over time, piano practice may become a recurring source of tension within the family, negatively affecting both emotional well-being and the parent–child relationship.

In contrast, autonomy-supportive participation tends to foster a more emotionally secure learning environment. Parents provide guidance while remaining responsive to the child's emotional needs and developmental stage. Because mistakes are treated as a natural part of learning rather than evidence of failure, children are more likely to feel accepted and supported during practice. This sense of emotional safety promotes open communication, reduces conflict, and strengthens mutual trust between parents and children.[4] Consequently, piano practice is more likely to function as a shared educational experience rather than a source of family stress.

Permissive participation presents a different psychological challenge. Although overt conflict is less common due to limited parental involvement, children may receive insufficient emotional support throughout the learning process. When parents rarely engage with practice activities or discuss learning progress, some children may interpret this absence as a lack of interest in their development and achievements.[5] In situations where learning difficulties arise, the absence of both guidance and emotional reassurance may contribute to reduced self-efficacy and feelings of discouragement. As a result, children may become less confident in their ability to overcome challenges and maintain long-term engagement with piano learning.

4. Practical Implications for Optimising Parental Involvement

Building upon the preceding analysis, effective parental involvement in children's piano learning should not be understood as either strict supervision or complete non-intervention. Rather, the central issue is how parents can provide appropriate support while preserving children's motivation, emotional safety, and learning agency. The following implications suggest how parental participation may be shifted from a control-oriented or permissive pattern towards a more autonomy-supportive model.

First, parents need to reconsider the educational value attached to piano learning. When piano study is treated primarily as a means of achieving examination results, competition success, or future academic advantage, parental involvement can easily become performance-oriented and emotionally pressurised. A more productive approach is to frame piano learning as a long-term process of aesthetic development, skill formation, and personal growth. This does not mean rejecting examinations or competitions altogether, but it requires parents to position them as part of the learning process rather than as the sole measure of success.

Second, appropriate parental involvement requires dynamic scaffolding[6]. In the early stages, children often need external structure to establish practice routines and manage basic learning tasks. However, this support should

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[5] Zhang, C., Leung, B. W., & Thibeault, M. D. (2023). A proposed model of parental behaviours of music practice: based on music majors' retrospective views in mainland China. *Music Education Research, 25*(5), 496-508.

[6] Myruski, S., et al. (2022). Observed parental spontaneous scaffolding predicts neurocognitive signatures of child emotion regulation. *International Journal of Psychophysiology, 177*, 111-121.

gradually shift from direct intervention to guided independence as children develop greater technical familiarity and maturity. Parents should therefore focus less on directly correcting technical details and more on organising practice conditions, maintaining communication with teachers, and helping children develop manageable learning routines.

Third, parents should adopt more formative and process-oriented modes of feedback.[1] Instead of evaluating practice only in terms of flawless performance or immediate technical accuracy, parental feedback should recognise effort, concentration, improvement, and problem-solving. Mistakes during practice can be reframed as information for further learning rather than as evidence of failure. This perspective, consistent with a growth mindset approach,[2] can help reduce anxiety, sustain motivation, and support a healthier parent-child relationship during piano practice.

5. Conclusion

This study examined how different forms of parental involvement influence children's piano learning through the frameworks of educational psychology and music education. By applying Baumrind's parenting-style typology to the context of piano practice, the study identified three distinct patterns of parental involvement: control-oriented, autonomy-supportive, and permissive participation. It further explored how these patterns affect children's motivation, learning outcomes, psychological well-being, and parent-child relationships.

The findings suggest that parental involvement functions not merely as supplementary support, but as a critical mediating factor between formal instruction and home practice. While control-oriented participation may promote short-term compliance and technical accuracy, it often undermines children's autonomy and emotional security. Permissive participation, by contrast, provides insufficient structure and guidance to support sustained learning. Among the three approaches, autonomy-supportive participation appears to offer the most balanced framework, combining appropriate guidance with respect for the child's agency, thereby supporting both effective learning and positive psychological development.

More broadly, the study highlights the importance of reconceptualising the parental role in children's piano education. Rather than acting as technical supervisors or passive observers, parents may be most effective when functioning as supportive facilitators who provide structure, encouragement, and emotional stability while allowing professional instruction to remain the primary source of technical guidance. By fostering a learning environment that balances autonomy, support, and constructive feedback, parental involvement can contribute not only to improved musical development but also to healthier parent-child relationships and greater long-term engagement with piano learning.

Although this study focuses on piano education, its findings may also have broader implications for parental involvement in other forms of extracurricular arts education. Future research may further explore how parental participation interacts with factors such as age, learning stage, socioeconomic background, and teacher-parent communication in shaping children's long-term artistic development.

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