

The Implementation of Sex Education for Secondary School Students in China

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Abstract. In this study, 200 questionnaires and structured interview samples were collected nationwide from students, parents, and teachers in three perspectives: personal identification information, personal experience of sex education and the level of knowledge about sex education. The data from the questionnaires and the results of the structured interviews were combined to analyze and summaries the general characteristics of the current situation of sex education among high school students: high school students, their parents and teachers are to a large extent aware of the importance of sex education and are eager to obtain relevant knowledge through the school, but the knowledge provided by the school is often limited and does not fully meet the needs of high school students; the sources of sex knowledge for high school students are mainly The attitude of high school students towards sex-related topics has changed considerably from the previous surveys conducted by scholars, with most of them being able to face up to their own physiological demands and discuss sex-related topics with others openly; however, even so, the vast majority of respondents still think that sex education is not being implemented, and the sex education curriculum is far from the national standard. Even so, most respondents still believe that sex education is not being implemented and that the curriculum is nowhere near the level required by the state. The reasons for the current situation of sex education include: school reasons, the concept of sex education has not kept pace with the quality of education, the lack of professional resources for sex education teachers and sex education materials in schools; family reasons, some parents have old-fashioned ideas, lack of correct understanding of sex education, do not attach enough importance to sex education, parents generally lack comprehensive scientific knowledge of sex, parents and children lack of communication; social reasons, the government lacks regulation of undesirable cultural factors and the relevant policies are not comprehensive.

Keywords: Sex education; Secondary school student; Policy implementation.

1. Introduction

Sex education could be considered as one of the most neglected aspects of education by Chinese parents. Sex education has always been a neglected type of education in China. Different Chinese parents have completely different attitudes towards sex education. Some parents may not want their children to be exposed to sexual knowledge too early. At the same time, other parents believe that children's early exposure to sex education knowledge is helpful for later life, these parents believe that sex education can help children to establish the correct concept of sex education, although there are two different views.

One research focus in the importance of sex education has been repeatedly argued in recent years. In 2009, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) published International technical guidance on sex education: An evidence-informed approach for schools, teachers, and health educators which considers healthy sex as an important part of a positive self-image and the ability to maintain rewarding relationships [1]. Scholars like Miya Narushima, Josephine Pui-Hing Wong and others have also identified adolescence and young adulthood as a

critical time for building a lasting foundation for sexual health and well-being [2]. A central developmental task in early adulthood is the successful resolution of conflicts between intimacy and isolation: entering emotionally and sexually satisfying relationships requires the ability to open oneself up to intimacy and closeness with others, while maintaining one's emotional and physical boundaries [3].

Another research focus is the model and approach to sex education. In the United States considering the steady rise in the rate of underage sex crimes and teenage abortions in the 1960s under the influence of sexual liberation and sexual freedom ideology, there is a consensus in the United States in favor of adolescent sex education in schools. However, the field of adolescent sex education in the United States is divided into two different perceptions on the implementation: one perception, represented by the American Council on Sex Information and Education, has proposed "comprehensive sex education", which advocates that the most important goal of school sex education program is to teach adolescents to use condoms and to reduce harm to their own health and that of others when engaging in sex activity. The other perception, represented by the American Institute of Sexual Health Medicine, advocates character-based 'abstinence-based sex education', suggesting that sex education programmed based on sexual and character-based educational goals should focus on character education, suggesting that virginity should be maintained until one has found and entered into a legal marriage with someone who is prepared to live together for the rest of one's life before engaging in sexual relations [2, 4-6]. Research by scholars like Amy Bleakley, Michael Hennessy and others has concluded that American adults tend to favor a more balanced approach to sex education rather than a single abstinence-based approach to sex education [7]. American Sexual Health Association, initiated by Dr Joe Mcilhaney, also published a monograph in 1999, 'Abstinence versus Safe Sex Education', in which it compared abstinence-based sex education with comprehensive sex education in a holistic manner, highlighting the advantages of comprehensive sex education [4].

Due to traditional thinking, most Chinese parents insist on the concept of "no teacher, no teacher" in educating their children about sex, and some teachers in schools are too shy to mention "sex" to their students, resulting in a serious disconnect between sexual practices and sex education for minors. The lack of knowledge about sex, the distortion of sex and the slippage of sexual morality among minors, which leads to criminal behavior and social problems. Many minors today rely on the internet and other media to 'learn' about sex, but these media are a mixed bag of so-called sex knowledge, and the lack of scientific and systematic sex education has left many misconceptions engraved in their minds, which in turn leads to a tragic cycle.

In recent years, tragedies caused by sexual ignorance in China have been on the rise, which shows the ineffectiveness of sex education in China. Few parents initiate discussions with their children about sex education, even if they want their children to receive good sex education [4]. Sex education is always on the curriculum, but few teachers actually transmit it to their students in the classroom, and even when it is disseminated the content of the sex education curriculum is very limited.

Despite the increasing emphasis on sex education in China, sources of knowledge about sex education for young people are very limited in every respect. Few studies have addressed the question of whether sex education is being implemented in China and how young people view it. This study uses questionnaires to analyze the implementation of sex education in China and the reality of sex education.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research design

In the short questionnaire, there are 15 questions in total, consisting of three types for various aims. A participant consent form and Briefing Letter are provided to each respondent before answering the questions so that ensure our participants in the survey are all voluntary and free to finish the questions. The study begins with three basic information questions, including gender, living area and role at

school. Such messages could contribute to the initial understanding of the sample during final data analysis and is helpful for the comparison of different categories during the differential analysis. Apart from that, participants are asked to respond using an a-point Likert Scale, which is the most significant part of the survey. These eight scale questions with a total of 40 marks are designed to measure the degree of recognition and satisfaction of participants about the situation of sex education on campus in China in a quantitative method. For instance, if one respondent totally agrees with the question stem “Specialized knowledge related to sex education is necessary to learn and master”, this answer can convert to five marks mathematically. As a result, the marks reflected by the rate of how strongly the participants agree with each statement, could quantify their attitudes of them and help us to do further analysis [12-14]. Accordingly, the following research questions on the Likert scale will guide this study:

- 1) Whether you learn a lot about sex education or not?
- 2) Whether you agree that it is necessary to have sex education courses in secondary school?
- 3) Do you think middle and high school is the best medium for sex education?
- 4) Do you think specialized knowledge related to sex education is vital to learn and master
- 5) Have you ever been involved in a sex education program at school?
- 6) Whether have some experiences discussing sexuality with others on campus or not?
- 7) whether you would have no shame when talking about sex in school or not?
- 8) Are you generally satisfied with the current status of sex education in China?

In the last part, using 3 multiple choice questions, participants were asked to choose the options, based on their opinion about the specific issues of implementation of sex education, improvements in teaching and who is the most essential group that should be responsible for teenagers’ sex education. The purpose of this section is to indicate the younger generation’s preference for the implementation of sex education for practical implications, pushing educational institutions to reform and optimize sex education.

2.2 Data Collection and Sampling

First, we chose middle school and high school students, which are between 13 and 18 years old, as the main respondents, as well as some parents and teachers. Because they are the main education group, and they are the people who most need to receive sex education. Puberty, when children become curious or confused about sex, is theoretically the best time for sex education. After that, we chose to spread the questionnaire in the way of social media, especially Wechat mini program, and the respondents only need to identify the two-dimensional code in the picture to start answering questions. This not only saves the printing cost and paper cost, but also facilitates better data statistics and the efficiency of our research.

Then, we tried to share the QR code in WeChat group chat and various social platforms as much as possible, to get a certain amount of reward after filling in. However, the number of questionnaires collected by such a sharing method was not optimistic. Although there was a certain amount of reward, it was too limited to the group chat of people they knew as the respondents, and the number was not enough. Then we came up with a method that we also needed a certain number of sample questionnaires to share the respondents, and our respondents were close to age, so we helped each other to speed up the distribution of questionnaires. At the same time, it greatly improves the coverage of the population. In the end, we successfully obtained more than two hundred questionnaires, with a high response rate of over 85%. To make the sample more universal and representative, we distributed the questionnaire to people in middle and high schools and above, with various locations and different genders. The subjects were mostly in their teens to 30s, with a small number of older people.

These individuals are usually within the age range of our research object or have experienced middle school and high school. They are relatively familiar with the situation of sex education in China because they have experienced it personally, so they can express the most real situation and their own feelings. Of course, there are some older people who didn't remember what sex education was like at school, or the system was too different from what it is now, or who didn't finish grade 12;

There are also some children who have just entered middle school, have not received enough school education for a long time, and have relatively less exposure to sex education. These are all uncontrollable factors and are included in the error of this questionnaire. It is undeniable that these data is useful and reliable, though the results may be relatively extreme due to factors other than age.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1 Hypothesis

Xie Ying in "The Ethical Difficulties Facing Sex Education in China and Countermeasures Research", proposed that in China, many parents are reluctant to talk to their children about specific sex-related topics, and sex exists as a taboo in family education. Many parents worry that discussions on sexuality with their children will lead to premature sexual experiences and sexual intercourse, while some parents have difficulty answering the relevant questions raised by their children correctly due to their own lack of scientific knowledge about sexuality and limited ability in sex education [10]. On this premise, a random sample of 14-17-year-olds from 123 urban communities and 37 rural villages in China was surveyed by Pan Juming and Professor Huang Ying Ying from April to September 2010, further demonstrating the current resistance of parents to the topic of 'sex' in China [11]. According to the data obtained, the main concern of parents who do not talk about sex is the fear that their children will be "led astray" into sexual activity.

Furthermore, the concept of reproduction as the core value and primary purpose of sexuality has been perpetuated in China for thousands of years. In today's China, if the relationship is harmonious, even if people are not sexually satisfied, it hardly affects the relationship. There is a widespread emphasis on the reproductive function of sex, infertility is seen as unfilial, society questions the lifestyles of celibate people, and sexual health care providers almost always focus on sexual dysfunction and infertility as a treatment and selling point. Because marriage has traditionally been considered the only reasonable way to live a sexual life, society has taken a very strict attitude towards outgoing sexuality [10-13].

Based on this social context, the study made assumptions about the questionnaire's views on sex education before formally starting to collate the data. The hypothesis was that more people would oppose the implementation of sex education and consider it "shameful" to mention sex-related topics in their daily lives. However, the actual results of the study were very different from this hypothesis.

3.2 Data Analyse

This study used iconographic comparisons in analyzing the data, mainly using bar chart analysis and bar graph analysis. The bar chart analysis was used to assess the differences between the different identities in this questionnaire and to assess the association between sources of sexual knowledge and adolescent characteristics, the understanding of sexual knowledge and personal experiences of sexual sources by different identities, the current problems with sex education in Chinese schools and whether the respondents themselves have had experiences of discussing sexuality at school. Bar chart analysis was used to understand respondents' understanding of sex education, the need for sex education in schools, whether junior and senior high schools are the most appropriate medium for sex education, whether they have attended sex education courses, whether they have no shame about the topic of sex education, who should be responsible for sex education, what aspects of sex education should be carried out in schools, and what forms of sex education should be carried out in junior and senior high schools in the future. A data survey was conducted.

3.2.1 Understanding of Sexuality Education and the Need for it in Junior and Senior Secondary Schools

The question "How much do you think you know about sex education" was designed to find out whether the participants had a basic knowledge of sex education. Subjects were asked to choose from five different levels to suit their situation: very unaware, unaware, aware, very aware, and very aware.

Based on a summary of the relevant literature, this study assumes that more people do not consider themselves to be sufficiently knowledgeable about sex education. However, the actual findings of the study contradicted this hypothesis. Out of a sample of 200, the highest proportion of respondents, 41.5% (83), chose 'know a lot' and the lowest, 3.5% (7), chose 'know little'. The percentages of respondents who chose 'know' and 'know a lot' were 28% (56) and 20% (40) respectively, while 7% (14) chose 'don't know'. Figure 1 indicates that most respondents are very aware of sex education.

The survey on the need for sex education in high school is also inconsistent with the assumptions made in this study. In the original hypothesis, based on the traditional Chinese cultural shame of talking about 'sex', the study concluded that more people did not recognize the importance of sex education [10]. However, 49.5% strongly agreed and 32.5% agreed to the question "Do you think it is necessary to introduce sex education in junior and senior high school? Those who remained neutral, disagreed, and strongly disagreed were 14%, 3% and 1% respectively. Figure 1 indicates that more than half of the respondents support sex education in junior and senior secondary schools, and only a very small number do not support sex education.

Difference analysis—Knowledge level of sex education

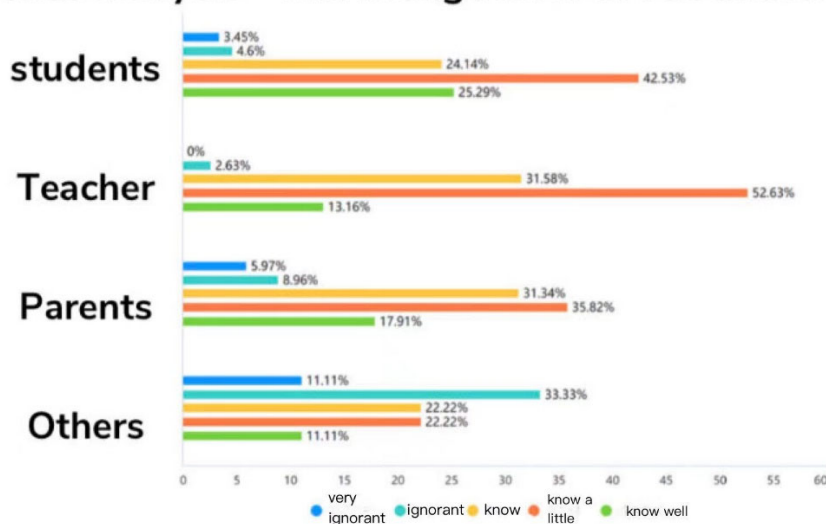


Fig. 1 The line graph of understanding of sex education

3.2.2 The Medium of Sex Education

As shown in Figure 2, the percentage of respondents who agree and strongly agree on whether they consider junior high school to be a medium for sex education is 84%, while those who are neutral are 11.5% and those who do not support and oppose are 4.5% in total. The data shows that respondents consider junior and senior secondary schools to be the medium for sex education.

The survey found that 85% of respondents agreed that sex education requires specific study and mastery. Of these, 51% had participated in sex education activities at school. Only half of the respondents wanted to acquire knowledge of sex education but only half of them had participated in it.

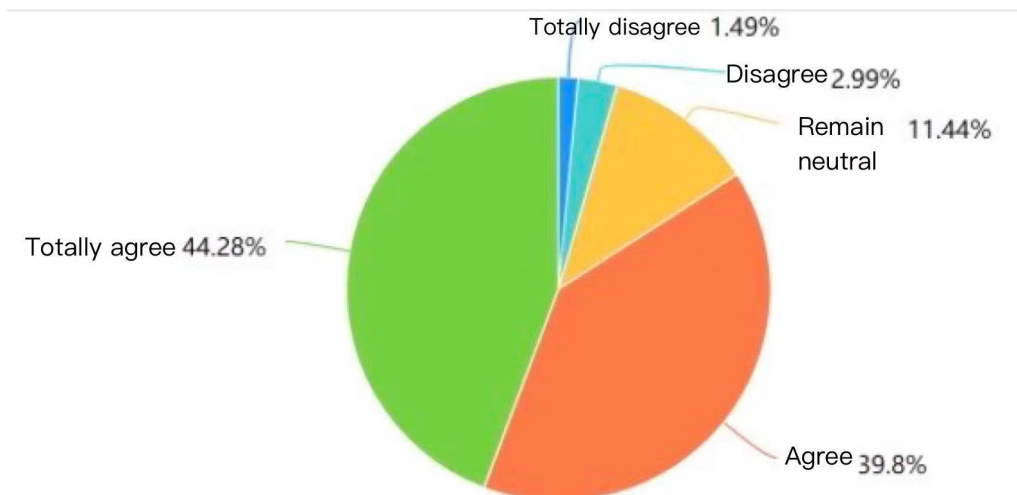


Fig. 2 The pie chart of the attitude of students on whether school is the best medium to teach sex education to teenagers (which is below 18)

3.2.3 Current Situation

In terms of the status of sex education in China, Figure 3 has shown that only 10% of the respondents were very satisfied, while 44% were dissatisfied and very dissatisfied, which means that the respondents were not satisfied with the status of sex education in China. In the survey, more people were dissatisfied than satisfied with the current state of sex education in China. This is mainly due to the backwardness and lack of sex education in China, which is still a difficult issue in China. Although people are becoming aware of the importance of sex education as it becomes more popular and people's mindset improves, sex education is not well implemented in China. China's current sex education does not meet the needs of young people growing up. There is a lack of sex education materials, the channels for young people to obtain sex education knowledge are not standardized, the education on sexual morality is weak, and there are gaps in family sex education. These are the problems of sex education in China, which shows that the current situation of sex education in China is not optimistic.

Total satisfaction of domestic sex education — different provinces

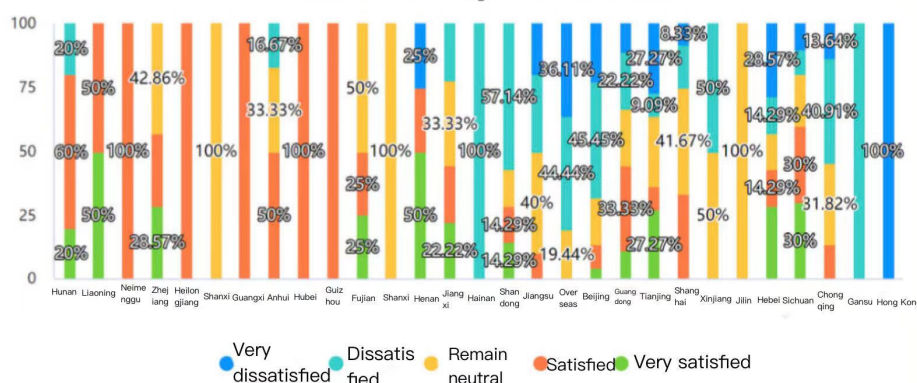


Fig. 3 The Line chart of the domestic situation

3.2.4 Responsibility for Sex Education

This survey has five options: schools and teachers, students themselves, parents, society, and others. Parents and teachers should really take responsibility for sex education, as they are the two most important players in a child's formative years. The most direct source of sex education for children is through the teaching of parents and teachers. The survey questions are multiple-choice, as

shown in Figure 4, the two largest percentages are schools and teachers and parents. For example, some teachers do not know how to teach sex education to their students, as sex education classes are not taken seriously by teachers or students in schools. Then students may have fewer sources of sex education from school and learn more through friends or on their own. But this kind of may lead to false sex education knowledge being formed in the brains of underage children. Bad knowledge can induce bad outcomes and is not as good as students learning directly at school. On the other hand, although sex education is supported by most parents in China, there are still some parents who believe that sex education should not be learned too early. Other parents want their children to be exposed to sex education at an early age, but because they do not know how to teach their children, they are unable to learn about it through their parents.

Question 12: Who do you think should take responsibility for sex education?

Options	Total	Proportion
Schools and teachers	155	77.5%
Students	100	50%
Parents	154	77%
Community	103	51.5%
Others [Explain]	2	1%
Number of people completing	200	

Fig. 4 Two or more references

3.3 Discussion

In general, the choices made by both adults and minors in the section on personal views on sex education differ from the assumption made prior to the compilation of the data in this study that "most people in society do not properly understand the importance of sex education". The results show that the public has developed a more correct perception of sex education and that most people have experienced sex education and believe that they have acquired sufficient knowledge about sex to be able to recognize the importance of sex education. On the contrary, many people are dissatisfied with sex education, even though they believe that they have had experience with sex education. There are three likely reasons for this result.

Firstly, in the 21st century, the rapid development of the internet has enabled many people to gain knowledge about sex from the internet or to obtain some sex education from the internet. In the most popular video software in China, such as Bilibili, a search for "sex education" will give you a variety of sex education videos, such as "high school sex education lectures". These videos have over 3 million views. Such data is also available on the short video platform TikTok. A search for "sex education" on the Chinese version of TikTok brings up over 20,000 videos. This shows that the acquisition of sexual knowledge has been largely transferred from school lectures to online platforms. However, this method of information dissemination also faces the problem of misinformation. The quality of videos on the internet varies, and the creators of short videos can often exaggerate sex-related information to gain traffic. As a result, it is likely that the sexual knowledge that audiences gain from these videos is incomplete [13].

Secondly, even though most people have had experience with sex education in school, these lessons are often limited. China's Health Education Norms for Primary and Secondary Schools,

promulgated in December 2011, states that school health education should be carried out through subject teaching and various school activities as well as various forms of publicity and education, while subject teaching should be arranged for six to seven lessons per semester, mainly using Physical Education and Health as the carrier curriculum [14]. According to the survey, many respondents had been exposed to sex education courses, but the number did not reach the 6 to 7 class hours per semester suggested by the Code. Several respondents even responded that their schools had had sex education courses cancelled after they had started due to external factors. This shows that even though the subjects had experiences related to sex education, these experiences were often negative.

Thirdly, the social acceptance of sex education is still low. Even though many respondents had received sex education from schools, many of them still felt that Chinese society was not very tolerant of 'sex' related topics. One interviewee in the structured interview told us that his school's sex class was cancelled shortly after it started due to the uproar of his classmates and the reports of some parents after the class. This view contradicts the data from this study. According to the findings of this study, most parents can recognize the importance of sex education and expect to see it become more widespread. This discrepancy in findings is most likely due to the limitations of this study. The questionnaires for this study were drawn from cities with high economic levels, such as Beijing, Shanghai, Tianjin, and Chongqing. Therefore, the results of this study largely reflect the situation in developed Chinese cities and are not highly generalizable. In addition, due to practical issues such as time constraints, the sample size of this study is small and to some extent unrepresentative. Even so, this study still concludes that there are limitations in the subjects' views and that many of them tend to exaggerate the current situation. Despite the limitations of this study, it can still reflect to some extent the current level of acceptance of sex education among the public. This shows that in Chinese society, the topic of 'sex' is still considered 'dirty' by many parents and children, but many people's perceptions are beginning to change with the spread of sex education and the development of the internet.

4. Conclusion

In our survey on the completion of sex education in high schools, we studied the implementation of sex education in domestic colleges and universities through electronic questionnaires and interviews and understood and analyzed college students' cognition of sex education, including their attitude, and understanding of the importance of sex education.

As for the unpopularity of sex education methods provided by schools, first, schools are perfunctory in introducing sex education to students because they avoid sensitive topics of sex education, and it is obviously difficult to attract students' interest in science popularization that is too simple. There are few materials that can provide students with knowledge about sex. Parents feel ashamed, schools do not do sex science education in place for fear of causing complaints from parents, and perfunctory videos and materials cannot let students really understand sex education and take due preventive measures and self-protection.

Therefore, the lack of sex education resources and the lack of attention and deliberate avoidance by teachers and parents are the main reasons for students to ignore sex education. And to change the status quo, we believe that the domestic old sex education thought should be reform, now, all kinds of video platform has appeared various forms of sexual education video, although some intentionally diddle traffic video exists, but the overall direction is presented, the society is beginning to embrace a more straightforward, clearer, more scientific sex education

In our study, we avoided by the society for a topic to investigate, despite the link to feel part of the crowd clear emotions, such as interviews, we successfully collected from all ages, all kinds of profession, the crowd of high normal education views and opinions, to our domestic education development provides the progress direction and a more profound understanding of the hearts and minds. We also met many interviewees who had deep feelings and provided us with real feelings and references. In domestic, the questionnaire, interviews and data collection are more difficult and

blocked, but we finished the depth successfully collected data and analysis, also on the domestic current situation of the sex education the most objective evaluation and Suggestions to improve the direction, hope that the domestic high school sex education environment is becoming better. Really implement every school, every student.

This project is the first research study currently being carried out in China about sex education among high school students. We have collected and analyzed information on high school students' attitudes towards sex education, their needs, the sex education they received at school in the past and their views on sex education. And through data collection and analysis, our research questions were validated. However, some additional uncontrollable factors, including the limited size of the survey, only allowed us to reach a few hundred out of the millions of high school students in China. Most of them are also from big cities and belong to the middle class, and thus their schools place a higher value on quality education, so our results are not yet very representative. Therefore, based on this study, we suggest that future scholars can go for in-depth research in the following two directions. Firstly, some future research could be conducted on the implementation of sex education in universities within a smaller geographical area. For example, it could focus on eastern or western cities in China, or even on a particular province or city. This would avoid the effects of large differences due to different ethnic minorities, regional cultural traditions, and inequitable educational resources, and allow for a higher degree of similarity in the background of the sample participating in answering the questionnaire, facilitating better control of variables. It is therefore also suggested that comparative research questions could be designed to compare the implementation of sex education in different regions and to compare commonalities and differences in sex education within schools. Secondly, researchers can focus on how sex education programs can be delivered more efficiently at school level. At a thematic level, research can be analyzed from the perspective of teachers, different positions in management, or the economy, school aims and curriculum, thus facilitating the search for the root causes of the failure to implement sex education in the school as a setting. Some current speculations include the fact that high school education is more concerned with student achievement scores, with high school exams as the goal; or that schools have not yet discovered the importance of line education in the same way that they have introduced psychology programs in the past, despite the occasional sexual assault, early pregnancy and other things that happen in some schools. Schools tend to always blame the cause and responsibility on the students and their families and do not take responsibility for it, as we shared in the multiple-choice question.

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