

## Parent-Child Interaction and Children's Art Learning in China: Influences, Contexts, and Strategies

Jun Wang<sup>1</sup>, Yu Yang Tian<sup>2</sup>, Siti Farhana Zakaria<sup>3\*</sup>, Noor Azly Mohammed Ali<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Faculty of Creative Arts, Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM), 40450 Shah Alam, Selangor, Malaysia  
Email: 2021684716@student.uitm.edu.my

<sup>2</sup>Faculty of Creative Arts, Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM), 40450 Shah Alam, Selangor, Malaysia  
Email: 2022790015@student.uitm.edu.my

<sup>3</sup>Faculty of Creative Arts, Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM), 40450 Shah Alam, Selangor, Malaysia  
Email: farha981@uitm.edu.my

<sup>4</sup>Faculty of Creative Arts, Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM), 40450 Shah Alam, Selangor, Malaysia  
Email: noora568@uitm.edu.my

### CORRESPONDING AUTHOR (\*):

Siti Farhana Zakaria  
(farha981@uitm.edu.my)

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### ABSTRACT

This study explores the role and impact of parent-child interaction in children's art education within a global context. As global educational paradigms shift, art education has evolved from skill development to fostering creativity, cultural identity, and social development. Despite China's emphasis on traditional cultural heritage, family art education faces challenges such as urban-rural disparities and uneven resource allocation. Through qualitative analysis, this study compares international trends with Chinese practices, examining how the frequency and quality of parent-child interaction influence children's interest in art, artistic skills, and emotional expression. The results unveil that high-quality parent-child interaction significantly enhances children's artistic abilities, stimulates their interest in art, and improves emotional expression. Collaborative and supportive models of parent-child interaction in international education provide valuable insights for Chinese families. The study recommends improving parental art literacy, promoting community art programs, and optimizing resource allocation to enhance the quality of family art education and support children's holistic development. These measures aim to bridge gaps in art education and foster inclusive and effective ways to nurture children's creativity and cultural awareness.

**Contribution/Originality:** This study innovatively integrates ecological systems theory, conducts cross-cultural comparisons of parent-child interactions and art education, incorporates the "Double Reduction" policy, proposes optimization strategies, balances traditional culture with modern education, fills theoretical gaps, and provides practical guidance.

## 1. Introduction

With the policy reforms by the Chinese government ([Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2024](#)) and the acceleration of globalization ([UNESCO, 2021](#)), many scholars suggest enhancing parent-child interaction to enable children to grow up in a sound atmosphere ([Daelmans et al., 2017](#)). The recent policy reforms introduced in China are expected to strengthen traditional parent-child relationships by encouraging parental involvement in extracurricular activities both within and outside the home, while also reducing the homework load assigned by schools ([Fang & Caiping, 2022](#)). This allows parents and children to enjoy quality family time, foster parent-child communication, and ultimately benefit the children ([Lin, 2023](#)).

Family plays a fundamental role in shaping children's socialization during their development. Family education, occurring within family life and centered around parent-child relationships, represents educational activities aimed at cultivating individuals needed by society. It occupies a crucial position among the various family factors that influence child development. The effectiveness of family education depends not only on the educators' (primarily parents') educational motivations and content, but to a greater extent on parenting styles - the methods and forms selected and employed when implementing education for children. In other words, appropriate parenting styles facilitate children's holistic development, whereas unsuitable approaches may hinder their growth. Amid rapid economic development and national transformation, Chinese parents' increasing preference for Western culture has significantly altered contemporary parent-child relationships in China. This transformation has resulted in conflicts between modern and traditional parenting approaches. Through analysis of numerous Chinese and Western literature from the past five years and interview findings, it has been discovered that joint participation in artistic activities can enhance parent-child relationships. However, current research indicates there is still a lack of comprehensive studies regarding the improvement of parent-child relationships through artistic activities. This study explores the specific impacts of parent-child interaction on children's artistic learning outcomes ([Gao et al., 2022](#)). The Guidelines for the Learning and Development of Children emphasize that parents should develop children's comprehensive abilities through joint activities, collaborative creation, and shared experiences with their children ([Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2012](#)). Parent-child relationships are defined as a unique and influential bond that plays a critical role in the physical and psychological development of children through interactions between parents and children. Such relationships not only reduce anxiety in both parents and children and shape children's moral behavior but also promote the development of their social behaviors ([Shao & Kang, 2022](#)).

With the acceleration of globalization, art education has become not only an essential means of fostering children's creativity and aesthetic abilities but also a critical domain for enhancing their social adaptability and cultural identity ([Bronfenbrenner, 1979](#); [Eisner, 2003](#)). Ecological systems theory coined by Bronfenbrenner offers a multidimensional framework for delineating child development, emphasizing the complex interactions between individuals and their environments ([Bronfenbrenner, 1979](#)). Within the microsystem, the family serves as the central environment for child development, where the quality of parent-child interactions directly influences the development of children's cognitive, emotional, and social abilities ([Bronfenbrenner, 1979](#); [Seror, 2022](#)). Within the macrosystem, cultural contexts and social policies further shape the forms and content of art education ([Bronfenbrenner, 1979](#); [Logan & Curry,](#)

2015). Parenting or teaching can be challenging, but the positive aspect is that we can acquire skills to strengthen our relationships with children and improve our approach to raising them (Spyrou, 2020). Children act as future-makers (Spyrou, 2020). Positive parenting and discipline foster respectful, trusting, empathetic, and communicative relationships not only between parents and children but also between teachers and students (Apaydin, 2022). In recent years, international trends in art education have emphasized the integration of creativity, cultural identity, and social inclusion, while family-based art education in China seeks to balance the preservation of traditional culture with modern educational principles (Eryong & Li, 2021).

### 1.1. Research Objectives

- i. To examine how the frequency and quality of parent-child interactions influence children's interest in art, artistic skill development, and emotional expression.
- ii. To identify the cultural and social factors that contribute to family-based art education practices in China.
- iii. To propose strategies and recommendations for optimizing family art education, offering practical guidance for families, educators, and policymakers.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Global Trends in Children's Art Education

In recent years, with the transformation of global educational paradigms, the value of art education has become increasingly prominent (Kremer, 2020). Its focus has shifted from traditional skill training to fostering children's critical thinking, creativity, and emotional expression abilities (Eisner, 2003). This shift not only reflects the significant role of art education in personal development but also aligns with the demand for innovation and multicultural understanding in the context of globalization. Many countries, such as Finland and Japan, have integrated art education into their core curricula, emphasizing interdisciplinary integration and cultural heritage preservation (Ho, 2023). For example, Finland's education system uses art education to enhance students' interdisciplinary collaboration skills and problem-solving abilities in real-world contexts, while Japan fosters students' cultural identity through traditional craft courses, such as calligraphy and origami (Zhu, 2024). In addition, the widespread availability of online art resources and community art activities has provided new avenues for family education. These resources not only enrich the content of art education but also offer children broader learning opportunities (Cano, 2022). For instance, AI-powered interactive painting, as an emerging form of art education, has significantly sparked children's interest and engagement through 3D animations and interactive experiences. This innovative educational approach not only enhances children's artistic skills but also fosters their creativity and emotional expression abilities.

### 2.2. The Current Status and Characteristics of Family Art Education in China

In China, art education is regarded as a vital component of high-quality education. In recent years, the implementation of the "Double Reduction" policy has further highlighted the importance of art education (Fang & Caiping, 2022). However, family art education in China still faces challenges such as urban-rural disparities and uneven distribution of educational resources (Chang, 2020). For example, urban families often have access to higher-quality art education resources, while rural families may be

constrained by economic limitations and resource scarcity (Wu Jin et al., 2024). In addition, family art education in China heavily relies on the transmission of traditional culture, such as cultivating children's artistic talents and cultural identity through calligraphy, paper-cutting, and other forms. This traditional culture-centered approach not only contributes to the development of children's artistic skills but also strengthens their sense of cultural identity and national pride.

### **2.3. The importance of parent-child interaction is crucial in the field of children's art education**

High-quality parent-child interactions not only stimulate children's curiosity but also foster emotional bonds and provide psychological support (Kunzman & Gaither, 2020; Robinson et al., 2021). Research indicates that parent-child interactions have a significant impact on children's cognitive, emotional, and social development, fostering their artistic abilities, creativity, and cultural awareness (Huang et al., 2021). For example, art activities involving joint participation between parents and children can significantly enhance children's critical thinking and problem-solving skills (Fernandes et al., 2020).

Furthermore, emotional expression plays a pivotal role in art education. Through artistic activities, children can express complex emotions in a healthy manner while receiving emotional support from their parents, thereby enhancing their self-esteem and sense of security. According to Raby et al. (2021), when a child confidently explores their environment in the absence of a parent, it indicates a secure attachment formed through consistent care, sensitivity, and positive reinforcement from the parent. In contrast, limited exploration suggests an insecure attachment within the parent-child relationship (Seror, 2022). Secure attachment enables the parent to act as a reliable foundation for the child's exploration, characterized by warmth and responsiveness to both physical and emotional needs. This secure bond supports the development of the child's emotional and behavioral regulation (Gurwitsch et al., 2024).

The quality of parent-child interactions is also closely tied to socio-cultural contexts. In China, parent-child interaction patterns are often influenced by traditional family values, where parents tend to assume the roles of instructors and supervisors rather than collaborators in children's artistic activities. In contrast, international education emphasizes equality and collaboration in parent-child interactions, with parents typically participating as supporters and partners in children's art learning (Callanan et al., 2020). Parental interactions play a crucial role in shaping both cognitive and noncognitive skill development. As children learn from their parents, they not only build cognitive abilities but also develop noncognitive traits—such as motivation—that further encourage continued learning (Seror, 2022). This difference affects the development of children's creativity and also reflects variations in educational philosophies across different cultural contexts.

## **3. Research Methodology**

### **3.1. Research Design**

This study adopts a qualitative research design to explore the impact of parent-child interaction on children's art learning outcomes in China. Guided by Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1986), the study examines how various

environmental systems—such as the family, educational institutions, and broader socio-cultural settings—shape children’s art education experiences. The qualitative research design enables an in-depth understanding of the emotional, cognitive, and cultural dynamics underlying family-based art learning.

### **3.2. Participants**

A total of 11 participants (P1-P11) were selected through purposive sampling to capture a diverse range of perspectives related to children’s art education. The sample included kindergarten teachers, school principals, founders of children’s art education institutions, professors and PhD researchers in children’s art education, as well as parents from both urban and rural areas in various Chinese cities. This multi-stakeholder composition enriched the analysis by incorporating both professional insights and firsthand parental experiences concerning parent-child interaction and family art education practices.

### **3.3. Data Collection Methods**

Data were collected through semi-structured one-on-one interviews, conducted online with each participant. Each interview session lasted approximately 45 to 60 minutes. The interview questions were developed based on key principles of early childhood and kindergarten education, national policy guidelines, and relevant academic literature (Oppenheim, 1966). The interviews focused on participants’ experiences, observations, and reflections regarding interactive family art activities, with particular attention to emotional engagement, learning behaviors, cultural practices, and institutional or community support structures.

### **3.4. Data Analysis**

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke’s six-phase approach. This included familiarization with the data, generation of initial codes, searching for and reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and compiling the final report. Thematic analysis allowed the researcher to identify recurring patterns related to how parent-child interactions influence children’s artistic interest, skill development, and emotional expression, as well as how cultural and systemic factors shape family-based art education.

### **3.5. Trustworthiness and Limitations**

To ensure validity and reliability, the interview questions were grounded in established educational theory and aligned with national policy frameworks. However, the subjective nature of qualitative interviews presents certain limitations. Response bias and social desirability bias may have influenced how participants portrayed their experiences, potentially affecting the accuracy of the data and the generalizability of the findings.

### **3.6. Ethical Considerations**

Ethical approval was obtained from UITM ethics committee. All participants were informed of the purpose of the study and their rights, including confidentiality, voluntary participation, and the option to withdraw at any time. Informed consent was

obtained prior to participation, with additional clarification provided where necessary to ensure participant understanding.

## 4. Research Findings

### 4.1. Frequency and Quality of Parent-Child Interactions

The findings reveal that the frequency and quality of parent-child interactions, situated within the microsystem of the family, serve as a central role in affecting children's engagement with art, skill development, and emotional expression. High-quality interactions—characterized by warmth, responsiveness, and shared engagement—enhance children's learning by providing emotional support and cognitive stimulation (Ewin et al., 2021). When parents participate in art-making and engage children in guided conversations, it not only promotes a deeper understanding of artistic concepts such as color, form, and space (Sharim et al., 2024), but also nurtures emotional expression through shared creative experiences (Chen et al., 2022).

This is reflected in the words of one parent: *“When we draw together, she tells me why she chose each color. I can see her feelings through her drawings.”* (P3). Another parent echoed this sentiment (P3), saying, *“Sometimes my child draws what happened at school that day. It becomes our way of communicating, especially when she doesn't feel like talking directly.”* These responses highlight how the immediate family environment serves not only as a platform for skill-building (Peppler et al., 2022; Sengonul, 2022), but also as a space for emotional connection and psychological safety—consistent with Bronfenbrenner's (1979; 1986) concept of the microsystem (Yuan et al., 2021).

The study also found that the quality of parent-child interactions is influenced by parenting styles (Ewin et al., 2021; Seror, 2022). Parents who adopted authoritative approaches—those who balance sensitivity with structure—tended to foster more open and expressive environments during art activities. One father shared, *“I don't correct her drawing. Instead, I ask her, ‘Tell me about your picture.’ She becomes more confident every time.”* (P2). Such interactions promote children's agency and creative thinking while reinforcing positive attachment and communication (Holmgren et al., 2022; Phillips & Mychailyszyn, 2021).

According to Bronfenbrenner's (1979; 1986) theory, the mesosystem involves the linkages between microsystems—such as family and school (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2013; Perron, 2017). This study found that the impact of parent-child interactions at home often extended into children's behavior and performance in early education settings. A kindergarten teacher noted, *“Children who often do art with their parents are more confident in class. They're not afraid to try new things or talk about their ideas.”* (P5). This supports the idea that enriching experiences in one setting (home) can positively influence outcomes in another (school), demonstrating the interdependence of microsystems within the mesosystem.

The exosystem, which includes external influences such as parents' work conditions and access to resources, also played a significant role (Perron, 2017; Vélez-Agosto et al., 2017). Two mothers from a rural area reflected, *“I want to spend more time drawing with him, but after working all day, I'm too tired. We don't have any art centers nearby either.”* (P7). In contrast, a parent from a well-resourced urban community shared, *“We go to weekend art workshops together. It helps me learn too, and we get inspired to continue the*

*activities at home.*" (P6). These examples illustrate how environmental factors outside the child's immediate experience can still shape their learning context by influencing the parent's capacity to engage.

Finally, the macrosystem, which represents broader cultural values and policies, also emerged as an important theme. Some participants noted that traditional education systems in China still prioritize academic achievement over creative development. One participant, a children's art education researcher, stated, *"Many parents still think art is just a hobby. Unless the system values creativity, family attitudes won't change much."* (P8). This cultural perspective filters down to shape how families perceive and prioritize art activities, ultimately influencing the child's developmental environment.

In summary, interpreted through Bronfenbrenner's (1979; 1986) ecological systems theory, the findings demonstrate that children's art learning is not determined solely by direct parent-child interactions (Holochwost et al., 2024; Pepler et al., 2023), but rather by a dynamic interplay of systems—ranging from the nurturing home environment to institutional support and cultural beliefs. A holistic approach to family art education must therefore consider both individual relationships and the broader structural context that supports or limits them.

#### 4.2. Cultural and Social Influences on Family-Based Art Education

The findings suggest that family-based art education practices in China are deeply shaped by cultural values, societal expectations, and structural inequalities, aligning with Bronfenbrenner's (1979; 1986) macrosystem and exosystem levels. While many parents recognize the benefits of engaging in artistic activities with their children, their behaviors and attitudes are often influenced by broader socio-cultural narratives that prioritize academic achievement over creative expression (Duncum, 2002).

Several participants acknowledged a prevailing cultural emphasis on academic success, which often sidelines art education in the family setting. A school principal stated, *"Many parents still see drawing as a side activity—something nice, but not essential. Their main focus is math, reading, and test preparation."* (P11). This reflects a value system embedded in the macrosystem, where national education policies and social norms reinforce the idea that academic performance is the key to upward mobility. These norms create subtle pressure for families to allocate more time and resources to academic pursuits, limiting opportunities for creative engagement at home (Freedman, 2000; Sullivan, 1993).

Parents also shared that their own educational backgrounds and social class influenced their confidence and willingness to support their children's artistic growth (Damerow, 2023). A mother from a rural area admitted, *"I didn't learn art in school, so I don't know how to teach my child. I just give her crayons, but I can't help her much."* (P1). In contrast, a well-educated urban parent noted, *"I studied design, so I naturally include art in our daily activities. It's part of our routine."* (P4). These contrasting experiences highlight how the exosystem—including parents' education, socioeconomic status, and access to art-related knowledge—affects their involvement in art education (Sincuba, 2024).

Geographic disparities also emerged as a significant factor. Families in urban areas generally had greater access to extracurricular art programs, museums, and community workshops, which enriched their children's exposure to artistic environments. A parent

from a major city explained, *"We go to the art museum almost every month. They have kid-friendly events, and it inspires us to create at home too."* (P10). On the other hand, a rural kindergarten teacher reported, *"In our town, there are no formal art classes. Children only draw at school if we make time for it."* (P10). These findings highlight the structural inequalities embedded in the exosystem, particularly in terms of resource availability and infrastructure.

The mesosystem is also relevant here, especially in cases where schools attempt to bridge the gap between cultural values and family practice (Váradi, 2022). Some schools actively encouraged parent-child collaboration through art-themed homework or events. A teacher shared, *"We organize family art days where parents and children work together. Some parents discover their kids' talents for the first time."* (P3). These activities helped build connections between the school and home environments, fostering a more supportive context for children's creative development.

Finally, the cultural perception of creativity itself plays a shaping role. In traditional Chinese culture, creativity has not always been viewed as central to formal education. However, there are signs of shifting attitudes. One children's art education researcher observed, *"Parents are slowly realizing that creativity is important, especially in this new era. But change is slow and uneven."* (P1). This suggests that while the macrosystem is evolving, long-standing cultural narratives still influence how families engage with art education.

Overall, the findings underscore that family-based art education in China cannot be separated from its broader cultural and social environment. Interpreted through Bronfenbrenner's (1979; 1986) ecological systems theory, these influences span across multiple systems—from parents' personal histories and community resources (exosystem), to prevailing cultural beliefs and national education values (macrosystem). Addressing disparities in family art education thus requires a multi-layered approach that recognizes both individual agency and systemic constraints.

### 4.3. Strategies for Optimizing Family-Based Art Education

Based on participants' insights and consistent with Bronfenbrenner's (1979; 1986) ecological systems theory, the study identified several actionable strategies to enhance the effectiveness of family-based art education in China. These strategies span across multiple ecological layers—including individual, institutional, and societal levels—and highlight the importance of a collaborative, culturally sensitive, and system-oriented approach (Carlisle, 2011; Nevanen et al., 2012).

At the microsystem level, the quality of parent-child engagement emerged as a critical foundation for meaningful art learning. Many participants emphasized the importance of parental involvement, even when parents lacked formal art training. One parent shared, *"I don't know much about art, but just sitting and drawing with my son makes him so happy. He doesn't need me to be a teacher—just someone who's there."* Another mother reflected, *"I used to think I had to teach him something every time we did art. But then I realized it's more important to just enjoy the process with him."* (P4). These quotes illustrate that emotional presence, shared attention, and a non-judgmental environment often matter more than technical expertise (Hughes, 2011). Encouraging parents to participate without fear of "doing it wrong" can foster stronger emotional bonds and nurture creativity.

To support this, participants recommended community-based workshops and parent-child art sessions that provide guidance and build parental confidence (Rousell & Fell, 2018). A children's art education provider explained, *"We hold family art days to show parents that art isn't about perfection. It's about expression and connection. That changes their whole approach."* (P5). A teacher added, *"Some parents come to the workshops shy, but they leave saying they want to do more art at home. It opens up a new side of their relationship with their kids."* (P5). These initiatives reflect the mesosystem, where schools, institutions, and families interact. By designing programs that intentionally bring these systems together, communities can strengthen the bridge between professional educational settings and home-based learning.

At the exosystem level, participants identified the need for greater accessibility to art education resources, particularly in rural areas. A principal from a small town stated, *"Urban families have museums and workshops everywhere. We need mobile programs or online platforms for small towns like ours."* (P11). A rural parent expressed, *"We don't have art teachers or centers nearby. If there were more online videos or even printed guides, I'd love to try things at home."* (P9). These examples underscore how geographic and economic disparities influence whether families can access quality support for their children's creative development (Richardson, 2010). Suggestions included mobile art buses, virtual art classes, and government-supported resource kits that can be distributed to underserved families.

The macrosystem—comprising national educational values, cultural narratives, and policy frameworks—also plays a decisive role. Participants noted that a shift in public perception is necessary to elevate the value of creativity within the formal and informal education system. One early childhood education researcher observed, *"Art is still seen as secondary. Until policies and teacher training prioritize it, many families will follow the academic-first mindset."* (P6). Another participant, a parent and former art teacher, noted, *"When schools treat art like a break instead of a subject, parents don't take it seriously either."* (P5). In response, participants called for policy-level integration of arts into early childhood education, enhanced teacher training, and public campaigns that promote the role of creativity in children's development. These system-wide changes can help normalize and institutionalize the practice of family-based art education.

Finally, some participants suggested that digital tools—such as interactive apps or video tutorials—can act as entry points for art activities, especially for tech-savvy younger parents. However, they emphasized that these tools must complement, not replace, real parent-child interaction. One father stated, *"We sometimes use YouTube to find new ideas, but the best part is when we start doing our own version of the project together."* (P3). A parent from a suburban area added, *"Technology makes art more accessible, but it shouldn't be just another screen activity. It has to be personal."* (P2).

In summary, the study's findings suggest that optimizing family art education requires a multi-layered strategy that supports parents, builds institutional partnerships, ensures equitable access to resources, and fosters a cultural shift in how art and creativity are valued. Interpreted through Bronfenbrenner's (1979; 1986) ecological systems theory, the proposed strategies recognize that children's learning environments are shaped not only by immediate family interactions, but also by broader educational structures and societal narratives. Effective reform must therefore engage all levels of the system—from home practices to national policy—to create a more inclusive and creativity-enabling ecosystem for children.

## 5. Discussion

This study explored how parent-child interactions shape children's art learning in the Chinese context, drawing upon [Bronfenbrenner's \(1979; 1986\)](#) ecological systems theory to interpret findings across multiple environmental levels ([Perron, 2017](#); [Seror, 2022](#); [Sincuba, 2024](#)). The results offer important insights into the emotional, cognitive, and sociocultural dimensions of family-based art education.

The findings confirm that high-quality parent-child interaction within the microsystem—characterized by warmth, responsiveness, and shared participation—has a strong influence on children's artistic interest, skill development, and emotional expression. These results reinforce prior research on the benefits of parental engagement in early childhood learning and demonstrate that even non-expert parents can meaningfully support creative growth when emotional presence and encouragement are present ([Cotantino et al., 2010](#)). This underscores the importance of fostering a home environment that values process over product and creativity over correctness.

Furthermore, the study revealed that broader social and cultural factors—such as parental education level, geographic disparities, and dominant academic values—significantly affect how families engage with art education. These elements reflect the influence of the exosystem and macrosystem ([Ewin et al., 2021](#); [Perron, 2017](#)), where external structures such as access to art resources and prevailing societal norms indirectly shape the child's development. In particular, rural families reported limited access to structured art programs, while urban families with greater cultural capital were more likely to incorporate art into their daily routines ([Váradi, 2022](#)). The persistent prioritization of academic achievement within Chinese society also continues to shape parental attitudes, often diminishing the perceived value of artistic and creative pursuits at home.

The study also identified opportunities for mesosystemic collaboration, particularly in efforts to bridge gaps between families, schools, and community institutions. When schools organize art-related events that encourage parent-child collaboration ([Yuan et al., 2021](#)), or when local organizations provide informal art spaces, the reinforcement of creativity across these systems enhances children's exposure to supportive learning environments. These mesosystemic interactions demonstrate how intentional partnerships can significantly influence home-based learning behaviors and parental attitudes toward art education.

### 5.1. Theoretical Implications

Theoretically, this study extends [Bronfenbrenner's \(1979; 1986\)](#) ecological systems theory into the domain of family-based art education in China ([Perron, 2017](#)), an area that remains underrepresented in developmental and educational research. By illustrating how micro-level interactions are shaped by broader socio-cultural structures, the study reinforces the importance of adopting a multi-layered ecological perspective when analyzing children's learning experiences. Additionally, it contributes to the cross-cultural application of [Bronfenbrenner's \(1979; 1986\)](#) model by situating child development within a uniquely Chinese context, where Confucian traditions, educational reforms, and modern parenting values converge.

The study also highlights the fluid interplay between ecological systems. For example, changes in macrosystemic values—such as increased societal recognition of creativity—can influence exosystemic decisions about resource allocation, which in turn shape the mesosystemic relationship between schools and families, eventually enhancing the quality of interactions in the child's microsystem. This dynamic interconnectivity emphasizes the need to consider system-wide strategies for promoting family-based art education.

## 5.2. Practical Implication

From a practical standpoint, the findings suggest that supporting parental involvement through community-based initiatives is essential. Schools, art institutions, and local organizations can play a key role in equipping parents with the confidence and basic skills needed to engage in art activities with their children. These efforts may include organizing parent-child workshops, creating resource kits for home use, or offering short training sessions that demystify art as a form of play and connection.

Equally important is the need to address urban-rural disparities in access to art education. Families in under-resourced areas would benefit from policies that support mobile art programs, digital learning platforms, and affordable materials that make artistic engagement more accessible. In addition, early childhood education policy should more explicitly integrate art and creativity into formal curricula, helping to shift public attitudes and institutional priorities. Public awareness campaigns and teacher training programs can also contribute to building a more supportive cultural environment that values creativity as essential to children's holistic development.

Technology also offers potential pathways to support family art education, especially for younger, tech-savvy parents. Interactive platforms, video tutorials, and mobile applications can serve as creative prompts and learning aids. However, these tools should be positioned as complements to, rather than replacements for, direct and meaningful parent-child interaction.

## 6. Conclusion

This study highlights the pivotal role of parent-child interaction in shaping children's artistic development, while framing these dynamics within [Bronfenbrenner's \(1979; 1986\)](#) ecological systems theory. It demonstrates that children's art learning is not determined solely by the immediate family environment, but is deeply embedded in a wider system of cultural, institutional, and structural influences. These systems interact in dynamic ways, shaping not only how families perceive and engage with art, but also the resources and opportunities available to them.

In the Chinese context, where academic achievement remains culturally dominant, promoting a more balanced and creativity-enabling learning environment requires interventions at multiple levels. Families must be empowered to see themselves as capable co-learners in their children's creative journey; schools and communities must act as bridges that provide access, guidance, and encouragement; and policy reforms must acknowledge art education as a vital component of childhood development.

By recognizing and addressing the complex ecology in which children grow and learn, we can move toward a more inclusive, equitable, and culturally responsive approach to

family-based art education—one that nurtures not just creative ability, but emotional intelligence, cultural awareness, and the parent-child bond.

Although this study has revealed the connection between parent-child interaction and children's art education, there are still some limitations. Future research could:

- i. Expand cross-cultural samples: By expanding cross-cultural samples, more diverse interaction patterns can be revealed. This will help better understand the differences in parent-child interaction across different cultural contexts and their impact on children's art learning.
- ii. Focus on the application of digital technology: With the widespread adoption of digital technology, future research should examine its application in family art education and explore how it can support parent-child interaction (Cao, 2022). For example, AI-powered interactive drawing and virtual art exhibitions offer new avenues for family art education.
- iii. Study the sustainability of family art education: Examine how policy support and community collaboration can promote the development of family art education in both urban and rural areas (Lu et al., 2022). For example, improve the resource scarcity of rural family art education through community art projects and support from public institutions.
- iv. Optimize parent-child interaction models: Research how to promote equality and collaboration in parent-child interaction through family art projects and community activities, thereby reducing the urban-rural gap.

### **Ethics Approval and Consent to Participate**

This study followed the research ethics guidelines set by the Research Ethics Committee of Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM). All procedures involving human participants were carried out in compliance with the ethical standards of the institutional research committee. Informed consent was obtained from all participants in accordance with the principles outlined in the Declaration of Helsinki.

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### **Conflict of Interest**

The authors reported no conflicts of interest for this work.

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