

Current Kindergarten Parents' Attitudes toward and Beliefs about Children's Art Education in Majority Cities and Counties of Taiwan

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Abstract

Current kindergarten parents' attitudes toward and beliefs about children's art education in majority cities and counties of Taiwan were investigated. A review of the literature was conducted to identify several possible influences on parents' interpretation/ assessment of children's art education. Then, the researcher developed and distributed a questionnaire for parents; 1,010 copies were distributed and 800 copies returned—of these, 758 were valid. Findings were as follows: (1) Parents' occupations, educational backgrounds, genders, ages, classes attended by children, and children's genders had significant effects on the interpretation of children's art education. (2) More than 66% of Taiwanese kindergarten teachers used the theme-based teaching approach. (3) Over 72% of parents believed that kindergarten art educators should have basic drawing skills and familiarity with art supplies and craft equipment. (4) Majority parents believed children could attend art classes by 3 years of age, and also informed that their children had attended art classes at that age.

Keywords: kindergarten parents' beliefs, children's art education, children's art functions, integrated curriculum, teaching methodology

1. Introduction

The Government of Taiwan plans to initiate the first stage of the Five-Year Aesthetic Education Project which will span the years 2014 to 2018. Additionally, the Ministry of Education plans to initiate the Root Project of Aesthetics and Arts Education for Preschool Students (MOE, 2013), which aims to encourage the offering of aesthetic experiences for every preschool child and to lay a foundation for their future learning of aesthetics. In the Temporary Curriculum Guidelines for Early Childhood Education, announced by the Ministry of Education in August 2012, the "aesthetic discipline" was incorporated in the curriculum because preschool education is critical to the enlightenment of the aesthetic domain. Aesthetic education should be implemented in a progressive, systematic way to ensure that all become familiar with aesthetics in schools, the community, and society as a whole. Moreover, all citizens should reach a consensus on the promotion of aesthetic education. When aesthetics becomes a necessity, citizens' aesthetic domain will be improved, thereby making Taiwan a country with aesthetic competitiveness (MOE, 2013). To learn about current Taiwanese parents' knowledge of the aesthetics discipline in the Temporary Curriculum Guidelines for Early Childhood Education, the researcher initiated an investigation.

Art is a part of the preschool curriculum for its own sake (Bruner, 1990; Thompson, 1995). No other component of the curriculum introduces children to an appreciation and understanding of the visual arts. Children should have awareness and knowledge of form, color, shape, line, and texture in artwork and in their environment. They should be able to create their own artwork and to appreciate the work of others. No other subject meets this need (Seefeldt & Barbour, 1998). The researcher has taught young children's art education in kindergartens for more than 15 years, as well as engaging in children's art education studies in southern Taiwan. A search of online research databases indicated that no studies of or large-scale surveys had been conducted with Taiwanese parents to assess their background in children's art and interpretation/assessment of children's art education from their artworks. Therefore, the researcher developed a study to investigate parents' attitudes toward and beliefs about children's art education on the main Island of Taiwan and the outlying islands. Results may offer parents useful knowledge about tutoring children in art education or interpreting/assessing children's artworks, and useful

suggestions for art educators. Moreover, results may affect the ways in which art education teaching is offered to students in both public and private kindergartens.

1.1 Research Questions

The purpose of the study was to investigate parents' attitudes and beliefs about art education for kindergarten-aged children in the majority cities of Taiwan. The following questions were posed:

- 1) What are current kindergarten parents' attitudes toward and beliefs about children's art education in Taiwan? What is current kindergarten children's art-making experience and parents' perspective of art educators' expertise in Taiwan?
- 2) Are there differences among parents' views of kindergarten art education according to their backgrounds and beliefs?

Based on the above research questions, the following hypotheses termed assumptions were examined in this study:

- a. Hypothesis 1: The interpretation of children's art education would vary according to the genders of children.
- b. Hypothesis 2: The interpretation of children's art education would vary according to the type of kindergarten.
- c. Hypothesis 3: The interpretation of children's art education would vary according to the classes attended by children.
- d. Hypothesis 4: The interpretation of children's art education will vary according to the parents' age.
- e. Hypothesis 5: The interpretation of children's art education will vary according to the genders of parents.
- f. Hypothesis 6: The interpretation of children's art would vary according to the parents' highest education degree earned.
- g. Hypothesis 7: The interpretation of children's art would vary according to parents' occupations.

2. Literature Review of Relevant Researches

2.1 Art as Cognitive Activity

The ability to represent one's experience through symbols is a primary cognitive achievement for young children (Golomb, 1992; Goodenough, 1926; Thompson, 1995, Toren, 2004). In creating art, children must organize their actions and thoughts into symbols and patterns (Lu, 2013). They reason, create, invent, and solve problems; for instance, children must decide how to fit two pieces of clay together, which shapes to use to express an idea, or how to make a piece of play dough stand up (Hsiao, 2008). They give concrete representation to abstract concepts, notions, and feelings (Seefeldt & Barbour, 1998).

2.2 Art as Emotional Expression

"The expressive arts foster learning from the inside out" (Jalongo, 1990, p. 196). Psychoanalytic theorists approve of art because it is emotionally satisfying; they believe that, through the visual arts, a certain quantity of tension can be released while allowing expression of emotions, thoughts, and opinions (Lowenfeld, 1970). "Feelings that cannot to be identified or named find expression" (Seefeldt & Barbour, 1998, p. 388). Anger and frustration may be positively released during work with play dough, paint, or wood; pleasure and merriness can be expressed with crayons, markers, and paper (Hsiao, 2008). Children's feelings of competence and self-confidence increase as they create an artwork (Chen, 1997). The sense of achievement that arises from creating art fosters children's emotional development (Hsiao & Kuo, 2013).

2.3 Art as Academic Enhancement

Winner, Goldstein, and Vincent-Lancrin (2013) stated that art offers a different way of understanding than the sciences, math, and other academic subjects. Children who do not practice art do not achieve as well as those who have had lots of art experiences. The power of art to cultivate children's academic skills has been fully documented (Danko-McGhee & Slutsky, 2003). Since art demands that children think of an experience, view, or feeling and then find symbols to express it, art is an extremely symbolic activity. Academic skills require children to have the ability to figure out something not present and then represent the idea in symbolic form (Tuman, 2000). "Art is learning and thinking itself" (Brewer, 2001, p. 389). Art is now believed to be necessary for learning to write and read (Kindler & Darras, 1994; Raines & Canady, 1990). As children scribble, they employ all the strokes needed to write. Thus, their scribbles are the beginning of written language (Clay, 1975). In fact, drawing may be the single most essential leading activity for reading and writing (Klein, 1985; Olson, 1992). Hsiao (2008) found that early childhood educators who adopted different teaching methods had a great

impact on children's artworks and parents' perspectives of art.

2.4 Art as Media and Cultural Experience

Hamilton (1992) believed in social effects on beliefs and advised that culture was influential in shaping them. Cultures affect children's learning processes, not only with regard to graphic symbols and forms, but also according to whole patterns of behavior that are characteristic of them (Chen, 1997). M. Wilson and B. Wilson (2010) noted that male children's drawings may indicate interactions in "child internal biases, the influences of the culture, of graphic models from the media" (p. 161). Kim (2008) claimed that the male child borrows settings and characters from media and then develops a new story.

In sum, art is serious and essential work. Through the visual arts, children express their thoughts, beliefs, and feelings using symbols (Hsiao, 2008). Since art is a symbolic process, it requires careful thought on the part of both parent and children. The parent's role is a vital one for cultivating children's art ability (Lin, 2006; Page, 2007; Wu, 2002). He or she is responsible for understanding the theories and values of children's art as well as being able to translate them to other academic subjects (Seefeldt & Barbour, 1998).

2.5 Art as Assessable

In spite of diversity of definitions on art in past, it is very important to the ways of assessment of art. Assessment can help parents and children to become aware of particular advantages and interests (Hsiao & Pai, 2014; Toren, 2007). Parents can assist children in developing these interests and to evolve some form of continuity and development in their work (Hwan & Hsiao, 2008). As a parent gains experience in talking with children about their art, the processing of assessments becomes easier and more accurate (Lu, 2013). This has the effect of raising the general level of intelligence and comprehension about art (Lai, 2000). Thus, assessment is an important and valuable tool for the parent, which enables him or her to support advantages, consider new directions, guide progress, and so on (Gentle, 1985).

2.6 Taiwanese Parent-Child Art Education

The most relevant points in Taiwan parent-child art education are as follows:

The most relevant studies on parent-child art education in Taiwan are as follows:

Lin's (2006) study shows that mothers are more generous than fathers when devoting themselves to their children's art learning, and pay more attention to educating the whole child. Lin also found that mothers who obtained a bachelor's degree carefully selected their child's after-school art class to ensure the best advantage. Hsiao and Kuo's (2013) study demonstrated that mothers take part in after-school art classes more than fathers. Furthermore, Hsiao and Pai's (2014) study revealed that mothers scored significantly higher on kindergarten art courses and children's artistic development than the fathers. Hsiao also found that parents who had gained a higher education degree were inclined to emphasize the comprehensive education of their children and were more focused on selecting after-school art programs that would increase the effectiveness of their children's art learning.

In sum, art is serious and essential work. Through the visual arts, children express their thoughts, beliefs, and feelings using symbols (Hsiao, 2008). Since art is a symbolic process, it requires careful thought on the part of both parent and children. The parent's role is a vital one for cultivating children's art ability (Ho, 2004; Page, 2007). He or she is responsible for understanding the theories and values of children's art as well as being able to translate them to other academic subjects (Seefeldt & Barbour, 1998).

In line with the summary above, this study was to sort out which problems might impede early childhood parents from realizing the value of children's art products, and the kind of art interpretation/assessment that might be implemented at their homes in order to facilitate children's mental growth. Finally, this study could suggest how to improve early childhood parents' art knowledge in Taiwan to serve these ends.

3. Research Methods

This research used a quantitative methodology and designed a self-completion survey, entitled "Parental survey on kindergarten children's art education". The following sections describe the study participants, survey design, validity and reliability of the survey, and analysis of the data.

3.1 Study Participants

A total of 1010 parents of kindergarten students were selected as the study population from 15 major cities and counties in Taiwan. A snowball sampling method was used in this study because locating respondents to obtain information took finances and time. The study took place in the middle of the spring semester. A total of 800

survey questionnaires were collected. The return rate was 79%, with a questionnaire validity rate of 95%.

3.2 Survey Design

There are three sections in the survey. First, there are eleven demographic questions for parents. Second, there are six questions regarding the children's creative experience of art. Lastly, opinions on the significance of kindergarten art are examined with fifty Likert seven-point scale items.

3.3 The Validity and Reliability of the Survey

Six experts and scholars were asked to inspect the survey's validity and to give useful revision suggestions. The researcher revised the survey according to the experts' advice, establishing expert content validity. Also, to improve the content validity, the researcher undertook a pre-test. Moreover, to enrich the reliability of the survey, the researcher adopted an internal consistency analysis of the entire scale; the Cronbach's alpha of the entire test was 0.88.

3.4 Analysis of the Data

After collecting the majority of the questionnaires one month later, the researcher discarded any questionnaires where participants gave the same answers throughout the survey or that had incomplete personal information. The researcher then coded the valid surveys and used SPSS 20.0 for the statistical analysis in order to validate the replies to the questions. The following statistical analysis methodologies were used: a One-Way ANOVA, Scheffé post hoc tests, frequency and percent, and a t-test.

4. Results

4.1 Research Question 1: What Are Current Kindergarten Parents' Attitudes toward and Beliefs about Children's Art Education in Taiwan? What Is Current Kindergarten Children's Art-Making Experience and Parents' Perspectives of Art Educators' Expertise in Taiwan?

A total of 52% parents reported their children's gender as female (N=758); the majority (37%) attended 4- to 5-year-old classes; most survey respondents (39%) were between the ages of 36 and 40; 81% of mothers filled out the questionnaire; most parents (51%) raise one child; 61% of parents had a bachelor's degree; most parents (33%) had government-related occupations; and 70% children did not attend after-school art classes. Moreover, Taiwanese parents reported that their children used markers, crayons, and color pencils most frequently at school and home when creating artwork. Furthermore, the frequency of children's art making at home was mostly 1 hour. 81% of parents had recorded their children's artworks. The most popular methods of recording were in decorations at home—55% used decorations. Parents reported that kindergarten educators should offer more than 1 hour for children's art activity. Fifty-four percent of parents believed children could attend art classes at 3 years of age, and also reported that their children had attended art programs at that age. In addition, 67% of kindergarten educators had adopted the theme-based teaching approach. Seventy-two percent of parents believed kindergarten educators have to be familiar with art supplies and craft equipment. Eighty-two percent of parents considered preschool teachers should have basic skills in drawing.

4.2 Research Question 2: Are There Differences among Parents' Views of Kindergarten Art Education according to Their Backgrounds and Beliefs?

The goal in this question was to determine whether kindergarten parents from different backgrounds had different beliefs regarding kindergarten art education. Background factors included eight variables: ages of the parents, genders of the parents, parents' occupations, highest educational degree earned, types of kindergartens attended, classes attended, teaching methods, and genders of the children. Parental beliefs regarding art education included six factors: children's art functions, integrated curriculum, method on art appreciation, children's emotional expressions, teaching methodology, and media influences. The results of these assumptions were as follows:

1) Assumption I: The interpretation of children's art education will vary according to the genders of children.

Table 1 data indicate that children of different genders demonstrated significant differences on children's art functions and media influences. Girls scored significantly higher on children's art functions; boys scored significantly higher on media influences. For integrated curriculum, method of art appreciation, children's emotional expressions, and teaching methodology, no significant difference was found between the genders.

Table 1. T-test for parents' beliefs related to interpretation of children's art, by children's genders ($n=758$)

Factors	Levels	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>t</i>	Sig.
Children's Art Functions	Female	392	6.48	0.47	2.276	0.023*
	Male	366	6.40	0.50		
Integrated Curriculum	Female	392	5.87	0.80	0.222	0.824
	Male	366	5.85	0.81		
Method on Art Appreciation	Female	392	5.52	0.75	-0.784	0.433
	Male	366	5.57	0.92		
Children's Emotional Expressions	Female	392	6.02	0.68	1.839	0.066
	Male	366	5.93	0.69		
Teaching Methodology	Female	392	5.59	0.89	-0.994	0.320
	Male	366	5.65	0.85		
Media Influences	Female	392	5.88	0.70	-2.034	0.042*
	Male	366	5.98	0.69		

* $p < .05$.

2) Assumption II: The interpretation of children's art education will vary according to the type of kindergarten.

Table 2 data indicate that parents choosing different types of kindergartens demonstrated significant differences on the teaching methodology factor. Parents of public kindergarten children scored significantly higher than those with children in private kindergartens. On other factors, no significant differences were found in parents choosing different types of kindergartens.

Table 2. T-test for parents' beliefs related to interpretation of children's art, by type of kindergarten ($n=758$)

Factors	Levels	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>t</i>	Sig.
Children's Art Functions	Public	493	6.44	0.48	-0.589	0.556
	Private	265	6.46	0.50		
Integrated Curriculum	Public	493	5.87	0.82	0.405	0.686
	Private	265	5.84	0.77		
Method on Art Appreciation	Public	493	5.56	0.80	0.505	0.614
	Private	265	5.52	0.90		
Emotional Children's Expressions	Public	493	5.97	0.67	-0.428	0.668
	Private	265	5.99	0.72		
Teaching Methodology	Public	493	5.69	0.87	2.985	0.003**
	Private	265	5.49	0.87		
Media Influences	Public	493	5.93	0.70	-0.036	0.971
	Private	265	5.93	0.68		

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

3) Assumption III: The interpretation of children's art education will vary according to the classes attended by children.

Table 3 indicates that classes attended by children indicated significant differences on integrated curriculum factors. For the integrated curriculum factor, children who attended the 3- to 4-year-old class scored significantly

higher than those children who attended a mixed-age class, whereas on other factors, no significant difference was found between the classes attended by children.

Table 3. One-Way ANOVA for parents' beliefs related to interpreting children's art, by classes attended by children ($n=758$)

Factors	Levels	N	M	S	F	Sig.	Post-hoc tests
Children's Art Functions	1.3- to 4-year-old class	131	6.46	0.45	0.443	0.722	
	2.4- to 5-year-old class	278	6.46	0.49			
	3.5- to 6-year-old class	249	6.42	0.50			
	4.Mixed-age class	100	6.41	0.46			
	Total	758	6.44	0.48			
Integrated Curriculum	1.3- to 4-year-old class	131	5.98	0.73	2.862	0.036 *	1>4
	2.4- to 5-year-old class	278	5.90	0.77			
	3.5- to 6-year-old class	249	5.81	0.81			
	4.Mixed-age class	100	5.71	0.93			
	Total	758	5.86	0.80			
Method on Art Appreciation	1.3- to 4-year-old class	131	5.52	0.81	2.060	0.104	
	2.4- to 5-year-old class	278	5.55	0.78			
	3.5- to 6-year-old class	249	5.61	0.73			
	4.Mixed-age class	100	5.37	1.17			
	Total	758	5.54	0.83			
Children's Emotional Expressions	1.3- to 4-year-old class	131	5.97	0.72	0.909	0.436	
	2.4- to 5-year-old class	278	5.99	0.67			
	3.5- to 6-year-old class	249	6.00	0.68			
	4.Mixed-age class	100	5.87	0.72			
	Total	758	5.98	0.69			
Teaching Methodology	1.3- to 4-year-old class	131	5.58	0.93	1.781	0.149	
	2.4- to 5-year-old class	278	5.72	0.83			
	3.5- to 6-year-old class	249	5.56	0.88			

	4.Mixed-age class	100	5.56	0.87		
	Total	758	5.62	0.87		
Media Influences	1.3- to 4-year-old class	131	5.97	0.70		
	2.4- to 5-year-old class	278	5.91	0.71		
	3.5- to 6-year-old class	249	5.95	0.68	0.408	0.748
	4.Mixed-age class	100	5.88	0.73		
	Total	758	5.93	0.70		

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001.

4) Assumption IV: The interpretation of children's art education will vary according to the parents' ages.

Table 4 indicates that parents of different ages demonstrated significant differences on teaching methodology factors. Those aged 26–30 and 31–35 years old were significantly higher than those 41–45 years old; parents aged 26–30 years were significantly higher than aged 46 years old or above; whereas on other factors, no significant difference was found between parents' ages.

Table 4. One-Way ANOVA for parents' beliefs related to interpreting children's art, by parents' ages ($n=758$)

Factors	Levels	N	M	S	F	Sig.	Post-hoc tests
Children's Art Functions	1.25 or below	13	6.60	0.37			
	2.26–30	42	6.48	0.49			
	3.31–35	223	6.43	0.49			
	4.36–40	298	6.49	0.46	2.163	0.056	
	5.41–45	138	6.40	0.51			
	6.46 or above	44	6.28	0.52			
	Total	758	6.44	0.48			
Integrated Curriculum	1.25 or below	13	5.71	1.06			
	2.26–30	42	6.07	0.63			
	3.31–35	223	5.86	0.80			
	4.36–40	298	5.91	0.77	1.792	0.112	
	5.41–45	138	5.76	0.85			
	6.46 or above	44	5.68	0.92			
	Total	758	5.86	0.80			
Method on Art Appreciation	1.25 or below	13	5.35	1.11			
	2.26–30	42	5.71	0.73			
	3.31–35	223	5.50	0.80			
	4.36–40	298	5.58	0.80	0.770	0.571	
	5.41–45	138	5.52	0.69			
	6.46 or above	44	5.52	1.46			

	Total	758	5.54	0.83		
	1.25 or below	13	5.92	0.73		
	2.26–30	42	6.17	0.67		
	3.31–35	223	5.99	0.66		
Children's Emotional Expressions	4.36–40	298	6.01	0.67	2.172	0.055
	5.41–45	138	5.88	0.71		
	6.46 or above	44	5.78	0.75		
	Total	758	5.98	0.69		
	1.25 or below	13	5.94	0.75		
	2.26–30	42	5.90	0.82		
	3.31–35	223	5.70	0.88		2>5
Teaching Methodology	4.36–40	298	5.65	0.81	4.321	0.001** 2>6
	5.41–45	138	5.41	0.93		3>5
	6.46 or above	44	5.34	0.94		
	Total	758	5.62	0.87		
	1.25 or below	13	5.97	0.94		
	2.26–30	42	5.95	0.70		
	3.31–35	223	5.97	0.70		
Media Influences	4.36–40	298	5.97	0.66	1.455	0.202
	5.41–45	138	5.82	0.69		
	6.46 or above	44	5.77	0.87		
	Total	758	5.93	0.70		

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001.

5) Assumption V: The interpretation of children's art education will vary according to the genders of parents.

Table 5 data indicate that parents of different genders presented significant differences on children's art functions and integrated curriculum factors. Mothers scored significantly higher on children's art functions and integrated curriculum factors; whereas on the method of art appreciation factor, children's emotional expressions, teaching methodology and media influences, no significant difference was found among either fathers or mothers.

Table 5. T-test for parents' beliefs related to interpretation of children's art, by parents' genders (n=758)

Factors	Levels	N	M	S	t	Sig.
Children's Art Functions	Female	618	6.48	0.47	4.402	0.000***
	Male	140	6.28	0.51		
Integrated Curriculum	Female	618	5.90	0.79	3.291	0.001**
	Male	140	5.66	0.83		
Method on Art Appreciation	Female	618	5.57	0.78	1.568	0.117
	Male	140	5.44	1.05		
Children's Emotional Expressions	Female	618	6.00	0.68	1.930	0.054
	Male	140	5.87	0.69		

Teaching Methodology	Female	618	5.65	0.87	1.845	0.065
	Male	140	5.50	0.86		
Media Influences	Female	618	5.94	0.69	1.092	0.275
	Male	140	5.87	0.74		

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

6) Assumption VI: The interpretation of children's art will vary according to the parents' highest education degree earned.

Table 6 shows that parents with different educational backgrounds exhibited significant differences on children's art functions. On this factor, parents with a senior high school diploma, bachelor's degree, master's degree or higher scored significantly higher than those with a primary school education only, while on other factors, no significant difference was found between parents with different educational backgrounds.

Table 6. One-Way ANOVA for parents' beliefs related to interpreting children's art, by highest educational degree ($n=758$)

Factors	Levels	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	Post-hoc tests
Children's Art Functions	1. Primary school diploma	4	5.56	0.10	3.878	0.004**	3>1 4>1 5>1
	2. Junior high school diploma	14	6.18	0.68			
	3. Senior high school diploma	118	6.42	0.43			
	4. Bachelor's degree	461	6.46	0.47			
	5. Master's degree or higher	161	6.45	0.51			
	Total	758	6.44	0.48			
Integrated Curriculum	1. Primary school diploma	4	4.75	1.09	2.689	0.030	
	2. Junior high school diploma	14	6.13	0.68			
	3. Senior high school diploma	118	5.74	0.85			
	4. Bachelor's degree	461	5.87	0.78			
	5. Master's degree or higher	161	5.91	0.82			
	Total	758	5.86	0.80			
Method on Art Appreciation	1. Primary school diploma	4	4.94	0.92	1.639	0.163	
	2. Junior high school diploma	14	5.12	0.94			
	3. Senior high school diploma	118	5.52	0.78			
	4. Bachelor's degree	461	5.54	0.78			

	5. Master's degree or higher	161	5.62	0.99		
	Total	758	5.54	0.83		
Children's Emotional Expressions	1. Primary school diploma	4	5.33	0.67		
	2. Junior high school diploma	14	5.86	0.69		
	3. Senior high school diploma	118	5.90	0.71	1.453	0.215
	4. Bachelor's degree	461	5.98	0.68		
	5. Master's degree or higher	161	6.03	0.67		
	Total	758	5.98	0.69		
Teaching Methodology	1. Primary school diploma	4	5.44	0.69		
	2. Junior high school diploma	14	5.71	1.03		
	3. Senior high school diploma	118	5.68	0.84	0.376	0.826
	4. Bachelor's degree	461	5.62	0.87		
	5. Master's degree or higher	161	5.57	0.90		
	Total	758	5.62	0.87		
Media Influences	1. Primary school diploma	4	5.22	0.69		
	2. Junior high school diploma	14	5.60	1.03		
	3. Senior high school diploma	118	5.96	0.59	2.838	0.024
	4. Bachelor's degree	461	5.97	0.69		
	5. Master's degree or higher	161	5.84	0.74		
	Total	758	5.93	0.69		

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001.

7) Assumption VII: The interpretation of children's art will vary according to parents' occupations.

Table 7 indicates that parents with different occupations revealed significant differences on integrated curriculum and media influences factors. For the integrated curriculum factor, parents employed in government-related occupations scored significantly higher than those who were laborers; on the media influences factor, parents employed as merchants, government-related occupations, laborers, housewives, and other scored significantly higher than those employed as agricultural workers, whereas on other factors, no significant difference was found between parents with different occupations.

Table 7. One-Way ANOVA for parents' beliefs related to interpreting children's art, by parents' occupations (n=758)

Factors	Levels	N	M	S	F	Sig.	Post-hoc tests
Children's Art Functions	1. Merchants	108	6.39	0.53	2.472	0.031	
	2. Government-related	252	6.45	0.48			
	3. Laborers	60	6.30	0.52			
	4. Agricultural workers	6	6.28	0.50			
	5. Housewives	232	6.51	0.46			
	6. Others	100	6.40	0.46			
	Total	758	6.44	0.48			
Integrated Curriculum	1. Merchants	108	5.87	0.79	2.923	0.013*	2>3
	2. Government-related	252	5.96	0.75			
	3. Laborers	60	5.57	0.85			
	4. Agricultural workers	6	5.46	0.66			
	5. Housewives	232	5.86	0.82			
	6. Others	100	5.79	0.84			
	Total	758	5.86	0.80			
Method on Art Appreciation	1. Merchants	108	5.66	1.11	1.202	0.306	
	2. Government-related	252	5.52	0.77			
	3. Laborers	60	5.37	0.86			
	4. Agricultural workers	6	5.31	1.04			
	5. Housewives	232	5.58	0.77			
	6. Others	100	5.50	0.74			
	Total	758	5.54	0.83			
Children's Emotional Expressions	1. Merchants	108	5.99	0.67	0.993	0.421	
	2. Government-related	252	5.98	0.68			
	3. Laborers	60	5.86	0.72			
	4. Agricultural workers	6	5.56	0.75			
	5. Housewives	232	5.98	0.71			
	6. Others	100	6.04	0.63			
	Total	758	5.98	0.69			
Teaching Methodology	1. Merchants	108	5.68	0.87	0.994	0.420	
	2. Government-related	252	5.62	0.85			
	3. Laborers	60	5.52	0.95			
	4. Agricultural	6	5.17	0.86			

		workers					
	5.Housewives	232	5.67	0.88			
	6.Others	100	5.52	0.83			
	Total	758	5.62	0.87			
	1.Merchants	108	6.06	0.59			
	2.Government-related	252	5.90	0.70			1>4
	3.Laborers	60	5.88	0.76			2>4
Media Influences	4.Agricultural workers	6	4.83	0.91	3.995	0.001**	3>4
	5.Housewives	232	5.93	0.71			5>4
	6.Others	100	5.97	0.68			6>4
	Total	758	5.93	0.70			

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001.

5. Discussion

The first finding was that children's genders are linked with parents' interpretation of children's art. Female children had a higher score on factors relating to children's art functions, while male children had a higher score on factors relating to media influences. This result supports work by Page (2007) who noted that art education programs are for girls in the Australian community. Moreover, Kim (2008) claimed that male children borrowed characters and settings from the media and then developed a new story by adding new characters when making story drawings. M. Wilson and B. Wilson (2010) also noted that "the boys' drawings seem to stem from media action narratives" (p. 163). According to Hsiao (2008), Goodenough (1926) pointed to gender difference when noting that boys tended to include movement in their pictures. Girls' predilection for presenting more details in their drawings was an indication that, according to Goodenough, girls are promoted more quickly than boys in school. Such success cultivated positive attitudes in girls toward school and enhanced their ability to study as well as directed their attention to detail (Tuman, 2000).

The second finding was that type of kindergarten relates to parents' interpretation of children's art. Parents of public kindergarten children had a higher score on teaching methodology factors. The result is the same as Hsiao and Kou's (2013) finding—parents with children in Kaohsiung public kindergartens who attended after-school art programs had higher scores than those in private kindergartens. Hsiao's (2008) study also showed that teachers in public kindergartens claimed most art specialists and early childhood educators tended to adopt teacher-directed methods in art instruction, and that children do not have many opportunities to create artworks in private kindergartens, causing a dulling if not outright stunting of imagination. Furthermore, Hsiao and Lin (2009) found that public kindergarten parents will stress teaching methodology more than will private kindergarten parents. In addition, Lai's (2000) children's art education study showed that more public kindergarten educators obtain a higher education degree than private kindergarten educators do. Many kindergarten educators who have a higher education degree understand that art plays an important role in children's development, and subsequently offer more children's art activities in their classrooms. Further, she found that educators in public kindergartens provide children with more children's art activities—both in terms of quality and quantity—than do teachers in private kindergartens.

The third finding was that classes attended by children related to parents' interpretation of children's art. Children who attended the 3- to 4-year-old class had a higher score on integrated curriculum factors. Hwan and Hsiao (2008) stated that kindergarten educators encounter problems when they prepare curricula and teaching resources for mixed-age classes; hence, children's cognitive development is at different levels. Nevertheless, children who enroll in the 3- to 4-year-old class have a similar level of cognitive development; Lu (2013) confirmed that at the naming scribble stage children often tell stories about the scribble; through parent-child art talks, parents begin to understand children's art and their school life. The statistical result also corresponds to descriptive data which show that Taiwanese preschool parents mainly believed that youngsters could attend art classes at 3 years of age, and also claimed that their children had attended art classes at that age.

The fourth finding was that parents' ages related parents' interpretations of children's art. Parents aged 26–30 and 31–35 years old had a higher score on teaching methodology factors. The result was the same as that found in Hsiao and Kuo (2013), where mothers under 35 years old were significantly more likely than older mothers to select after-school art classes according to teaching methods and environment. Moreover, Hwan and Hsiao (2008) also stated that young kindergarten parents prefer the theme-based curricula found in Taiwan kindergartens a few decades ago, while older parents prefer traditional teaching methods.

The fifth finding was that parents' gender related to their interpretation of children's art. Mothers had a higher score on children's art functions and integrated curriculum factors. This echoes the Wu (2002) study, which found that mothers are more willing to devote themselves to children's art learning and are more focused on educating the whole child than fathers. Hsiao and Kuo (2013) also found that mothers participate more in after-school art programs than fathers. In Toren's (2007) study, fathers believed that mothers have more knowledge about children's art than they do. Furthermore, Hsiao and Pai (2014) also found that mothers scored significantly higher on preschool art courses and children's artistic development than did fathers.

The sixth finding was that parents' highest education degree earned related to parents' interpretation of children's art. Parents with a senior high school diploma, bachelor's degree, master's degree or higher had a higher score on children's art functions. This result matched that from Hsiao and Pai's (2014) study, which found that parents who earned a higher education degree were leaned to highlight the comprehensive education of children and were inclined to more pay attention to select after-school art classes to increase the effectiveness of art learning. Lin's (2006) study also found that mothers who obtained bachelor's degrees carefully selected children's after-school art program in order to ensure better art achievement.

The seventh finding was that parents' occupations related to parents' interpretations of children's art. Those employed in government-related occupations had a higher score on integrated curriculum factors. Parents whose occupations were merchant, government-related, laborer, or housewife had a higher score on media influences factors. Hsiao and Kuo (2013) found in their study that mothers employed in government-related occupations were more likely to select integrated art curricula than those in other occupations. Page (2007) also claimed that "low socioeconomic status results in low educational aspirations" in art education" (p. 52). Toren (2004) stated that upper-class parents considered creative and integrated art curricula to be good for foster children's imagination and individual expression, and problem-solving skills.

6. Conclusion

According to the descriptive data, parents reported that more than 66% of preschool teachers used the theme-based teaching approach in Taiwan. More than 72% of the parents believed preschool art teachers should have basic drawing skills and be familiar with art supplies and craft equipment. Mostly parents believed that children could attend art programs at three years of age; they also reported that their children had attended art classes at that age. In addition, statistical analysis results were as follows: for the "children's art functions" factor, significant differences were found in interpretations of children's art by parent gender, educational background, and children's gender. For the "integrated curriculum" factor, significant differences were found in interpretations of children's art by parent gender, educational background, occupation, and classes attended by children. For the "teaching methodology" factor, significant differences were found in interpretations of children's art by parents' age. For the "media influences" factor, significant differences were found in interpretations of children's art by parent's occupation and child gender. In sum, parents' occupations, educational backgrounds, genders, ages, classes attended by children, and children's genders had significant effects on interpretations of children's art education.

7. Recommendations

Based on Taiwanese parents' responses in this study, parents employed as laborers and agricultural workers apparently did not consider children's art an important subject. Moreover, fathers placed less emphasis on children's art education than did mothers. In order to foster children's aesthetics, creativity, and art capacity; parents must become familiar with the realm of children's art knowledge before they have a child and during that child's toddlerhood. Preschool teachers should hold parent-child conferences more often in order to educate parents about the importance of children's art education. Furthermore, the city officials in Taiwan should provide more art festivals, art workshops, and art conferences for parents, children, and preschool educators. In addition, when government authorities implement early childhood educational reforms, they should work to improve preschool educators' aesthetic knowledge, as most currently lack the capacity to appreciate art.

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