



# The Research on the Online Videos About Sex Education in China

## Taking Bilibili Videos as an Example

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**Abstract.** Sex education has been in an awkward place in Chinese society that it often is presented as an evaded topic, yet it undeniably plays an integral role in the young generation's growth, assisting to learn to communicate with others, view and build gender identity and build a value system of respect for others. In response to the current state of sex education in China, a great deal of discussion in the form of videos has sprung up in the mass media. In this study, a popular sex education analysis video on the famous Chinese video site Bilibili was selected as the study sample. Using the method of discourse analysis of the video content and the current multifaceted status of sex education in China as the research context, the study aims to analyse and evaluate the media product exemplified by the video.

**Keywords:** Bilibili Video · Online Video · Sex Education · China

## 1 Introduction

When it comes to sex, Chinese society is conservative. Sex has been considered taboo and even unclean in the long and profound Chinese history for so many years. Even now, a national culture of not talking about sex presents barriers to sex education implementation. Parents and instructors are both wary of discussing sex with teenagers who are unaware of it. Studies have indicated that young students, particularly in rural regions, have an inadequate understanding of gender, violence, contraception, and unwanted and early births [1]. Yang argued that China lacks comprehensive sex education for kids that is either school-based or family-based, and that present sex education is incapable of addressing the complexity that results from societal problems [2]. Lack of access to sex education for adolescents also increases the risk of HIV and sexually transmitted diseases, with the number of college students with the disease increasing by 30 to 50% annually over the past few years [3]. There is also a vicious spiral between parents' opposition to sex education and their children's bad sentiments regarding it. In the year 2020, a group of experts did a study on the attitudes of Chinese parents toward their children's sex education [4]. Most parents were intended to help their children prevent sexual assault, but only a few were successful in teaching them what sexual assault is, what they should do, and why they should do it, according to the findings. The cultural environment

of avoiding sexual matters is the result of each individual avoiding discussing sexual information, resulting in fewer possibilities for youngsters to get a thorough and scientific education. Against the present societal backdrop, various films featuring discussions concerning Chinese sex education were broadcast on internet platforms.

The next part explores the literature in a theme format to discuss some basic arguments on the present condition of Chinese sex education and evidence for gender lineage acceptability in the current Chinese community. The results and conclusions of a series of research publications on various study issues and viewpoints are offered in the literature review, together with additional analyses and suggestions. As my research object, the author will do research on a video on Chinese parents and sex education, which will be released on Bilibili.com [5]. The content of the video is examined using the discourse analysis approach [6]. According to the findings of the study, the development of comprehensive sex education for Chinese teenagers' lags behind the growth of Chinese people's sexual notions in the modern period. As the video with the most views under the phrase "Chinese sex education" on Bilibili.com, it would be evaluated as a sample example of an online video discussing Chinese sex education on a Chinese online video website.

## 2 Literature Review

In recent years, researchers studying sex education in China have discovered studies directed at various populations and from various perspectives. To begin with, as a distinct young group in society, college students have become one of the most essential study subjects for scientists. Lyu and colleagues gathered 6,665 surveys from nine institutions in Yunnan, Henan, and Zhejiang provinces in China to investigate gender disparities in sexual knowledge, attitudes, and behaviour among Chinese college students, as well as their desire for sex education [7]. The survey included 12 multiple-choice questions about socio-demographics, sex knowledge, sexual attitudes, sexual behaviour, and sex education. It was found that there is a rising proportion of sexual intercourse among Chinese college students, as is the number of unprotected activities. Furthermore, men and women have distinct perspectives on sexual conduct. For female students, sex-related issues often bring more embarrassment than their male peers. Finally, females have an average higher level of enlightened attitudes regarding the acceptance of the queer group. Thus, they concluded firstly the relatively low level of sexual knowledge among Chinese adolescents leads to risky sexual activities, secondly, educational authorities are responsible to prioritize proper sex education for gender-sensitive youth groups with an emphasis on empowering girls.

Another research examined the sexual knowledge, behaviour, and attitudes of 3,193 female students from urban and rural locations [8]. The scientists collected and analysed important data from research items using questionnaires. The questionnaire's content is based on an assessment of literature both nationally and internationally. The survey results show that female college students in urban and rural areas of China have little awareness of sexual protection, especially in rural areas, yet the backward rural areas are instead the areas where female college students are more sexually active. The occurrence of unsafe sex is directly related to the lack of sexual knowledge. The rising incidence

of unsafe sex has made HIV prevention more difficult in China, prompting the Chinese government to develop more precise HIV prevention recommendations for young women and to increase education on self-protection.

Young college students' beliefs and worldviews are simply grown, and the majority of their views originate from school and family instruction from early infancy through adolescence. They perform the function of linking history and the future as a particular group that has just begun to live freely and is going to enter society. Their beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours reflect not just information from their prior life experiences, but also, to some part, the future evolution of society. The extent of college students' knowledge about sex-related issues may reflect the extent and level of sex education they have had during their adolescence, and their sexual behavior could also indicate the acceptance of sexual activities by the New Generation in China. Both of the previous research showed that the sex education Chinese college students received during their student years was mostly ineffective and that unsafe sexual behaviour can lead to problems such as HIV transmission and abortion [8]. In other words, Chinese college students' acceptance of premarital sex is higher than their level of sexual knowledge. Furthermore, the study reveals that poor early sex education worsens gender disparity in young people once they reach cognitive maturities [7], such as self-knowledge capacity, awareness of opposite sex respect, and self-confidence.

Another component of previous sex education research is professional instructors. The major research subjects are teachers and parents. Xiong and colleagues analysed and examined the situation of Chinese high school teachers teaching sex education [9]. The research team spoke with 30 high school teachers who had graduated from Beijing Normal University and had been teaching for two years about their ability to understand sex education and the obstacles they experienced when providing sex education. They discovered that instructors, particularly female ones, lacked sexual expertise. Furthermore, teachers lack the expertise and confidence to discuss sexual topics with kids. Furthermore, when teaching sex education, instructors do not have a supportive environment. In her conclusion, she states that increasing the sex education skills of Chinese apprentices for young people needs the help of educational authorities. At the same time, parents also need these skills.

In 2020, a study on parents' attitudes toward sexual abuse prevention and sexuality education for pre-schoolers was conducted in Beijing, China, from the perspective of parents who practice sex education. The study revealed that while most parents of young children communicate with their children about the most basic personal safety issues, such as telling them what to do if they encounter a stranger, there is minimal parent-child communication about CSA or what to do if sex occurs. According to the findings, most preschool parents had favourable attitudes regarding avoiding child sexual abuse but still had gaps in their understanding of minors' sexual abuse. Zeng, another researcher, investigated Chinese parents' views toward sex education by using public situational theory on children's sex education in China [10]. Statistics show that the increased involvement of Chinese parents in the education of their children is having a positive impact, however, a significant percentage of Chinese parents still need reconsideration and appropriate behavioural advice. Zeng suggested that Chinese parents' sex education

of their children should be improved and that it is critical to govern the notion of sex in traditional Chinese culture and establish a socially supportive atmosphere.

According to the research, Chinese parents and instructors are unable to provide adequate and comprehensive sex education for their children, which is a major contributor to Chinese adolescents' lack of empowering sex knowledge. When it comes to the discussion of sex education, teachers and parents, as mentors and elders of young people, represent the sexuality of the previous generation. The previous generation is unable to view gender relations equally from the standpoint of concepts and objective knowledge, and this message is passed on to the next generation on the path of sex education. The incompetence of educators is the main reason for the lack of adequate sex education for Chinese youth.

Another research finds widespread issues with sex education in China. Yang stated that China lacks comprehensive sex education for youth in schools or families and it presents that the current sex education in China cannot address the complexity that arises from societal concerns [2]. She said that sex education in China did not offer youngsters the full and right information and attitudes about sex, citing child maltreatment, abortion of young women, and the spread of AIDS as specific examples of the harmful repercussions of this reality. In China, a lack of comprehensive sex education has also increased adolescent pregnancy, abortion, and sexually transmitted illnesses.

There were Chinese academics trying hard to increase the level and quality of Chinese sex education. Li with the team recruited four experienced sex educators in physiological health-related subjects in Beijing high schools and developed 12 comprehensive sex education courses, as well as field applications and investigations [11]. They gathered information from the Empowerment Comprehensive Sexuality Education intervention project, which included students of grade ten from six distinct courses at four different schools in Lanzhou, China. It is worth noting that when the study team attempted to apply the teachings to middle school students, they were greeted with opposition from school teachers who claimed that the material on sex education for middle school students was too explicit and spiritually and mentally damaging. The study examined how comprehensive sex education in schools successfully influenced adolescents' knowledge of sex, sexual selves, and gender attitudes. According to the researchers, the data provide evidence that schools should provide comprehensive sex education interventions to strengthen sex education in China.

Chinese education officials, in addition to academicians, have undertaken efforts to promote comprehensive sex education for young people. Reiss and Ji investigated the sex education materials used in elementary schools by Cherish Life in Beijing [12]. In clear and understandable medical language, the textbook educates young people on self-protection against sexual assault and non-heterosexual messaging, as well as the reproductive systems of males and girls. They consider Cherish Life as a daring new attempt at sex education for young children in China, and that its hidden deviation resides in its candid and forthright language, which challenges patriarchy's authority in traditional Chinese society.

As a result, despite the fact that diverse institutions in China have made all kinds of efforts to promote the development of comprehensive sex education, the actions of these few people are impeded by conservative forces. The majority of Chinese society

opposes comprehensive sex education for youths, and this social reality has resulted in significant societal consequences. Some non-academic topics are progressively making their way into public awareness in this environment. The highest-ranking video in the search results of one of China's most well-known video websites, bilibili.com, under the term "Chinese sex education," had around 3 million visitors [6]. The content and quality of videos exploring the issue of sex education in China are still being researched and debated.

### 3 Methodology

In this paper, the author will present and analyse an analytical video posted on bilibili.com. The site is <https://www.bilibili.com/video/BV1bb4y1S7Z8>. The specific media product was chosen purposefully according to the credibility it has shown and the large page view revealed. The video is criticizing Chinese parents' opposition and obstruction of comprehensive sex education for adolescents. The author deeply analyses the current situation of sex education for Chinese teenagers, as well as historical and social reasons. There would be five sections according to the content. To figure out how and how well the media product on a deep level interpreted the current situation of sex education for teenagers in China in the context of the rapidly developing sexual concept, the author will collect and analyse the notions conveyed in the video and analysis the rationality and credibility. The author will also apply the discourse analysis method to figure out the deeper meaning behind the video makers' words, and the facts and phenomena reflected by the language and expression. The discourse analysis is "a research method for studying written or spoken language concerning its social context" [6]. Doing discourse analysis means examining how language works and how meaning arises in different social contexts. It can be applied to any case of written or spoken language, as well as to non-verbal aspects of communication such as tone and gesture. The content of the video lies in the social and cultural reality of sex education existing in China. The author will pay attention to the social and cultural background of the video author when analysing the discourse analysis method. The language used in the video is fairly poignant and pungent. As a result, the author can evaluate the values and attitudes expressed by the authors by the way the language is used. There are also mode diagrams shown as a visual aid that could be a good summary of the author's point. Form analysing the content through the discourse analysis method, associating the sociocultural context, the author can not only illustrate the viewpoint of the media product producer but also elaborates on the dilemma and historical evolution of the current sex education for teenagers in China based on the literature review, thus evaluate and assess the video as a whole.

### 4 Discussion

The video was co-created by two of the bloggers on bilibili.com and is broken into five sections based on the content. It includes an analysis of the lack of comprehensive sex education in China and the tragedy brought about by the backwardness of Chinese parents' sex education philosophy. As a whole, the video expresses the central idea that the development of educators' knowledge and perceptions of comprehensive sexuality

education lags behind the sexuality perceptions and acceptance of the new generation. This limitation is not just due to the backwardness of parents' concept but also involves complex social factors such as history, culture, and even politics.

The media product makers offered a succession of past studies to introduce the demonstration of the generally unfavourable state of sex education for teenagers in China [5]. Following a review of the research indicated in the literature review, several researchers highlighted the faults and defects of sex education at various levels from the views of Chinese young college students. [7], school teachers [9], and parents [4], proving the general lack of Chinese sex education. After discussing the overall problem, the writers started to focus on a specific group: Chinese parents who teach sex education to teens. They began with a specific example of the comprehensive sex education textbook *Cherish Life*, which was protested and withdrawn in order to demonstrate that parents were impeding the implementation of sex education. The authors explained why they believe Chinese parents are incorrect about sex education, claiming that they are dumb and greedy. Despite the writers' bombastic style, their analyses were believable, with obvious goals, logic, and objectivity. Rather than attacking parents, the author used them as a starting point to explore the difficulties with sex education in China.

They build their own logical framework to support the second part of the video. First, they distinguish between two key concepts: traditional sex education and comprehensive sex education. Distinguishing between the two types of sex education helps to highlight the basic concept that sex education has always happened in China and that the term "lack of sex education" actually refers to a lack of comprehensive sex education. The authors highlighted sex education books extensively used in China as an example, as well as so-called physiological health booklets with key themes on menstruation and AIDS prevention, and the ban of premarital sex. Some common similar book covers were displayed on the screen in picture form, easily convincing the viewer that this is indeed the most common officially released physical teaching material for sex education in Chinese primary and secondary schools discusses only health issues and no sex-related content, and the entire content is devoted to marriage and procreation. Chinese adults are trying to teach young children in a stigmatized way that sex is unclean and that desire should be discouraged through avoiding discussions about sexual organs, sexuality, and sexual minorities. They support their escape with self-defeating excuses: "my children are not allowed to have premarital sex and certainly do not need to know anything about sex and sexuality, which is intended to encourage underage revelry; my child will never be gay, will never be sexually abused or attack others, and will never behave in a way that does not conform to gender stereotypes". However, these assumptions are not always valid. According to the conservative position, sexual tragedy may be averted by not recognizing and banning it.

The writers condemned not just the Chinese parents' opposition, but also the parents' general conservative mentality. Rather than just discussing the subject of sex education, this is a shift in viewpoint and an attempt to investigate the reasoning and logic underlying people's support for various kinds of sex education. They provided several facts on China's young people's sexual conduct, including a high HIV transmission rate, a significant young population with abortions, unprotected intercourse, and coerced sex.

The reality of bad situations shows that the classic abstinence sex idea and abstinence-only sex education can no longer provide the right and effective counsel for current young people's lifestyles. One of the key factors for teenagers' shifting sexuality may be information technology and the rise of human self-awareness. The video's writers describe this period of quick information flow and popular acceptance as "openness," and they argue that Chinese parents blame this openness for sexual catastrophes in their adolescents. They did, however, demonstrate three examples of "openness" and "conservatism," and the fact is that sexual safety and civility are better in somewhat open locations. The inference here is that the growth of the times is not inherently negative, that the evolution of society is inexorable, and that the best we can do as educators is to edit our mind of perceptions to suit the cultural development of society.

After examining the negative aspects of the conservative mentality, the writers made an essential point: the conservative attitude is great in and of itself, but it cannot adapt to the changing times. They constructed an important model and presented it in the form of visuals in the following reasoning. It was built in the shape of a blue line, with the left end signifying modernism and openness and the right end indicating a traditional and conservative mentality. The blue line shows different cultures' attitudes on sex, while the red line next to it reflects the related path of social education, especially sex education. Comprehensive sex education (instead of simply "sex education does exist") is represented by the left end of the red line, while abstinence-only sex education (instead of "sex education doesn't exist") is by the right end. Only when the dots on the two lines are positioned similarly can sex education and sexual attitudes be harmonized.

This model provides a foundational basis for the main ideas of the media product and can be used to interpret the current state of Chinese sex education for teens. The development of sex education in China has lagged behind the shift in sexuality and perceptions of the new generation, arising the ensuing conflict and uncertainty surveying as the root cause of problems with sex-related topics in China. The acceptance of sex and sexuality, especially the recognition of sexual minorities and premarital sex, is at the core of the so-called sexuality concept. The evolution of sex education includes not only the continuation of sex education, but also the transition from purely abstinence-based sex education to comprehensive sex education. As China's socio-economic and cultural development continues, as well as its increasing openness (meaning that the dot on the blue line moves to the left), it can be argued that China's traditional abstinence-based sex education is no longer adapted to the current needs of social development (meaning that the dot on the red line does not move to the left at the same time). Because China lacks the concept and practice of comprehensive sex education, Chinese sex education cannot cater to the sexuality of the new generation of Chinese people and is therefore obsolete and backward. Through a clear interpretation of the model, the video provides a compelling examination of the form and nature of China's current sexuality education problem.

Next, the authors referred to two different models of sex education using an ancient Chinese proverb: "Whether the cat is black or white, it is a good one only for the ability to catch mice". They attempted to examine the two styles of sex education from a more balanced and impartial standpoint. Instead of deciding what was right and wrong, they blamed the clash of two philosophies and a practice that did not match national realities.

Finally, based on the history of Chinese educational thought, the authors responded to their initial point. Chinese educators have sought to manage to yearn rather than trace their origins since Confucius. Parents desire to keep their children uneducated in order to protect them. Parents are selfish because they do not want the future generation to have too many independent thinking skills to escape their influence. However, this approach cannot be adapted to the current society and therefore, the video author makes a conclusion echoing the beginning saying that parents are ignorant. In the current era of highly mobile information, the vast majority of people, including teenagers, have access to a wealth of information, both good and bad, sex-related content included. The core of a well-rounded education should be empowerment. Therefore, adults who are educators and try to prevent a comprehensive education and push a stereotypical one-sided approach will not help children gain objective knowledge and critical thinking skills, but they are unaware that the new generation, which is attempting to maintain control over their children, is greatly influenced by external information. As a result, a rising proportion of Chinese youths have sexual behaviour when they are afraid and not yet ready, which has had detrimental implications.

Reflecting on the literature review, school instructors and parents are trailing behind as potential sex educators when it comes to implementing sex education. The author harshly attacks Chinese parents who resist comprehensive sex education in the video. However, it is far from the parents' fault that China has failed to establish sex education. Examine the studies described in Reiss and Ji's literature review of the textbook *Cherish Life* [12]. The textbooks' removal is difficult to explain, given their substance and language might endanger China's long-standing patriarchy. Similarly, the evolution of sex education in China is likely to be inextricably linked to the local economy, culture, and complicated political concerns, which cannot be discussed here in detail. The reasons for these dimensions are not discussed and dissected in the video. The content and thrust of the video basically stay at the level of socio-cultural and popular thinking, without much description of the structural problems in the socio-economic and political system, etc.

## 5 Conclusion

Education is a significant and exceedingly complicated national subject. Existing sex education issues in China have resulted in obvious issues such as increased HIV infection rates, rising abortion rates among young women, and prejudice against sexual minorities. The selected video created an in-depth and comprehensive analysis of Chinese youth sex education in a novel way. The overall idea conveyed by the media product is that the obstacle to the practice of Chinese sex education is that the perspectives of instructors have not kept pace with the new generation of young people. As information technology and socio-economic and cultural development make young people increasingly receptive to new things and open-minded ideas, sex education should also be a tool for young people's empowerment, helping them to gain the ability to filter information, analyse behaviour, and have more critical values. Instead of criticizing Chinese parents from a condescending perspective, the video makers analyse the pros, cons, and reasons step by step. Finally, the most essential argument is that the lack of comprehensive sexuality



education may lead to larger social problems, such as barriers to survival and lack of self-awareness for socially vulnerable groups such as women and sexual minorities, impediments to social and economic progress, and the imbalance of power in society. However, looking at the whole work, it is not difficult to find that the video title deviates from the content to a certain extent. While aggressive headlines for media products can attract more eyeballs, they can also be easily misleading to viewers. Overall, media products that so sharply point out social issues and are produced with heart are inspiring. For future research, it is still worthwhile to focus on a larger scale of samples that may not only be on the mass media level but also institutional and economic, thus exploring more themes such as how to develop sex education in China, how to contribute to adjusting the trend, and what other efforts scholars can make.

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