

Research Article

Musical instruments used in music education in Türkiye and a literature review of research on instrument selection

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Abstract

Instrument selection constitutes the first stage and one of the most important parts of the instrument playing process. Correct instrument selection is one of the most powerful factors for the proper, successful, and effective progression of a music career. Incorrect instrument selection may lead to outcomes such as losing interest in the instrument or decreased interest in music, and in individuals receiving professional music education, it may result in an incorrect shaping of their music career and facing numerous difficulties in their professional life. For this reason, it is important to correctly identify instrument preferences, understand the many determining factors during the instrument selection phase, and shape the process accordingly. This study aims to examine the musical instruments used in music education in Turkey, their organological structures, and the research conducted on instrument selection. The method of this research is determined as a literature review. The study includes an examination of the instruments used in the Ministry of National Education curriculum and research conducted in Turkey between 2007 and 2025. In this study, based on the findings obtained in the field of instrument selection, 25 instruments were selected for review at the preschool, elementary school, middle school, and high school levels. In addition, 6 master's theses and 11 research articles were reviewed. Out of the 17 studies reached, 14 were directly related to instrument selection, while 3 were indirectly related. The indirectly related studies were categorized under indirect relationships since they primarily focused on instrument education and motivation in instrument education or covered only a specific instrument. When the studies were generally examined, it was concluded that instrument selection is particularly influenced by factors such as age, gender, music taste, and income level.

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Introduction

The history of musical instruments dates back to ancient times. Musical instruments have developed in parallel with the development of humans and their life conditions. A significant portion of the knowledge regarding the history of musical instruments has been obtained from visual elements such as reliefs, paintings, sculptures, and miniatures, as well as written sources that have survived from past periods. Through these sources, many of the instruments used in the past can be recognized, and information about playing techniques can be gained (Somakçı, 2016: 17). Archaeological research also supports and confirms the long history of musical instruments. Archaeological studies reveal that musical instruments began to be used approximately five thousand years ago (Kalender, 2001: 160). Humans and musical instruments have always been intertwined throughout history. As cultures evolved, so did music cultures and musical instruments, adapting to the period. Throughout human history, it can be observed that musical instruments have held

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an important place in the cultures created by societies (Özdemir, 2020: 2). It is understood that musical instruments, one of the fundamental elements of music, emerged simultaneously with human history and developed over time (Aydemir, 2024: 1). It is stated that musical instruments emerged from the sounds made by reeds, strings, and arrows used in hunting as part of human intellectual development (Alaskan, 2013: 176). This shows that musical instruments are influenced by materials in nature and human daily life experiences. When evaluated from a historical perspective, the first musical instruments in human history are seen to be idiophones (Koçkar and Koçkar, 2016: 2). Similarly, Hüseynova (2007) points out the process of Europeans first encountering string instruments in the 9th and 11th centuries (p. 117). After musical instruments were recognized and became widespread, the process of instrument making gained momentum both in the world and in our country. It is seen that in Turkey, instrument production has evolved from traditional master-apprentice methods to industrial manufacturing and academic programs such as instrument-making departments at universities (Han and Çelik, 2024: 197). In Turkey, the establishment of the instrument-making workshop at the Ankara State Conservatory in 1936 and the appointment of Heinz Schafraß from Germany marked the beginning of an academic dimension in instrument production (İşik and Uslu, 2012: 25). In this regard, the instrument-making industry has continuously developed over the years. With the establishment of instrument-making departments in conservatories, the field gained an institutional identity (Akyıldız, 2014: 181). The number of cities with instrument production in our country has steadily increased. Izmir, the third-largest instrument production center in Turkey after Istanbul and Ankara, holds an important position in the industry and stands out with its accumulated knowledge from the past (Alaskan, 2024: 165). When all this data is examined, it is seen that musical instruments have found a place for many years in both the world and our country and have preserved this important position. In this context, incorporating musical instruments, selecting an instrument, or determining the inclination toward an instrument is of great importance. The fundamental characteristics that define the sounds produced by musical instruments are pitch, loudness, and timbre (Değirmenli, 2015: 2). These characteristics are also among the determining factors in instrument selection and stand out as aspects to be considered. In music teaching departments, it is seen that students who pass the aptitude exam choose their instruments based on their inclinations, physical characteristics, and the facilities available at the department (Orhan and Arıcı, 2015: 144). This emphasizes the importance of physical conditions and environmental factors in the instrument selection phase of professional music education. It is stated that the compatibility of a person's anatomical structure with their instrument brings various conveniences or challenges throughout their education and professional life (Servan and Akıncı, 2018: 26). This situation points to the long-term effects of individual characteristics in instrument selection. The main factors affecting instrument selection are the physical features of the instrument, such as its size, weight, shape, timbre, and sound intensity, as well as internal factors such as the individual's physical structure, intelligence, and personality traits, and external factors such as peer groups, authorities' guidance, and media (Doğan and Erdal, 2016: 6054). It is also seen that the musical interests of children increase when family members are involved in music, contributing positively to their musical talent development (Yapalı and Özal Göncü, 2025: 51). In this context, individual instrument selection is shaped according to needs, desires, instrument characteristics, and current conditions. In Turkey, institutions that provide instrument education at the undergraduate level include the Music Education Departments of the Faculty of Education, Conservatories, and Music Departments of Faculties of Fine Arts. The instrument education provided at these institutions varies depending on the goals and objectives of the institutions (Lehimler, 2015: 258). In a broad educational process for a wide range of instruments, it is emphasized that choosing which instruments to focus on is a significant matter (Dönmez and Dalkıran, 2024: 569). For music educators working with beginning level students or those in the pre-band or orchestra period, it is noted that guiding students in selecting an appropriate instrument is crucial (Kang, 2016: 1). This highlights the role of educators as guides in the instrument selection process. It is emphasized that effective and efficient instrument education starts with selecting the right instrument for the individual, and the correct instrument selection is directly related to the individual's physical features and age (Akın and Yiğit, 2023: 1515). This suggests that correct instrument selection is a fundamental factor in supporting the effectiveness of music education, student motivation, and musical

development. Reviewing the master's theses and research articles published every year is important in providing sources for new studies.

Problem Statement

Instrument education, which is one of the essential components of music education, directly affects the individual's musical development, motivation, and career orientation. The process of instrument selection, which forms the initial stage of this process, is closely related to the individual's physical characteristics, age level, cognitive and emotional structure, musical preferences, socio-economic conditions, and the opportunities provided by the educational environment. The literature emphasizes that the selection of an inappropriate instrument may lead to consequences such as distancing from the instrument, loss of motivation, negative attitudes towards music lessons, and especially a decrease in academic success in professional music education (Doğan and Erdal, 2016; Akbudak and Taşdemir, 2021). In Turkey, musical instruments used in music education vary across different educational levels, from preschool to high school, within the framework of the Ministry of National Education music curricula. However, there is a lack of comprehensive review studies addressing the criteria for selecting these instruments, their appropriateness to educational levels, organological features, and academic works on instrument selection as a whole. It is noted that most of the existing research is conducted based on specific educational levels, individual instruments, or limited samples, and the findings appear scattered (Derin, 2007; Topaloglu, 2021).

In this context, it is necessary to systematically present the musical instruments used in music education in Turkey according to educational levels and to examine the graduate theses and research articles on instrument selection with a holistic perspective. The lack of this holistic view in the field creates a significant problem area for both practitioners and researchers.

Importance of the Research

This study is significant as it is the first to address the musical instruments used in music education in Turkey and academic works on instrument selection under a single roof. By examining scattered theses and articles with a holistic perspective, the research aims to systematize the accumulated knowledge in the field.

The findings are expected to serve as a guide in the instrument selection process for music teachers, teacher candidates, curriculum developers, and academics conducting research in the field of music education. Furthermore, the study will contribute to identifying gaps in research on instrument selection by providing a theoretical foundation for future empirical studies.

Additionally, the organological examination of the instruments used in different educational levels will facilitate evaluating the adequacy of music teaching programs in practice and developing more informed instrument selection policies. In this regard, the research provides both theoretical and practical contributions.

Aim of the Research

The aim of this research is to identify the instruments used in music education at the preschool, elementary, middle, and high school levels in Turkey, examine their basic organological features, and analyze the graduate theses and research articles conducted on instrument selection in Turkey through a systematic literature review.

In line with this general aim, the research aims to:

- Classify the instruments included in the Ministry of National Education music curricula by educational level,
- Describe the basic organological features of the instruments used in teaching,
- Examine graduate theses and research articles on instrument selection conducted in Turkey between 2007-2025 in terms of methodology, findings, and focus,
- Present the individual, environmental, and educational factors that influence instrument selection based on the literature.

Method

Research Design

This study is a descriptive literature review aimed at holistically examining the musical instruments used in music education in Turkey and academic studies on instrument selection. Literature review is a research approach that systematically examines previous studies in a particular field to reveal the existing knowledge and determine the trends in the field (Köroğlu, 2015). Accordingly, the study was conducted through graduate theses and peer-reviewed journal articles on instrument selection.

Data Sources

The data used in the study were obtained by scanning the YÖK National Thesis Center, TR Dizin, Google Scholar, and relevant field journals. The scanning process focused on academic studies conducted in Turkey that dealt with instrument selection in the context of music education.

Keywords and Scanning Process

During the literature review, the following keywords were used: "instrument selection," "instrument playing tendency," "instrument choice," and "instrument inclination." The search was limited to studies published between 2007-2025. This time frame was chosen to present the current trends and approaches in the field more accurately.

Inclusion Criteria

The studies included in the research were selected based on the following criteria:

- They were conducted in Turkey,
- They focused on instrument selection, instrument preference, or instrument playing tendencies,
- They were master's theses or peer-reviewed journal articles,
- Full-text access was available.

Based on these criteria, a total of 6 master's theses and 11 research articles were included in the research.

Data Analysis

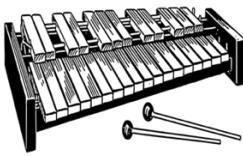
The studies obtained in the research were classified into two groups: directly and indirectly related studies. Studies that directly addressed instrument selection were classified as research that focused on the factors affecting an individual's instrument preference. Studies that indirectly addressed instrument selection were evaluated as research on instrument education, motivation, or expert opinions about specific instruments.

The obtained data were analyzed using a descriptive analysis approach. The research types, data collection tools, variables examined, and key findings of the studies were tabulated and presented. In addition, the Ministry of National Education's music curricula were examined to determine the instruments used at the preschool, elementary, middle, and high school levels, and the organological features of these instruments were descriptively analyzed.

Finding

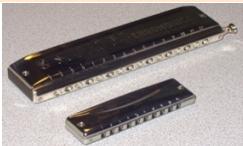
The music education programs of the Ministry of National Education (MEB) have been reviewed and are outlined below. Musical instruments used in music education in Türkiye.

Table 1. Musical instruments used in music education in the preschool period in Türkiye

Instrument	Photo	Organological Features
Xylophone		It is an instrument made up of a series of tuned wooden sticks arranged in a scale, played by striking them with two mallets. Each wooden piece is a tuned idiophone corresponding to a note in the musical spectrum. (Web1).
Maracas		The instrument that produces sound when shaken due to the parts inside its hollow body. There are types made of wood, bamboo, and plastic. The small hard particles placed inside collide with each other when shaken, creating sound (Web1).
Tambourine		It is a percussion instrument consisting of a frame with small metal cymbals called 'zils' made generally of wood or plastic. It is commonly used with regular percussion sets (Web1).
Rhythm Sticks		They are cylindrical sticks made of hardwood. They are generally used as a percussion instrument played by striking them together (Web1).
Triangle		It is a percussion or <i>ударный</i> instrument and a type of idiophone. It is usually played by striking it with a short metal mallet (Web1).

As seen in Table 1, the use of musical instruments for early childhood education is simple and practical. The curriculum emphasizes that early childhood music education positively impacts children's development. Activities include listening to and distinguishing sounds and music, rhythm exercises, playing musical instruments, creative movement, and movement to music (Ministry of National Education Curriculum, 2025). In this context, it is concluded that the instruments listed in the table will be suitable for the curriculum.

Table 2. Musical instruments used in primary school music education in Türkiye

Instrument	Photo	Organological Features
Drum		It is one of the oldest known percussion instruments. It consists of a cylindrical body made of wood, metal, or fired clay, stretched with skin. It is played by striking with hand or a stick (Web1).
Flute		It is a woodwind instrument. It is a reedless wind instrument. It is classified as a wind instrument (Web1).
Harmonica		It is a free-reed wind instrument used in many musical genres, known as the French harp or mouth organ (Web1).
Melodica		It is a free-reed instrument, similar to a pump organ or harmonica, that produces sound. It is portable and has a musical keyboard at the top. It is played by blowing air through a mouthpiece that fits into a hole on the side of the instrument (Web1).
Organ		It is a keyboard instrument consisting of one or more pipe sections or other tools to produce sound (Web1).

As shown in Table 2, the instruments are suitable for the elementary school period as basic instruments. The curriculum discusses achievements such as being able to use the body as a rhythm instrument, recognizing instruments used in the surroundings, distinguishing between thin and thick sounds, and classifying known instruments according to their characteristics (Ministry of National Education Curriculum, 2025). In this context, it has been concluded that the instruments listed in the table will be appropriate for the curriculum.

Table 3. Musical instruments used in music education during the middle school period in Türkiye

Instrument	Photo	Organological Features
Piano		It is an acoustic, keyboard musical instrument invented around the year 1700. Sound is produced through the strings. When the keys are pressed, a wooden hammer inside strikes the strings to create the sound (Web1).
Guitar		It is generally a fretted stringed instrument. While one hand vibrates the strings or plucks them, the other hand presses the selected strings onto the frets with the fingers (Web1).
Bağlama (Turkish Lute)		It is a stringed instrument with a plectrum, widely used in Turkish folk music. It is played by striking the strings with a plectrum made from cherry tree bark called "tezene" (Web1).
Ney (Turkish Flute)		It is a wind instrument. After selecting either the right or left side to blow, the performer finds their position and blowing angle by trial and error according to their lip and tooth structure (Web1).
Darbuka (Goblet Drum)		It is a percussion instrument. There are two sounds called "düm" and "tek" in the darbuka: The first sound provides the foundation of the rhythm and is achieved by striking the center of the instrument, while the second sound is used more for decoration and improvisation (Web1).

As seen in Table 3, the instruments are appropriate for the middle school period as main instruments. The curriculum mentions achievements such as recognizing the modal structure of Turkish music, distinguishing between types of instruments and instrumental ensembles, and showcasing music works in middle school music education (Ministry of National Education, 2025). In this context, it has been concluded that the instruments listed in the table are suitable for the curriculum.

Table 4. Instruments used in music education during high school in Türkiye

Instrument	Photo	Organological Features
Drums		It is a musical instrument consisting of percussion instruments such as drums and cymbals. It is used for keeping rhythm in songs (Web1).
Viola		It is the second member of the stringed instrument family and has a shape similar to the violin, but is slightly larger than the violin. In size, it is between the violin and the cello (Web1).
Cello		Known as the large viola, it is a string instrument. In modern symphony orchestras, it is the second-largest stringed instrument (Web1).
Saxophone		It is a musical instrument made mostly from brass, with an "S" shape, producing sound through a reed in the mouthpiece. It was designed by Adolphe Sax in the 1840s (Web1).
Oud		It is a stringed musical instrument. It can be made from many types of wood, has four types of tuning, and is played with a plectrum (Web1).

As seen in Table 4, the instruments listed are advanced-level instruments suitable for the high school period. The curriculum mentions the achievements students can gain during high school music education, such as the ability to engage in musical activities according to their interest and talent, having a universal music culture, distinguishing between music cultures, and presenting musical works (T.C. Ministry of National Education, 2025). In this context, it is concluded that the instruments listed in the table are appropriate for the curriculum.

Studies on Instrument Selection in Teaching and Music Careers

Based on the findings from the research, the table below has been created (See Appendix 1).

Table 5. Characteristics of studies on instrument selection in Türkiye

No	RT.	RM	DCT	Finding related music education	Findings related organology
R1	Article	Quantitative-descriptive model	Survey	Social and cultural norms, individuals' stereotypical biases, and the attribution of gender roles to instruments reveal the situation where instruments are associated with femininity and masculinity. The preference of women for feminine instruments associated with female identity and the preference of men for masculine instruments associated with male identity bring out the situation of gendering of instruments and show that preferences are being made significantly according to gender stereotypes.	Based on the data obtained from institutions providing Western music education, it has been concluded that female students tend to prefer instruments such as violin, viola, cello, piano, flute, and oboe, while male students tend to use and prefer instruments such as double bass, clarinet, bassoon, trombone, trumpet, tuba, guitar, and percussion instruments more frequently. Based on the data obtained from institutions providing Turkish music education, it has been concluded that female students prefer instruments such as piano, qanun, violin, kemane, flute, cello, viola, and classical kemence, while male students tend to use instruments such as oud, bağlama, clarinet, ney, kaval, percussion instruments, guitar, and tanbur.
R2	Article	Qualitative-descriptive research	Semi-structured interview	It has been found that Circassian women who play the accordion are influenced by gender roles, family, and their environment, and they also tend to prefer using instruments that were predominantly played by women in the past.	It has been found that Circassian women who play the accordion are influenced by gender roles, family, and their environment, and they also tend to prefer using instruments that were predominantly played by women in the past.
R3	Article	Qualitative-descriptive research	Ben-Tovim/Boyd system	When children play an instrument and practice it regularly, it helps strengthen their memory, develop their motor skills, focus their attention more easily, improve their social relationships, and gain work discipline. Considering all these benefits that playing an instrument brings to a child, it becomes an important and attention-grabbing issue to choose the correct and appropriate instrument for the child.	-
R4	Article	Qualitative-survey model	Interview form	It has been concluded that the most important factor influencing instrument preference is liking the instrument, and other factors include experience gained in the instrument, the type of music listened to, communication with the teacher, and the absence of the relevant branch in school.	Before professional music education, it was found that the majority of participants had guitar as their individual instrument ($f=39$), while during the undergraduate education, the most frequently studied instrument was violin ($f=33$). Additionally, it is noteworthy that a large number of students chose the violin for individual instrument training. It can be considered that due to the high demand for violin students in the orchestras formed in music departments, participants were assigned the violin as their individual instrument.
R5	Article	Mixed methods	Interview form	It is concluded that the media, family, social circle of friends, and music teacher play a significant role in instrument selection.	Before professional music education, it was found that female students mostly preferred violin, flute, and guitar, while male students predominantly showed interest in guitar, violin, and bağlama.
R6	Article	Qualitative-phenomenology design	Focus group interview	It has been concluded that the majority of students are unable to afford quality instruments due to the economic difficulties they face, which demotivates them and hinders their desire and effort to engage in effective and efficient individual practice. Furthermore, it has been found that the students' economic level directly influences and has a negative impact on their instrument selection.	-
R7	Article	Qualitative-case study	Semi-structured interview	The results of the study show that in institutions providing informal music education, institutional approaches, factors determining student preferences, most preferred instruments, students' achievements in learning the instruments, and the challenges they face during the learning process are all connected.	Under the theme 'Most Preferred Instruments in Informal Music Education Institutions,' sub-themes such as 'piano,' 'guitar,' 'violin,' 'drums,' and 'bağlama' have been identified.
R8	Article	Quantitative-relational survey model	Survey career anxiety scale	According to the test completed by 65 students from Western music and 47 students from Turkish music, it was found that there is no significant difference in career anxiety between students who chose their instruments from Western music and those who chose instruments from Turkish music.	-

No	RT.	RM	DCT	Finding related music education	Findings related organology
R9	Article	Quantitative-descriptive survey	Survey	It was concluded that there are significant relationships between the students' instrument preferences and factors such as age, gender, income level, and music genres they listen to.	There was no significant relationship found between the preferred instrument group (String, Wind, Percussion) and gender, income level, and frequency of listening to music. However, when considering the preferred instruments for both genders, it is understood that the participants' general inclination is focused on string instruments
R10	Article	Quantitative-descriptive survey	Survey	A significant difference was found between the music genres students listen to and their gender. It was concluded that female students listened to Turkish pop and foreign pop music, while male students listened to folk music, Turkish classical music, classical Western music, Turkish rap, foreign rap, Arabesque, and rock music.	It was determined that the majority of students chose the guitar in music lessons, and the results showed that, according to the gender variable, the majority of both girls and boys preferred the guitar.
R11	Article	Quantitative-survey model	Survey	While the overall motivation level of the students was found to be high, it was concluded that there was no significant relationship between motivation levels and variables such as gender, grade level, and the type of high school they graduated from.	-
R12	Thesis	QuantitativeR descriptive survey model	Survey	The instrument choices of the students in the Music Department of the Anadolu Fine Arts High School were influenced by factors such as gender, age, the music genres they listen to, and their familiarity with the instruments.	The main reasons for students being unable to choose the instrument they want are due to factors such as the low number of viola students in the school, opposition from their families, difficulty in transporting the instrument, lack of sufficient knowledge about the instruments, and physical incompatibilities, among other reasons.
R13	Thesis	Quantitative-survey model	Survey	It was concluded that there is no significant relationship between the musical preferences of music teachers and music teacher candidates and the instruments they selected."	-
R14	Thesis	Quantitative-descriptive survey	Survey	It has been found that there are significant relationships between the participants' preferences for musical instruments and their age, gender, and income level. Additionally, regarding the relationship between preferred music genres and gender, it was determined that women tend to prefer pop music more, while men tend to prefer Turkish music more.	As the average age of the participants decreases, the preference for Classical Guitar increases, and as the average age increases, the preference for the Ney (reed flute) increases. Participants with lower income levels preferred the Piano more, those with middle income levels preferred the Classical Guitar more, and those with higher income levels preferred the Ud (lute) more.
R15	Thesis	Quantitative-descriptive relational survey	Survey	It has been found that the most influential factor in the instrument selection of individuals receiving amateur music education is family influence, at a rate of 56%, while for those receiving professional music education, the most influential factor is teacher influence, at a rate of 64%.	-
R16	Thesis	Quantitative-survey	Interview form	-	Although physical characteristics are considered when selecting students in institutions that provide professional cello training, it has been concluded that the "love-interest" factor can overcome physical disadvantages. It was also found that cello teachers are knowledgeable about instruments of various sizes, but they generally lack sufficient knowledge regarding detailed information and cello models.
R17	Thesis	Quantitative-survey	Survey	The majority of primary school students have not received specialized music instrument training, and it has been found that, given the opportunity, students would like to receive such training. It has also been determined that the likelihood of receiving music instrument training is related to the socioeconomic status of their families and the types of music they listen to.	It has been concluded that the most preferred instrument is the guitar.

RT: Research Type RM: Research Methods DCT: Data Collection Tools

Discussion

In this study, the instrument inventories in Turkish music education programs were examined from an organological perspective, and 17 empirical studies related to instrument selection were systematically reviewed. This study presents findings intersecting with broader theoretical and empirical literature on organology, curriculum design, the sociocultural determinants of music selection, and methodological trends in music education research. The following discussion relates the study's main findings to existing academic works: (a) the alignment of instrument complexity with educational levels in the Ministry of National Education (MEB) programs, (b) the empirical profile of instrument selection research in Turkey (2007–2025), and (c) the main individual, interpersonal, economic, and cultural determinants of instrument selection. Each interpretative claim is based on organological and music education research that explains the possibilities of instruments, their social meanings, and methodological approaches to examining instrument selection (Lee, 2020; Tresch & Dolan, 2013; Bijsterveld & Peters, 2010).

Organological Fit Between Instrument Features and Education Levels

The study found that the MoNET music curricula rank instruments from "simple to complex" across educational stages (preschool uses percussion and rhythm-based instruments, elementary school uses basic melodic and wind instruments, middle school uses basic string/wind/percussion instruments, and high school uses technically advanced instruments). This finding aligns with organology theory and pedagogical practices that prioritize instrument-task alignment with students' motor, cognitive, and musical capacities (Lee, 2020; Tresch & Dolan, 2013). Organology emphasizes classification based on sound production mechanisms and the required manual dexterity, breath control, coordination, and notation literacy; Hornbostel-Sachs and contemporary organological critiques provide theoretical justification for classifying instruments according to these physical and acoustic features (Lee, 2020; Tresch & Dolan, 2013). From a pedagogical perspective, starting instrument selection with rhythm and percussion supports the development of both fine and gross motor control, as well as fundamental auditory and social skills, consistent with didactic explanations promoting hands-on, body-based music activities for young learners (Bijsterveld & Peters, 2010). In elementary school, focusing on melodic and wind instruments aligns with curriculum goals related to gradual development of breath and finger control, pitch organization, and introducing simple repertoire (Tresch & Dolan, 2013). Using "basic" instruments like string, wind, and percussion in middle school reflects their role in community pedagogy and reinforces reading, intonation, and basic technical skills; organological analyses highlight the broad tonal and technical progressions these instruments offer for intermediate skill development (Lee, 2020). Finally, the note about high school favoring technically demanding instruments aligns with professional conservatory career paths, supporting advanced repertoire and preparation for careers that require instruments with greater technical demands (e.g., large concert instruments, advanced keyboard literature, higher-level string instruments) (Tresch & Dolan, 2013). These alignments reflect the material constraints and possibilities of instruments, as well as their pedagogical potential at different developmental stages (Lee, 2020; Tresch & Dolan, 2013).

Implications for Curriculum Design and Pedagogy

The organological fit between instrument features and student development has various implications for curriculum design. First, curricula should clearly state the organological rationale behind the introduction of instruments, rather than treating instrument lists as purely traditional or administrative tools (Lee, 2020; Tresch & Dolan, 2013). Second, the instrument sequence should be flexible to accommodate different learners: organology and STS perspectives argue that instruments are socio-technical systems dependent not only on their intrinsic material properties but also on contextual factors (accessibility, cultural meaning, teacher expertise); curricula emphasizing organological logic should allow for flexibility when resources or student needs vary (Bijsterveld & Peters, 2010). Third, teacher training should include instrument-specific pedagogy based on organological knowledge: applied pedagogy benefits from instructors' understanding of instrument construction, ergonomics, and acoustic limitations, enabling them to appropriately support technical and repertoire development at all levels (Fredrickson et al., 2011; Thorgersen et al., 2015). This kind of teacher preparation aligns with international calls to integrate didactic and instrument-specific competencies into teacher education programs (Thorgersen et al., 2015).

Empirical Profile of Instrument Selection Research: Methods and Gaps

The literature review conducted in this study (17 studies, 82% of which focus explicitly on instrument selection) and the dominance of quantitative and descriptive designs reveal a methodological bias in Turkish instrument selection literature. Broader music education meta-reviews similarly note a tendency toward survey-based, descriptive studies when investigating students' choices, attitudes, and demographic correlations. In-depth qualitative or mixed-methods studies exploring meanings, discourses, and lived experiences are relatively fewer (Gaunt, 2009). Therefore, the limited number of qualitative and mixed-methods studies observed in the reviewed literature reflects international trends and indicates that interpretive depth in this field is underdeveloped. STS and contemporary organology studies argue for the necessity of qualitative approaches (e.g., ethnography, discourse analysis, narrative methods) to understand how instruments are socially constructed and how institutional practices shape selections beyond simple demographic relationships (Bijsterveld & Peters, 2010). Thus, the study's call for more qualitative research aligns with the methodological critique found in organology and music education literature (Gaunt, 2009).

Sociodemographic and Psychosocial Determinants of Instrument Selection

Gender and Instrument Gendering

The study concludes that gender significantly influences instrument preference and that certain instruments are culturally coded as "feminine" or "masculine," a finding strongly supported by contemporary empirical and theoretical studies documenting the gendered associations of instruments in different contexts (Wych, 2012). Research conducted in many national contexts reveals systematic gender stratification in instrument registration and the social meanings attributed to instruments (e.g., harp and flute as feminine; brass and percussion as masculine), and scholars argue that these patterns arise not from an instrument's intrinsic suitability to a gender but from historical role assignments, pedagogical expectations, and recruitment practices (González-Limón et al., 2023). For instance, Wych (2012) emphasizes that gender-instrument stereotypes impact students' persistence and suggests that active pedagogical strategies are needed to support gender-atypical instrumentalists. Therefore, the findings in this study align with international patterns and underscore the need for interventions to make instrument selection more gender-neutral, including teacher encouragement, exposure to diverse role models, and curriculum materials that challenge stereotypes (Wych, 2012).

Age, Music Preferences, and Developmental Stage

The study identifies age and the type of music students listen to as decisive factors in instrument selection. Developmental stage matters because the possibilities of instruments, as noted above, correspond to stages of motor, cognitive, and social development (Lee, 2020; Bijsterveld & Peters, 2010). Additionally, students' music tastes and exposure to popular genres also shape their preferences: exposure to guitar-based pop music or folk traditions (e.g., bağlama) increases the likelihood of selecting these instruments for identity and aesthetic reasons. This pattern is observed in cross-cultural studies linking listening habits with instrument acquisition (Post, 2013). Therefore, curriculum planners and instrument teachers should understand how listening ecologies and identity formation interact with developmental preparation to shape instrument preferences (Post, 2013).

Family, Teacher, and Environmental Influences

The different influences of family (dominant in amateur contexts) and teachers (dominant in professional careers) reported in the study are consistent with the literature highlighting the layered social contexts of decision-making in music. The socio-cultural capital, desires, and economic resources of the family often mediate early access to instruments, first enrollment, and ongoing support in amateur environments, while institutional teachers and conservatory pathways show a stronger influence in shaping professionalization and the trajectory of selections (Gaunt, 2009). Thorgersen and colleagues (2015) emphasize the dialogical teacher-student relationship in instrument traditions and the significant role teachers play in shaping repertoire, technique, and commitment. This observation reflects the dominance of teachers in professional music education. Organological studies based on STS knowledge also highlight how local infrastructures (instrument availability, repair services, community opportunities) mediate these interpersonal

influences (Bijsterveld & Peters, 2010). As a result, policy and practice should focus on strengthening both access to families and teacher-mediated guidance within institutions and equal access at the same time.

Economic Constraints: Affordability, Portability, Continuity

The study's identification of economic conditions such as instrument purchase costs, portability, and maintenance as significant determinants of selection and perseverance is consistent with organological and educational analyses that treat instruments as material objects embedded in economic systems (Bijsterveld & Peters, 2010; Gunawan, 2023). The rise of eco-organology and studies on instrument production emphasize that the affordability and sustainable design of instruments influence which instruments stand out pedagogically and culturally within a community. For example, affordable, portable instruments (guitar, small keyboards, accessible folk instruments) are often overrepresented in mass music education because they reduce entry barriers (Kang & Hood, 2023). Bijsterveld & Peters' (2010) STS perspective argues that instrument development and dissemination are shaped by technological, economic, and institutional conditions. This framework helps explain why students with fewer resources choose different instruments and why economic constraints may undermine long-term education. Therefore, the study's conclusion that economic limitations may negatively affect the continuity of instrument education reflects broader findings that price and logistical factors (size, transport) significantly constrain the educational process (Gunawan, 2023). Policy interventions such as instrument rental programs, subsidies, community instrument banks, and the promotion of low-cost or digital/virtual instrument solutions are proposed solutions based on this literature (Gunawan, 2023).

Instrument Preferences: Guitar, Violin, Piano, Bağlama

The study's finding that the guitar, violin, piano, and bağlama are the most frequently preferred instruments in the examined literature aligns with both pedagogical realities and cultural dynamics. Globally, the guitar and piano are among the most commonly taught instruments due to their accessibility, roles in popular music, and capacities in both solo and accompaniment roles; the violin, due to its position in the curriculum and infrastructure (string programs), continues to maintain a central position in community and classical music pathways (Fujita, 2021). The importance of the bağlama in the Turkish context is due to its central role in Turkish folk traditions and its institutional presence in regional music education and informal learning ecologies; organological and ethnomusicological explanations show that instruments embedded in local music repertoires and popular culture naturally attract learners (Sayın, 2023). These patterns show that instrument selection is not only an individual preference but is shaped by cultural repertoires, institutional accessibility, and popular music ecologies. This point has been repeatedly emphasized in organological and cultural evolution studies on instrument distribution (Aguirre-Fernández et al., 2021). Therefore, curriculum planners should consider the dual impact of individual tastes and socio-cultural accessibility when designing equitable instrument presentation policies.

Conclusion

In Turkey, the musical instruments used in preschool education were identified as Xylophone, Maracas, Tambourine, Rhythm Sticks, and Triangle Bell; in elementary school, the instruments included are Drum, Flute, Harmonica, Melodica, and Organ; in middle school, Piano, Guitar, Bağlama, Ney (Turkish flute), and Darbuka; and in high school, Drum Set, Viola, Cello, Saxophone, and Oud were determined and their organological analysis was conducted.

When examining the research on instrument selection, a total of 17 studies were found, consisting of 6 master's theses and 11 research articles. Of the studies reviewed, 14 were directly related to instrument selection, while 3 were indirectly related. Indirectly related studies included Study 11: "Motivation in Professional Instrumental Education," which did not discuss instrument selection outside of voluntary instrument choice, and Study 16: "Evaluation of Expert Opinions on Student and Instrument Selection in Cello Education," which only focused on instrument selection for the cello. Study 17: "Determining Primary School Students' Tendencies toward Autogenous Instrument Education" was considered indirectly related because it focused more on whether students received instrument training rather than instrument playing tendencies. The rest of the studies were directly related to instrument selection. These studies cover research conducted between 2007 and 2025.

In general, the research indicates that instrument selection is particularly influenced by factors such as gender, age, income level, and musical taste.

This study has classified the instruments used in music education in Turkey by educational level, examined them organologically, and evaluated academic studies on instrument selection conducted between 2007 and 2025 through a comprehensive literature review. The findings present significant results both for curriculum-based practices and individual and environmental factors influencing instrument selection.

First, when examining the Ministry of National Education's music education programs, it was found that the instruments followed a pedagogical structure from simple to complex across educational stages. In preschool, percussion and rhythm-based instruments that support motor development were used; in elementary school, basic melodic and wind instruments; in middle school, string, wind, and percussion instruments that serve as core instruments; and in high school, advanced instruments requiring technical skills and musical expertise. This shows a clear alignment between the organological features of instruments and students' cognitive, physical, and musical development levels.

Second, when examining the literature on instrument selection, it was found that 17 academic studies (6 master's theses and 11 research articles) were included, with the majority (82%) directly addressing instrument selection. The studies were predominantly conducted using quantitative and descriptive designs, while qualitative and mixed-methods studies were fewer. This finding indicates that the field has not been sufficiently supported by in-depth qualitative analyses.

Common findings from the research revealed that the primary variables affecting instrument selection were gender, age, income level, music genre preferences, and individual tastes. It was particularly noted that gender had a significant impact on instrument preferences, with some instruments being culturally associated with being "feminine" or "masculine." Additionally, the influences of family, teachers, and the environment were found to play a guiding role in the instrument selection process, with family influence being more dominant in amateur music education and teacher influence being stronger in professional music education.

Economic conditions also emerged as an important factor directly influencing instrument selection. The availability of instruments, their cost, and portability were found to affect both instrument preferences and students' motivation throughout the educational process. The study concluded that economic constraints, particularly in terms of individual instrument education, negatively affect the continuity of music education.

Finally, the most frequently preferred instruments in the literature were the guitar, violin, piano, and bağlama, which stand out due to their widespread presence in educational institutions, their accessibility, and their connection to popular music culture. This shows that instrument selection is shaped not only by individual preferences but also by cultural and institutional dynamics.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations have been developed for future research and applications in the field of instrument selection:

Increase in Quantitative and Qualitative Academic Research: The number of master's theses and research articles on instrument selection in Turkey is limited. Therefore, it is recommended to promote instrument selection as a thesis and project topic in music education departments, with a particular focus on supporting experimental, longitudinal, and mixed-methods studies at the graduate level. The opening of thematic thesis calls by the Council of Higher Education (YÖK) and universities will increase research productivity.

Expansion of Regional Representation: Most of the current studies are limited to specific cities or regions, which limits the generalizability of cultural, socio-economic, and environmental factors affecting instrument selection. Therefore, multi-center studies covering different geographical areas and conducting comparative analyses between rural and urban areas should be planned. This will help develop instrument selection models sensitive to regional differences.

Development of Guideline Documents for MoNET and Educational Institutions: Based on the research findings, it is recommended to prepare instrument selection guidelines for the Ministry of National Education and relevant educational institutions, taking into account age, physical suitability, musical interest, and socio-economic conditions. These guidelines should be especially practical for music teachers and classroom teachers working at the preschool and elementary school levels.

Teacher Training and In-Service Education Programs: Considering the pedagogical and individual aspects of instrument selection, it is suggested that in-service education programs for music teachers include more content on instrument selection, organological awareness, and student guidance. This will help teachers provide more suitable instrument recommendations based on students' physical and sensory characteristics.

Time-Sensitive and Periodic Research: As popular music genres, media influences, and cultural trends change over time, it is expected that individuals' tendencies towards playing instruments may also vary seasonally. Therefore, it is recommended that research on instrument selection be repeated at regular intervals (e.g., every 5-10 years) to track temporal changes in trends and develop policies based on current data.

Applications to Reduce Socio-Economic Inequality: Given the impact of economic conditions on instrument selection and access to music education, it is recommended to expand instrument provision programs in public schools, establish school instrument pools, and promote local government-supported instrument lending systems. These types of programs can help prevent students from being excluded from music education due to economic reasons.

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Web sites

Web 1. tr.wikipedia.org

Appendix 1. Studies included in the research

RN	Research
R1	Sağer, T., ve Karataş, Y. (2022). Cinsiyet faktörünün çalrı tercihine etkisi: çalrı-cinsiyet profili haritası. <i>İdil</i> , 94, 865. doi: 10.7816/idil-11-94-04
R2	Karataş, Y., ve Sağer, T. (2021). Çalrı-Kimlik İnşasında Toplumsal Cinsiyetin Rolü ve Kayseri'de Akordeon Çalan Çerkez Kadınların Çalrı Seçim Süreçleri. <i>IBAD Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi</i> , (10), 72-95.
R3	Tanınmış, G. (2014). Çocuklar için doğru çalrı seçiminde ben-tovim/boyd sistemi. <i>Fine Arts</i> , 9(4), 175-180. https://doi.org/10.12739/10.12739
R4	Akbudak, H., ve Taşdemir, T. (2021). Mesleki müzik eğitimi alan öğrencilerin bireysel çalrı tercihlerini etkileyen faktörler. <i>İnönü Üniversitesi Kültür ve Sanat Dergisi</i> , 7(2), 285-296. https://doi.org/10.22252/ijca.1035341
R5	Topaloğlu, T. (2021). Müzik öğretmeni adaylarının bireysel çalrı seçimini etkileyen unsurların öğrenci görüşleri doğrultusunda değerlendirilmesi. <i>Türk Eğitim Bilimleri Dergisi</i> , 19(2), 788-809. https://doi.org/10.37217/tebd.873044
R6	Polat, S., İlgar, K., ve Öztürk, N. İ. (2019). Konservatuvar öğrencilerinin ekonomik durumlarının enstrüman seçimi ve başarı düzeyi üzerindeki etkisi. <i>Social Sciences</i> , 14(4), 1715-1735. http://dx.doi.org/10.29228
R7	Akın, S., ve Yiğit, E. F. (2023). Özengen müzik eğitimi kurumlarında öğrencilerin çalrı seçimleri üzerine kurum sahibi görüşleri. <i>Bati Anadolu Eğitim Bilimleri Dergisi</i> , 14(2), 1511-1532.
R8	Değirmencioğlu, L. (2022). Career anxiety of fine arts high school students: a case study Kayseri fine arts high school. <i>International Journal of Education Technology and Scientific Researches</i> , 7(20), 2417-2453.
R9	Doğan, T., ve Erdal, B. (2016). Senin favori çalgın hangisi? Çalrı tercihini etkileyen demografik ve sosyo-kültürel faktörler üzerine bir araştırma. <i>Journal of Human Sciences</i> , 13(3), 6050-6070.
R10	Özkarasnaklı, U., ve Dalkıran, E. (2017). Genel müzik eğitiminde çalrı çalmaya yönelik öğrenci görüşleri: Denizli ili örneği. <i>Sanat Eğitimi Dergisi</i> , 5(1), 1-17. https://doi.org/10.30786/jef.1269510
R11	Öztürk, G. (2020). Mesleki Çalrı Eğitiminde Motivasyon. <i>Educational Policy Analysis and Strategic Research</i> , 15(3), 70-99.
R12	Derin, U. Y. (2007). Anadolu güzel sanatlar lisesi müzik bölümü öğrencilerinin çalrı seçim yöntemi, karşılaşılan sorunlar ve çözüm önerileri. [Yüksek Lisans Tezi]. Marmara Üniversitesi.
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