

An Examination of the Original Knowledge and Inheritance of Putu Xian Opera Among Putian Citizens

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Abstract: The purpose of this study is to investigate how the age and educational level of Putian citizens affect their attitudes towards the original perception and transmission of Putu Xian opera. Putu Xian Opera, with its distinct art form and rich cultural legacy, holds a significant place in the history of Chinese opera as one of the first batch of national intangible cultural heritages in China. The original preservation and transmission of Putu Xian Opera are vital to Putian inhabitants, as Putian is the cradle of this traditional art form. According to the findings of an extensive survey of Putian residents, the age group of 46–55 has the largest proportion of citizens, followed by that of 36–45. Regarding the awareness and transmission of Putu Xian opera, citizens between the ages of 26 and 35 and 18 and 25 have the most positive opinions, whilst those under the age of 18 and those 56 and older have the lowest awareness. The survey population is somewhat more male than female, with a more balanced ratio of male to female. The data does not indicate any discernible variations in opinions regarding the understanding and legacy of Putu Xian Opera. The respondents' greatest degree of education was a bachelor's degree (23.2%), which was followed by secondary or high school (23%), specialty or college (22.2%), and high school (22%). The group places greater value on preserving the unique qualities of Putu Xian opera and fostering a positive outlook on its dissemination the more educated they are. Research indicates that individuals with higher levels of education have a stronger feeling of responsibility and initiative towards the preservation of cultural heritage. They are also better able to strike a balance between tradition and modernity, which helps to effectively preserve and advance Putu Xian Opera. In addition, this study highlights the critical role that people's educational attainment plays in the preservation of intangible cultural assets and offers insightful experience and theoretical references for the preservation and transmission of traditional culture in other countries.

Keywords: Putu Xian Opera; Original perception; Inheritance attitude; Age; Education level; Cultural inheritance

1. Introduction

Once known as Xinghua Opera, Putu Xian Opera is a traditional style of opera that is exclusive to the Xinghua region of Fujian Province (present-day Putian City and Xianyou County). From its beginnings in the Song and Yuan Dynasties, Putu Xian Opera evolved into a distinct style and repertoire system during the Ming and Qing Dynasties. It combines various artistic elements, such as local folk music, dance, and literature, and is loved by local people for its ancient, delicate, and expressive artistic characteristics. Putu Xian Opera is one of the most important genres of traditional Chinese opera and was included in the first batch of the national intangible cultural heritage list because of its unique art form and rich cultural connotation.^[1] Putu Xian Opera is a living heritage of the region's history and culture in addition to being a significant aspect of Putian residents' cultural lives. However, as globalization and urbanization continue to accelerate, the space for the survival of traditional culture has been severely squeezed^[2]. The original perception and inheritance of Putu Xian Opera face many challenges.^[5]

Among these challenges, the most controversial is whether and to what extent the originality of Putu Xian opera should be preserved in its transmission. While others argue that slight modifications can draw in younger audiences, these adaptations could eventually undermine Putu Xian Opera's distinctive characteristics and undermine the cultural significance and purity of its legacy. According to Li Jiasi's research, Putu Xian opera faces a number of issues that could endanger its legacy and cause its long-standing cultural traditions to gradually fade away.^[3] These issues include aging actors and inheritors, changing performance forms and styles, removing songs, homogenizing makeup and faces, lacking young talent, and inadequate funding.

The prevailing opinion is that Putu Xian opera can be developed in novel ways through transfer and adaptation. Zhang Lijuan noted

that the play's adaptation has elevated the aesthetic bar and acquired new aesthetic knowledge, allowing it to transcend temporal and spatial boundaries and exhibit global aesthetic appeal and ideological significance.^[4] It is indisputable, nevertheless, that although the modifications to the Putu Xian Opera may in the near run draw in younger viewers, they will ultimately damage the opera's distinctive style. The likelihood that Putu Xian Opera may lose its original beauty increases with assimilation, which is highly detrimental to its legacy. It has disastrous consequences since it not only fails to advance the popularity of Putu Xian opera but also undermines the original work's classic status and loses its mainstream audience. In this setting, developing an effective policy for cultural inheritance requires investigating the elements influencing the attitudes of Putian citizens toward the perception and inheritance of Putu Xian Opera.

Research has demonstrated that age^[5] and educational attainment^[6,7] have a significant impact on an individual's opinions toward cultural awareness and transmission. According to Lovtsova et al. (2021), a person's perception and attitude toward traditional culture are more positive the more educated they are.^[7] However, Liang et al. (2021) discovered that younger people are generally not as interested in traditional culture, and that media promotion and education are necessary to raise cultural awareness.^[8] Liebenberg et al. (2019) highlight how important cultural education is in helping young people become more culturally literate and conscious of their ancestry.^[10] Thus, a crucial issue for cultural preservation is how to keep Putu Xian Opera alive in contemporary culture and encourage more youth to take part in its legacy. Based on the requirements of the study topic, hypotheses can be developed:

The original view and attitude regarding the transmission of Putu Xian Opera are greatly influenced by the age, gender, and educational attainment of Putian inhabitants.

To comprehend how the inherited attitude toward Putu Xian Opera and the original cognition of Putian residents relate to one another. In order to fully comprehend the original cognition and inherited attitude of Putian inhabitants regarding Putu Xian Opera, three factors of their characteristics—gender, age, and educational attainment—were analyzed through the use of questionnaire surveys. Five dimensions are covered by Putu Xian Opera's original conception and inheritance attitude, which includes performance forms and styles, plot themes and story inheritance, talent training and traditional skill inheritance, audience attraction and social dissemination, policy support, and social recognition. Consequently, this study makes an effort to demonstrate the tight connection between citizen demographics and Putu Xian opera heritage through these factors.

2. Research Methods

2.1 Research design

In order to gather information for quantitative analysis, this study uses a cross-sectional survey design with questionnaires. This design offers in-depth data on a particular population at a particular moment in time and facilitates understanding of the correlation between Putian inhabitants' sentiments regarding the origins and dissemination of Putu Xian opera and their demographic characteristics.

2.2 Study population and sampling method

To guarantee a representative sample, stratified random sampling was employed with the study population, which consists of Putian City permanent inhabitants. In order to more accurately depict the population structure, stratification factors included age, gender, and educational level.

2.3 Sample Size and Retrieval of Questionnaires

The Putian Statistical Yearbook for 2023 states that 3,199,000 people call Putian home.^[11] 384 people were included in the sample size calculation using the Krejcie and Morgan formula.^[12] After accounting for potentially erroneous surveys, 424 out of the 450 respondents that were polled had their questionnaires returned, yielding a recovery rate of 94.22 percent. Questionnaire recovery is largely satisfactory. 405 valid questionnaires—with a validity ratio of 95.52%—were obtained after invalid questionnaires were eliminated. This percentage demonstrates the excellent design and execution of the questionnaire process.

2.4 Reliability and validity of the questionnaire

Demographic data, cultural literacy, and opinions regarding the original interpretation and dissemination of Putu Xian opera comprised the three sections of the questionnaire. Using the Cronbach's alpha coefficient, the questionnaire's internal consistency was evaluated. The questionnaire's overall reliability score was 0.78.

Bartlett's test of sphericity and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure were used to evaluate the questionnaire's validity. Given that the KMO value of 0.94 is substantially greater than the generally accepted cutoff of 0.70, factor analysis can be performed on the data correlation. If there is no correlation, or if the correlation matrix between the variables is a unitary matrix, it can be determined using Bartlett's test of sphericity. There was a significant correlation between the variables, and the data were appropriate for factor analysis. The level of significance (p-value) was 0.00, which is substantially less than 0.05. These findings demonstrated the questionnaire's strong structural validity.

The study's findings offer a trustworthy and legitimate statistical foundation for understanding Putian residents' opinions and attitudes concerning Puxian opera, which aids in promoting the art form's growth and cultural legacy in the area. Subsequent investigations will focus on pinpointing the primary variables influencing attitudes and perceptions as well as proposing focused marketing tactics.

3. Research Results

3.1 Basic characteristics of Putian citizens

Table 3.1 Provides a basic overview of Putian citizens (n = 405)

Indicators		Frequency	Percentage
Age ranges	Under 18 years	18	4.40
	18 to 25 years	58	14.30
	26 to 35 years	61	15.10
	36 to 45 years	83	20.50
	46 to 55 years	137	33.80
	Over 55 years	48	11.90
Gender	Male	210	51.90
	Female	190	46.90
	Other	5	1.20
level of education	Elementary education and lower	20	4.90
	A junior high education	68	16.80
	Postsecondary education/high school	93	23.00
	University or College	90	22.20
	Graduate Student	94	23.20
	Master's and higher	40	9.90

Table 3.1 shows that the age group of the survey population is the greatest in the 46–55 age group (33.8%), followed by the 36–45 age group (20.5%), and the under-18 age group (4.4%). The gender ratio of the survey population is more balanced, with slightly more men than women. Undergraduate education accounted for the highest level of their education (23.2%), followed by secondary and high school education (23%), and specialty and tertiary education (22.2%). The lowest percentage, 4.9%, was seen in those in primary school and below.

It is evident that the age distribution is concentrated in the 36–55 age range, with the largest proportion falling into the 46–55 age group. There are slightly more men than women, indicating a generally balanced gender ratio. With a larger percentage of college and high school/secondary education and a lower percentage of elementary education and below, educational attainment is more diverse.

3.2 Distinct Age Groups of Putian Residents' Views on the Original Understanding and Transmission of Putu Xian Opera

Table 3.2 Views of Putian Residents Across Age Groups Regarding the Authentic Understanding and Passage of Putu Xian Opera (n=405)

Age ranges	Mean	The mean's 95% reliability interval		Skewness	Kurtosis	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a
		Lower line	Upper line			
Under 18 years	2.94±0.61	2.63	3.24	0.32	-1.04	0.13
18 to 25 years	3.95±0.49	3.83	4.08	-1.50	1.12	0.00
26 to 35 years	4.17±0.46	4.05	4.28	-3.09	9.75	0.00
36 to 45 years	3.78±0.66	3.64	3.93	-1.14	-0.11	0.00
46 to 55 years	3.41±0.72	3.29	3.53	-0.22	-1.33	0.00
Over 55 years	3.32±0.79	3.09	3.55	-0.07	-0.67	0.19

Table 3.2 reveals that the sentiments of Putian inhabitants across various age groups regarding the original knowledge and inheritance of Putu Xian opera vary significantly. With a mean score of 4.17, citizens in the 26–35 age group have the highest attitudes toward the original knowledge and inheritance of Putu Xian Opera, followed by those in the 18–25 age group (with a mean score of 3.95). The scores of those under the age of 18 and those 56 and older are lower, with means of 2.94 and 3.32, respectively.

Skewness analysis reveal that the data is negatively skewed for the majority of age groups, suggesting that while some people have lower perceptions, the bulk of people have a more positive attitude and perspective of Putu Xian Opera.

3.3 Distinctive Gender Attitudes of Putian Citizens Regarding the Authentic Understanding and Transmission of Putu Xian Opera

Table 3.3 Views of Putian Residents by Gender Regarding the Authentic Understanding and Passage of Putu Xian Opera (n=405)

Gender	Mean	The mean's 95% reliability interval		Skewness	Kurtosis	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a
		Lower line	Upper line			
Male	3.66±0.70	3.57	3.76	-0.77	-0.78	0.00
Female	3.63±0.75	3.53	3.74	-0.64	-0.88	0.00
Other	3.55±0.81	2.54	4.56	-1.31	1.18	0.20*

The attitudes of Putu Xian Opera's original knowledge and inheritance among its residents, broken down by gender, are shown in Table 3.3. A 95% confidence interval of 3.57 to 3.76 is indicated by the statistics, which indicates that the mean value of male citizens' original cognition and inherited attitude regarding Putu Xian Opera is 3.66. The 95% confidence interval for female citizens' mean value is 3.53 to 3.74, which is somewhat lower at 3.63. Although the 95% confidence intervals of citizens of the other genders range from 2.54 to 4.56, their mean value is 3.55, indicating that there are more disparities in this group's opinions and attitudes.

The majority of citizens appear to have a more positive attitude toward the knowledge and legacy of Putu Xian Opera, according to the skewness and kurtosis analyses, although there are a small number of people who have lower attitudes. The attitude data of both male and female citizens is negatively skewed. Male skewness is -0.77 with a kurtosis of -0.78, while female skewness is -0.64 with a kurtosis of -0.88. With a kurtosis of 1.18 and a skewness of -1.31, the data for citizens of the other genders exhibit a more atypical distribution.

3.4 Distinctive Educational Levels of Putian Residents' Attitudes Regarding the Original Understanding and Transmission of Putu Xian Opera

Table 3.4 Views of Putian Residents on the Original Interpretation and Transmission of Putu Xian Opera, by Educational Level (n = 405)

level of education	Mean	The mean's 95% reliability interval		Skewness	Kurtosis	Kolmogorov-Smirnova
		Lower line	Upper line			
Elementary education and lower	3.21±0.69	2.89	3.54	-0.05	-1.46	0.06
A junior high education	2.94±0.67	2.78	3.11	0.40	-0.74	0.07
Postsecondary education/high school	3.36±0.72	3.21	3.51	0.05	-1.11	0.00
University or College	3.80±0.55	3.69	3.92	-0.92	-0.54	0.00
Graduate Student	4.12±0.37	4.05	4.20	-2.52	6.39	0.00
Master's and higher	4.28±0.15	4.23	4.33	-0.01	-0.48	0.20*

According to Table 3.4, there is a substantial correlation between education level and the attitude toward Putu Xian Opera's original knowledge and legacy among Putian inhabitants with varying degrees of education. Postgraduate educated citizens, with a mean score of 4.28 and a 95% confidence interval of 4.23 to 4.33, have the highest perspective and attitude toward the uniqueness and legacy of Putu Xian Opera. A bachelor's degree holder's mean score is 4.12, with a 95% confidence interval ranging from 4.05 to 4.20. A mean of 3.80 indicates that citizens with specialized or college education also have high attitudes and perceptions. However, with a mean score of 3.80, residents in the junior high school and primary school and below groups score lower. There was a 3.80 mean score. On the other hand, individuals in the junior high school and primary school and below categories received lower scores—2.94 and 3.21, correspondingly.

The distribution characteristics of each group's cognitive and attitude data are shown via skewness and kurtosis studies. Undergraduate and specialist/college degree skewnesses are -2.52 and -0.92, respectively, suggesting that the distribution of the data for these two groups is left-skewed, meaning that while most people have high cognition and attitude, there are a small number of people with low cognition and attitude. Postgraduate and above education has a skewness of -0.01 and a kurtosis of -0.48, suggesting that the cognitive and attitude levels of those who possess this degree of education are near to normal. For junior high school and below, the skewness was -0.05 and 0.40, respectively, suggesting that these groups' levels of attitude and cognition were generally consistent. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test revealed a significant deviation from normalcy in the data on attitude and cognition across all educational levels, with the exception of postgraduate and higher education.

4. Research conclusions and recommendations

4.1 Research conclusions

The following findings can be made from this study's data analysis and questionnaire survey: Age and educational attainment have a major impact on Putian citizens' perceptions toward the original knowledge and legacy of Putu Xian Opera, although gender has less of an impact.

The results show that people's perceptions and attitudes on the transmission of Putu Xian Opera are highest among those in the 26–35 and 18–25 age groups, whilst under-18 and 56 and older residents score lowest. Since they were more educated, had more exposure to many cultures, and participated in more cultural events, the young and middle-aged groups (those between the ages of 18 and 25 and 26 to 35) displayed the most positive opinions toward the original knowledge and inheritance of Putu Xian Opera. This community helps Putu Xian Opera spread and grow because of its increased knowledge of and support for it. In order to improve their understanding of Putu Xian opera and their readiness to share it with others, the elder and younger groups require more cultural education and mentoring, as seen by their lower scores in these areas.

Though not very different, male and female citizens have slightly different awareness of and views toward Putu Xian Opera. Specialized cultural policies and educational initiatives should be created for various gender groups to increase awareness of and support for traditional culture in society at large, with the ultimate goal of better promoting the legacy of Putu Xian opera.

Individuals possessing a bachelor's degree or more expressed the best opinion and disposition towards Putu Xian Opera, whilst those with only an elementary education received the lowest marks. The more educated a population is, the more appreciative they are of Putu Xian Opera's original knowledge and legacy. Raising the public's educational level can improve their attitudes toward the cultural transmission of Putu Xian Opera and support its sustainable development. This is especially true for young people and other groups who may not have received as much education as they should.

To support the conservation and inheritance of the opera, particular recommendations for the original conservation and transmission of the Putu Xian Opera are made in light of these findings.

4.2 Research recommendations

4.2.1 Developing strategies for the transmission of Putu Xian Opera for different age groups

(1) To sustain and improve the enthusiasm and knowledge of the 26-35 and 18-25 age groups in Putu Xian opera, more chances for participation in cultural events should be offered, such as training courses, lectures, and Putu Xian opera performances.

(2) To provide young people under the age of eighteen with early exposure to and education about Putu Xian opera, classroom instruction, field excursions, and extracurricular activities should be enhanced.

(3) To promote the participation of citizens aged 56 and above in the inheritance and preservation of Putu Xian Opera, their rich life experience and cultural accumulation should be used to drive the younger generation's awareness of cultural inheritance through community cultural activities and volunteer programs.

4.2.2 Improvement of cultural education

(1) Increase the amount of Putu Xian Opera-related courses and events offered at the elementary, secondary, and university levels. Through cultural heritage classes, opera clubs, and extracurricular activities, students' interest in and identification with Putu Xian Opera will be fostered.

(2) To improve their cultural literacy and desire to continue the tradition, adult education programs, particularly for the middle-aged and older populations, offer lectures and training on Putu Xian Opera culture.

4.2.3 Harnessing media and digital technologies

(1) To raise public knowledge and interest in Putu Xian Opera, create and distribute content and programs about the opera via media outlets like the Internet, radio, and television.

(2) To encourage more young people to participate in the legacy of Putu Xian Opera through the use of digital technology, develop digital resources for the opera, such as online classes, virtual museums, and digital theater performances.

4.2.4 Supporting Folk Inheritors of Putu Xian Opera

(1) Assist folk artists and cultural inheritors of the Putu Xian Opera with financial support and policy guarantees. Encourage and support the development of the Putu Xian Opera through the establishment of inheritance bases, inheritance training, and cultural exchange initiatives.

(2) Through cultural community events, it fosters public-artist and inheritor connections and exchanges, and it increases the general public's sense of identification and engagement in Putu Xian Opera.

(3) By putting these policy proposals into practice, we may successfully raise Putu Xian Opera's knowledge and inheritance attitude among Putian citizens and encourage its preservation as a significant intangible cultural treasure.

Future research can investigate the impact of additional social factors, such as social environments, occupations, and economic levels, on attitudes and perceptions regarding Putu Xian Opera. This will provide a theoretical foundation and useful guidance for the creation of more thorough and successful cultural inheritance policies.

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