

Stereotypes about Sexuality Education

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ABSTRACT

In China, sexuality education has received increasing attention, and more individuals are becoming aware of its importance. However, sexuality education is still not widely available in China for a variety of reasons. In terms of people's perceptions, this paper reviews the reasons why sexuality education is not readily accessible. Through analyzing what stereotypes people have against sexuality education and their consequences, this paper tries to find out the appropriate strategies to eliminate these stereotypes, which aims at helping sexuality education to be spread and implemented effectively. This study examines existing sexuality education stereotypes in China from three perspectives: perception, object, and content. This review also aims to provide strategies for eradicating sexuality education stereotypes from three dimensions: family, school, and society. At the same time, this study deserves to be regarded seriously and further developed, and it has important implications for how to dispel sexuality education misconceptions and so support its implementation.

Keywords: Sexuality education, Stereotypes, Chinese society.

1. INTRODUCTION

Sexuality education has a significant impact on the development of sex and gender knowledge among children and adolescents. The essentiality of it is being increasingly recognized. However, sexuality education is not commonly accessible in China due to its widespread prejudices and stereotypes, resulting in a slew of pitfalls. With response to this issue, this paper discovers that the majority of existing studies in the field focused on the study of sexuality education methods and gender stereotypes. There is still a need for an efficient method that can eliminate stereotypes against sexuality education, thereby promoting its successful implementation in China. The focus of this study is the stereotypes people have towards sexuality education and how to overcome them.

2. STEREOTYPES REGARDING SEXUALITY EDUCATION

Sexuality education seeks to improve children's and adolescents' ability to make conscious, satisfying, healthy, and respectful decisions about relationships, sexuality, and mental and physical health. Sexuality education does not encourage children and adolescents to engage in sexual activity. However, preconceptions

concerning sexuality education exist in China due to the long-standing influence of traditional feudal thoughts. These prejudices essentially comprise the following sorts.

2.1 Stereotypes Against Sexuality Education's Perceptions

The so-called sexuality education perceptions are the viewpoints on the importance of sexuality education, its role, and its way to be conducted. The following are some of the common misunderstandings in China about the perceptions of sexuality education. Firstly, some people believe that sexuality education is unnecessary [1]. As children grow older, they will spontaneously acquire sex information [1]. For example, they assume, that when women reach a menstruation age, they will automatically learn about female physiology. They also feel that certain sexual practices can serve as a substitute for sexuality education in terms of knowledge transmission. Some people think that sexuality is an instinctive drive and that when children reach a particular age and sexual maturity, they will naturally gain information about sex. However, according to the findings of a Chinese study, a significantly higher percentage of secondary school students did not know or had never heard of the concepts of sexual touch, sexual perversion, ovulation, pregnancy, sexually transmitted

diseases, sexual offenses, and childbirth than those who did [2]. This suggests that adolescent children's sexual knowledge is limited and superficial. Secondary school pupils, on the other hand, are often between the ages of 12 and 18. They have definitely reached sexual maturity at an age which some people believe they should be aware of sexual matters. This leads us to deem that systematic, scientific sexuality education is not something that can be learned organically based on age and sexual maturity.

Additionally, some people believe that sex education might result in sexual stimulation, as well as prompt early sexual maturity [1]. According to Zhang, 82.5% of parents believe that early sexual maturity in children is caused by sexuality education [3]. There is almost no study about sexuality education can lead to an early sexual debut in teenagers. Liu refers that there has been an extensive international study in response to worries that sexuality education can lead to early first intercourse [4]. United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization cited a comprehensive study on the impact of sexuality education on sexual behavior, which concluded that sexuality education had the effect of delaying first intercourse, reducing the frequency of intercourse and the number of sexual partners [5]. Scientific sexuality education is also known to have no effect on the likelihood of early sexual intercourse among teenagers. Moreover, there is a distinction between sexuality education and obscene materials. There are numerous excessively explicit descriptions in obscene texts that depict passion. On the other hand, texts on sexuality education are sensible, impartial, and calm. Instead of creating sexual stimulation and initiating early sexual maturity in children, reading sexuality education literature helps people become calm and sober, understanding the attitude to take and the direction to pursue.

Furthermore, many people assume that a lack of understanding about sex among young children is a sign of moral purity [1]. This is due to the fact that Confucianism has long dominated Chinese ideology and had a significant impact on modern Chinese culture. Neo-Confucianism, which was prominent in China during the Song Dynasty, promoted self-control and saw sensuality as lascivious and prohibited. This viewpoint has persisted to the present day, with some Chinese still considering sex to be filthy and vulgar. Treating ignorance as purity, fatuous as a virtue, and prejudice as a principle as a backward way of thinking are the key causes of China's sexuality education growth being stymied.

2.2 Stereotypes Against Sexuality Education's Object

Since everyone is affected by sex, sex knowledge is a science that everyone should be familiar with. Hence,

adults must be educated on sexuality. According to Zhang, the majority of parents are aware of the need of sexuality education and are eager to participate actively in it [3]. However, these parents are still unaware of the content of sexuality education's intrinsic relevance, science, comprehensiveness, and systematic nature, indicating the need for sexuality education for adults.

Furthermore, most Chinese adults lack a good understanding and appropriate knowledge about sex. For instance, they are unaware of the rules of sex [6]. Although sexuality education in China has made significant progress in recent years, it still has a long way to go, and individuals who have missed out on this education must make up for it.

2.3 Stereotypes Against Sexuality Education's Content

Sexuality education is chiefly influenced by physical, social, psychological, spiritual, religious, political, legal, historical, ethical, and cultural elements [5]. Many parents still believe that sexuality education is solely about gender and sexual safety; they are unaware of the richness and intrinsic link between the content of sexuality education [3]. In response to this, Zhang claims that China currently lacks a systematic, comprehensive sexuality education-based curriculum or educational content, which makes the widespread promotion of accurate and comprehensive sexuality education difficult. People's lack of access to sexuality education content leads to their misunderstandings and prejudices, as well as deepening preconceptions about sexuality education.

3. THE RAMIFICATIONS OF SEXUALITY EDUCATION STEREOTYPES

The stereotypes against sexuality education mentioned in the previous section make it difficult for it to be spread and implemented effectively. Also, the lack of widespread dissemination of comprehensive sexuality education is the most immediate consequence of stereotyping it. Tao mentioned that when working with his partners on sexuality education, the greatest resistance came from a lack of acceptance and recognition [7]. They needed to build relationships with schools and parents as part of their research and promotion of sexuality education [7]. During this period, they discovered that prejudices and stereotypes surrounding sexuality education made progress impossible. This is due to the fact that, unlike other traditional subjects, schools and parents remain skeptical of the substance and effectiveness of sexuality education, fearing that it would have a negative impact on students. In order to avoid certain risks and duties, schools adopt a negative approach toward sexuality education, and parents would stay silent about it. This

issue still exists in China, which is one of the main reasons why sex education in China is so difficult to implement. This has also led to a dearth of sexuality education for Chinese adolescents and children, as well as several risks.

Wang refers that the lack of sexuality education has a significant negative impact on the development of adolescents' and children's sexual health [8]. For starters, a dearth of sexuality education among them leads to widespread sexual illiteracy. Second, the lack of sex education among them raises the likelihood of aberrant psychosexual development. Finally, the lack of sex education has a negative impact on adolescents' ability to construct the right sexual moral notions or build a clear understanding of sexual law.

Liu also identifies the lack of sexuality education as one of the causes of juvenile sexual offenses [9]. Adolescent psychosexual development is a critical stage in the growth of a person's psychological wellness. If adolescents are exposed to undesirable information before receiving sufficient sexuality education, it can cause a lot of uncertainty and troubles in their development. Also, it leads to sexual offenses, which are a common and widespread category of juvenile crime in China [10]. Prostitution, hooliganism, rape, and other juvenile sexual offenses are all closely tied to sexual behavior, sexual connections, and sexual phenomena [8]. As a result, schools and parents should eliminate sexuality education preconceptions and stereotypes, which will considerably reduce opposition to the promotion of sexuality education, allowing adolescents and children to have comprehensive sexuality education timely.

4. STRATEGIES TO ELIMINATE STEREOTYPES AGAINST SEXUALITY EDUCATION

In this section, we will discuss how to eliminate stereotypes against sexuality education from three different perspectives: family, school, and society, and try to figure out their necessity.

4.1 Family

Parents should first eliminate sexuality education preconceptions since their attitude toward sexuality education will have a big impact on whether or not their children receive it properly. This is due to the fact that the family is the earliest and longest-lasting social bonds of a child. Also, it is possible that a child's only relationship early on is with his or her parents. Children's expectations and responses to later social connections are shaped by their interactions and emotional relationships with their parents. Cultural views, values, and attitudes are passed on to children in a highly personal and chosen manner through their

parents. The cultural norms and standards that parents teach to their children are influenced by their personalities, attitudes, socioeconomic standing, religious beliefs, education, and gender [11]. And an infant already has the ability to imitate shortly after birth [12]. Moreover, Sun refers that sexual awareness begins to develop from the age of two to three [13]. As a result, throughout their formative years, children internalize some of the behaviors and personality qualities that they imitate from their parents, which become an early form for their gender norms, thereby contributing to their establishment of a strong gender cognition system. Parents may not realize they are serving as information transmitters in this process, yet their ideas regarding sex and gender are already impacting their children. The capacity of parents to appropriately evaluate and conduct sexuality education. Therefore, it plays a critical part in their children's formation of a sex and gender perspective.

Based on the previous sessions, before correcting any stereotypes, parents should consider if they have any, such as the notion that sex is nasty and forbidden or that sexuality education would cause children to become sexually precocious. Second, parents would have to be fully aware of the necessity of sexuality education and actively seek out information on how to provide proper and comprehensive sexuality education to their children. This will help them improve their own knowledge and behavior, as well as play a constructive part in their children's education. Also, parents ought to be fully aware of the critical impact that their own words and actions play in their children's early education. Since the people in some Guatemalan villages think that fresh air, sunlight, and clutter outside are detrimental, babies spend their first year of life in cramped, dark, windowless shelters with no toys [14]. Similarly, if Chinese parents continue to hold prejudices against sexuality education and believe it is harmful to children, the likelihood of Chinese children receiving sexuality education from their families will be greatly reduced, and sexual education stereotypes will be passed down from generation to generation.

4.2 Schools

When children reach the age of the school, they begin to leave home and enroll in classes. They will spend most of their daylight hours in school. As a result, school and teacher views on sex and gender will have a significant influence on children and adolescents. Aside from the sexuality education they receive from their parents, school education is the primary source of sexuality education for children and young people. As a result, it is critical that schools recognize the value of sexuality education and actively participate in it. However, according to Ding, most Chinese schools do not currently offer a sexuality education curriculum for

kids [10]. Although some schools offer a curriculum, teachers often skim over sensitive topics or leave pupils to learn on their own, making it less effective than it might even be.

Therefore, school officials and teachers must first recognize the relevance of sexuality education and dispel prejudices about it. Furthermore, schools must take concrete steps to make sexuality education a required subject and to train specialists. As appropriate, Chinese schools can draw on foreign experience and try to localize it. The school sexuality education system in Sweden, for instance, is organized into four levels: early childhood, primary school, secondary school, and university. All public primary and secondary schools in the United Kingdom are expected to give sexuality education in accordance with the requirements of the compulsory national curriculum, which is organized into four levels based on age groups. In addition, to differing degrees, the United States and Russia have also stratified sexuality education [15]. Finally, schools must ensure that teachers receive adequate sexuality education. Also, all teachers should receive sex education. This is because osmosis transmits teachers' opinions toward sex and gender to their students [16]. Teachers who have negative stereotypes against sexuality education will be unable to impart a healthy perspective to their students. Only when the teachers with whom students interact on a daily basis adopt a positive attitude toward sexuality education can students develop the appropriate conception of sex and gender.

4.3 The Society

Stereotypes are developed in three ways, according to popular psychology: as a result of socialisation through social traditions and conventions, through personal experience, and through the impact of the mass media [17]. In his research on the mass media, Lippmann states that the media are not only the primary providers of mimetic settings, but also has a significant impact on the formation, maintenance, and change of stereotypes in society [18]. Gould and White also discover that the media plays a role in social stereotypes by reflecting and spreading them, as well as strengthening their value [19]. As a result, this paper argues that the mass media should take on the social responsibility of eliminating sexuality education preconceptions, thereby diminishing sociocultural and individual stereotypes about sexuality education.

First and foremost, writers in the mass media must have a positive attitude toward sex and gender, as well as take the initiative to get sexuality education. Secondly, content in the media should be properly phrased and portrayed, such as in articles on sexuality education, by avoiding sexually suggestive pictures. The stereotypes of sexuality education can only be diminished by the audience of the mass media if authors of popular culture

offer content which is free of bias towards sexuality education.

5. CONCLUSION

Focusing on sexuality education, this study has addressed three questions, including the stereotypes that exist in Chinese society, the ramifications of having stereotypes about it and how to eliminate them. Firstly, this study analyzes sexuality education stereotypes in modern China from three perspectives: perceptions, objects, and contents, before speculating on the ramifications of such stereotypes. After reviewing previous research and the implication of sexuality education, especially the stereotypes against it, some useful strategies are suggested in three key dimensions: family, school, and society. Although these findings have provided several possible ways to promote sexuality education in China from a conceptual point of view, more empirical studies on this issue need to be conducted to further test and refine these findings.

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