The Impact of Chinese Sex Education on the Younger Generation: Gender Relations, Self-Awareness, and Awareness of Sexual Protection

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Abstract. Adolescent sex education refers to the education of adolescents on sexual physiology, sexual psychology, and sexual morality. The Chinese public avoids the word "sex" and the government rarely publishes relevant policies and regulations, for example, it rarely mentions "adolescent sex education" directly, but uses "puberty education" and "physiology education" instead of "puberty education", "physiology education" or "reproductive health education". This is related to the long-standing suppression of "sex" topics in traditional Chinese culture. However, the lack of sex education for adolescents has caused many social problems in contemporary education. Therefore, this study will investigate the significance of sex education for contemporary Chinese adolescents. This article will explore the current situation of sex education in China, how sex education affects adolescents' growth, and how different sectors that adolescents come into contact with during their growth should do a good job in sex education.

Keywords: Sex education, teenagers, mental health, sexual crimes.

1. Introduction

Sexual education for young people has been a highly controversial topic in contemporary China for many years. China has the second-largest number of teenagers globally, with an estimated 230 million in the 10-24 age group. Over the past three decades, China's rapid socioeconomic transformation and opening to the outside world have greatly impacted the lives of these adolescents. Adolescent participation in education has increased by leaps and bounds, with 30.3 million undergraduate students enrolled in 2019, up from 30.3 million in 2010. 30.3 million undergraduate students enrolled in 2019, up from 5.6 million in 2000. The Internet and social media expose teens to a globalized culture and different social norms and values related to sexuality and marriage.

Translated with www.DeepL.com/Translator (free version) [1]. The demand for sex education and the actual supply of sex education is currently in a severe imbalance. There are many questions about the meaning of sex education, but from the exploration and efforts of sex education in China in the past 40 years, both the progress at the policy level and the progress at the social awareness level point to the necessity of sex education for today's Chinese society. At the same time, it needs to be aware that even though sex education has been implemented in China for many years, there is limited data on adolescents' sources of sexual knowledge. Furthermore, with the development of the media network, driven by curiosity, young people have been exposed to sexual knowledge from various informal channels almost before they reach adulthood, and this sexual knowledge is usually far from scientific sexual knowledge. It can even give rise to sexual violence, which hurts the growth of the underage, so this paper will also demonstrate the importance of popularizing scientific sexual education for the young generation in China. The study will look at the current state of sex education faced by Chinese youth and the impact it has had, identify the multiple subjects that play a role in the sex education process, and explore what more they can do to improve the field of sex education.

This paper will look at the current situation of sex education in China, the significance of sex education for the younger generation, and the pluralistic division of subject roles in sex education to illustrate the importance of sex education in today's society. At present, teenagers are most exposed to sexual knowledge through the mass media, which is not regulated, so it is difficult to access scientific and healthy sexual knowledge. However, both schools and families have difficulties in

providing sex education due to the lack of policies and traditional concepts. Sex education plays an important role in shaping a person's healthy personality and self-identity. It can have the effect of preventing crime and developing a sense of responsibility. Therefore, it is important to identify methods and implementations that can advance sex education. The study will share to promote the construction of sex education.

2. The current status of sex education in China

Of the available channels of knowledge exposure, the media is the most common and accessible. But it is not a safe channel. First, the official media in China is very conservative about sex education and does not actively mention it. For example, in the case of movies, there is no film rating system in mainland China, but rather a censorship system. After a film is censored by provincial radio and television authorities, it can receive the title of "Film Film Public Screening License" (i.e. Dragon Label) and be shown in mainland China. Therefore, films containing adult content cannot be directly released in China. In the case of books, publishers in mainland China are currently eligible to publish through self-censorship and have an "editorial number" issued by the General Administration of Press and Publication. It is then revised and resubmitted, and so on, until it is approved by the publisher and reviewed and telegraphed successfully by the provincial press and publication bureaus, similar to the way films are censored. Therefore, it will not contain sexual knowledge either [2]. Second, unofficial media do not have an age-specific audience and therefore cannot provide appropriate sex education for teenagers. The Youth Research Institute of the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences once conducted a survey on "adolescent sex education" among 3,000 school students aged 11 to 17 in four cities: Shanghai, Beijing, Guangzhou, and Wuhan. The results showed that 56.25% of adolescents chose school curriculum, 62.5% chose classmates and friends, followed by movies and newspapers (43.75%), computer networks (39.58%), erotic novels (22.92%), and pornographic books (16.67%), while only 18.75% chose their parents [3]. Therefore, the sexual knowledge that teenagers are currently exposed to through the media is usually uncensored online content, which does not have the function of science popularization and can easily make teenagers misunderstand sexual knowledge.

Although China has introduced bills to support sex education since the founding of the country, there are no hard and fast standards on how to implement it. There is a lot of resistance to promoting sex education in schools. It was not until 1992 that the Ministry of Health, the State Education Commission, and the National Council for Love and Health jointly issued the Basic Requirements for Health Education for Primary and Secondary School Students (for trial implementation) and divided the content of health education into a health education syllabus for elementary school students and a health education syllabus for secondary school students according to different age levels in primary and secondary schools. But so far no law explicitly states that sex education is a mandatory education, so it is difficult for schools to implement the relevant curriculum. According to a survey conducted by the China Youth Daily Social Survey Center through Public Opinion China, 72.5% of teenagers have encountered sexual problems. The lack of teaching materials is also one of the problems plaguing sex education in China. 1986's Adolescent Education, edited by Yao Peikuan of the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, became the designated textbook of the Shanghai Education Commission and the first sex education textbook in China. After that, sex education textbooks have become a blind spot in domestic book publishing. 2017, "Precious Life: A Sexual Health Education Reader for Primary School Students" written by the Beijing Normal University Children's Sex Education Group was taken off the shelves after being popularized for two years by parents who questioned the overly blunt dissemination of sexual knowledge [4]. This adds to the already poor sex education. The current absence of schools in sex education continues.

Sexuality education in China's existing families is also very worrying. Since the parents of China's existing adolescents lived through a time when sex education was not available, there are very few families that will take the initiative to educate their children about sex. The earlier age of sexual

development means that adolescents will enter puberty earlier. Adolescence is a period of rapid physical and personality development, and girls need access to scientific knowledge of sexuality and effective psychological guidance to help them face the unfamiliar changes in their bodies and minds. However, by and large, China's current adolescent sex education for children and adolescents will not be arranged until middle school, which is unable to meet the needs of girls' sex education. Therefore, it is necessary to start sex education at home. According to Tong Li, secretary-general of the Chinese Society of Sexuality, for infants and toddlers aged 0-3 years, understanding body organs and differentiating gender are the key contents of family sex education; for toddlers aged 3-6 years, privacy protection should be emphasized; for children aged 6-12 years, the contents of family sex education should be set according to lower grades and middle and upper grades, with the lower grades covering the process of live birth, the meaning of love, and ways to interact with friends [5]. All of these urges Chinese families to abandon old ideas about sex education and correctly recognize that sex education is necessary to protect the healthy growth of children.

3. The impact of sex education on the younger generation

At the same time, Sex education is a way to care for young people's mental health against the backdrop of traditional culture's confinement on sexual knowledge. China has substantial restrictions on women's sexual debut, also known as the shame of the hymen. So when some adolescents are subjected to sexual violence and seek help from their school families, parents prefer to hide this fact in exchange for their children's "good name". When in fact, this is a much more damaging behavior. These figures suggest that many women were forced to have sex at an early age by someone they knew and trusted. At the same time, the evidence and detection of sexual violence are complicated; whether victims or perpetrators, minors in sexual violence crimes are challenging to be fully protected by the law or jurisdiction, so it is necessary to implement the proper sex education to let minors establish the corresponding sense of responsibility and self-protection awareness.

For sexual minority youth groups, sex education is an essential part of ensuring their healthy development. LGBTQ people are still an unrecognized sexual minority in China, so when sexual minority youth recognize their sexual orientation, they often choose to hide it from their families. Although the acceptance of minorities among young people has generally increased in the last two decades, the illegality of same-sex relationships and traditional perceptions of gender stereotypes hinder adolescents' self-perception. By default, sexual minority youths in China must disclose their sexual orientation to their families only after they have complete financial means and are free from family support. However, even after disclosing their sexual orientation, they still face tremendous mental pressure, such as being threatened by their parents and forced to enter into heterosexual marriages, being fired from their workplace for unknown reasons, etc. Therefore, they face great self-denial and doubt and have difficulty gaining self-identity during their extended adolescence, which has become a considerable growth hazard. However, scientific sex education can play a role in eradicating such knowledge, effectively preventing young people from suppressing their self-perceptions to meet the social mainstream, and allowing them to accept themselves better and maintain their mental health.

Sexual education is also a safety education for young people in China. The first thing that can be mentioned is the issue of science and the prevention of AIDS. By 2010, the number of HIV/AIDS cases will increase tenfold in the next six years to 10 million. The fastest-growing group of infections covered 16 to 25 years of age. This corresponds to the that young people in China have very little knowledge about HIV. Studies in China have shown that 11-26% of college students have experienced sex, but that does not mean that this group will use condoms [6]. Also, the hotspots of HIV infection in China are changing. after 2010, Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou have the highest number of infections. In addition, new clusters of infection were seen in 2012 in the provincial capitals of Xi'an, Wuhan, Changsha, Hangzhou, and Shenyang. It can be speculated that these clusters may be related to the presence of universities. Universities are pioneering areas to break the traditional

concept of sexuality. The acceptance of premarital sex among young people and the lack of knowledge about sex have combined to cause this bad outcome. Therefore sexual knowledge for college students is imperative. This is the embodiment of responsibility for young people's bodies and minds [7]. Therefore, suggesting a sustained sex education curriculum and universal STD prevention in higher education are essential behaviors that include accurate and age-appropriate information to prevent HIV transmission among students.

Another point to note is that sexual crimes against children are still a problematic issue to be fully sanctioned by the law in China, so it is necessary to make children aware of sexuality and seek help from parents and teachers promptly. First, because rape cases often involve sensitive private information, the judiciary's rate of disclosure/publication of cases is very low. Second, the practice of displaying and publishing judicial decisions has only begun in recent years, with the results of trials only being made public on the Internet in 2009. However, most disclosures of sexual assault cases are made to adults, while minors are not made public due to multiple factors such as privacy protection [8]. Chinese adolescent victims are generally ashamed to talk about their experiences of sexual violence. According to the "Girls' Protection," 2021 Child Sexual Assault Case Statistics and Sexual Assault Prevention Education Survey Report released, 223 cases of sexual abuse of children (under 18 years old) were publicly reported in the media in 2021, with 569 victims, the youngest being two years old. The child sexual abuse cases analyzed in the report are all cases publicly reported by the media in that year, and cases that occurred or were adjudicated in that year without media coverage are not included in the statistics. Therefore, the number of cases counted in the report is not equal to the number of child sexual abuse cases in the year. Of the 223 child sexual assault cases in China this year, 198 cases indicated interpersonal relationships. Among the 198 cases, 160 were committed by acquaintances, accounting for 80.80%; 38 cases were committed by strangers, accounting for 19.20%. This data undoubtedly increases the burden of parents and schools on the growth of young people [9]. This is because Chinese education is usually taboo to talk about sex to minors and does not know how to provide appropriate sex education to teenagers of different ages. Therefore, many child victims are too scared to ask their parents for help.

4. Division of Roles and Functions of Multiple Subjects in Sex Education

4.1 Government

Government policy is one of the most effective agents in the promotion of sex education. The Chinese government's promotion of line education has been divided into three stages. The first stage was from the early days of the founding of the country to the Cultural Revolution. This stage was the initial stage of the line education in China. It was a time to break the mystery of sex and to educate young students about sex. In 1955, "Knowledge of Sexuality" written by Wang Wenbin, Zhao Zhiyi, and Dr. Tan Mingxun was published, which was the first book on sexual knowledge after the founding of the country. Professor Ye Gongshao and others introduced some knowledge of sexual development and sexual hygiene in the press. "In the year or so after the article was published, more than a thousand letters were received from adolescents all over the country. This was the beginning of sexual health counseling during adolescence, and subsequently, sexual hygiene was taught in the Physiological Hygiene course in secondary schools. But after the Cultural Revolution occurred, sex education was forced to stagnate for ten years. The second phase began in the 1970s after the reform and opening up. Sexual education in this phase focused on addressing sexual health education in society. Along with population and family planning efforts, drug prevention education efforts, AIDS prevention education efforts, and other STD prevention education efforts, it was first proposed in government formation in the Interim Provisions on Health Work in Primary and Secondary Schools, jointly issued by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health in late 1979, that "adolescent health education should be strengthened." The following year, a course on Population Education was introduced in high schools. The third stage was from 1985 to the present, in which knowledge about the handling of sexual relationships and education about the prevention of sexual assault was added to the

continuation of the content of the second stage. Attention began to be paid to sex education in secondary vocational schools and higher education schools. in 1992, the Ministry of Health, the State Education Commission, and the National Council for Health Care jointly issued the Basic Requirements for Health Education for Primary and Secondary School Students (for trial implementation), and divided the content of health education into health education outlines for elementary school students and health education outlines for secondary school students according to different age levels in primary and secondary schools. in December 2008, the Ministry of Education published the newly developed In December 2008, the Ministry of Education published the newly developed "Health Education Guidelines for Primary and Secondary Schools", in which the Ministry divided education into "growth, development and adolescent health" into five levels, from the first grade of elementary school to the high school level. However, sex education is only available in developed cities in the southeast. And so far there is no clear policy to include sex education as a compulsory subject in compulsory education, nor are there any assessment criteria to test the teaching results. This makes the implementation phase very difficult.

4.2 School

China started late in sex education in schools but has gone through many attempts and reforms, due to the different backgrounds of the times, parents' lack of understanding and reporting became one of the most significant resistance. The Third United Nations International Conference on Population and Development in 1994 prompted a significant change in China's youth sex education policy. Since the beginning of the 21st century, sex education for adolescents has become more affluent in content and form than ever before, with the addition of education on the prevention of sexual abuse of adolescents, education on prevention of sexual crimes, and education on sexual morality, sexual health, and sexual birth control. The content and form of sex education have become more prosperous than ever, with new content such as education on the prevention of sexual abuse and prevention of sexual crimes and education on sexual morality, sexual health, and safety [10]. It can be said that sex education in schools has been developed from scratch without the follow-up of policies or the careful consideration of educators of young people. However, relying only on policies to push schools to set up sex education programs is inadequate in China's climate. In 2017, sex education textbooks in Hangzhou were met with complaints from parents that their content was unsuitable for young people. The textbook, compiled by a children's sex education group at Beijing Normal University, was taken off the shelves after the incident. Due to the influence of traditional culture and the dramatic social changes in China in the past 40 years, parents of Chinese adolescents aged 16-25 have not received sex education from their own families, and their choice of marriage and family is mainly subject to family arrangements, in a conservative. Therefore, not all parents have the scientific knowledge to educate their children about sex.

4.3 Society

In 2018, the user "Six Floors" released his first popular gynecology video on the BILIBILI platform. As an obstetrician and gynecologist, he learned that the demand for sex knowledge among modern teenagers is huge due to a large number of inquiries about sex knowledge on social media platforms. Therefore, he chose the most popular video website for young people as his popular science platform. So far in his early 30's, Sixth Floor has been doing women's health science for more than 7 years, including gender knowledge science. He is not the only one who is trying to change the status quo of sex education in China. 23-year-old Sera is the founder of the sex education organization "Berry Hot". After experiencing sexual harassment in high school, she discovered that many of her peers had similar experiences, but had nowhere to go to protect their rights and nowhere to talk about them. So after graduating from high school, she created her sex education seminar. These emerging builders of sex education in China are changing the status quo of sex education in China in their way. Society should cooperate with their public service activities to popularize sex education and reverse the public's poor perception of sex education.

5. Conclusion

The first thing to notice from this article is that sex education in China is currently in a stage of development and exploration. Sex education in China is still facing social incomprehension and public opinion pressure, so it still needs a long time to solve this problem. Fortunately, although China's sex education started late, it is working toward a more scientific concept of sex education for Chinese youth at every exploration stage. It can also be concluded that sex education is a necessary component of the education of Chinese youth today and requires a constant search for appropriate methods. It can help young people look at changes in their bodies in a more objective way in a biological sense and better understand their desires. It can also help young people to accept themselves psychologically and to become more aware of who they are. It can also educate minors to identify if they have been victimized effectively and actively seek help when faced with sexual crimes. Finally, in today's social environment, the significance of sex education often goes beyond sexual knowledge itself. It allows young people to learn how to protect themselves when having sex, respect their partners' opinions, and look more objectively at their future choices about marriage and childbirth, making an essential contribution to improving the health of young people and improving their health the quality of the population. Finally, society, families, and schools should all be in their place to share in the sexual education of young people. Parents need to abandon their prejudices about sex education, understand sex education objectively, and provide timely and correct guidance to young people. Schools should offer more professional courses, set more strict standards, and establish a complete system for sex education. Society should encourage various forms of sex education popularization and use media dissemination and review. Let teenagers be exposed to scientific sex education. However, this study does not identify specific solutions for improvement, but only points out the methods and shortcomings at this stage. It also does not discuss the particular classification of the research subjects, so the conclusion is not exact.

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