

The Status Quo, Problems and Suggestions of Sex Education for College Students in China

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Abstract—Due to the raising attention paid to sexual assault issues in society, both Chinese media and the public begin reflecting the lack of legal protection to teenage victims and deficiencies in current sex education system. At the same time, sex-related cultural revolution is launching from opinion leaders to the whole society. In China, sex was regarded as taboo and the sex education stagnated for many years. Therefore, it is necessary and reasonable to study and analyze the current sex education situation among Chinese college students, who have acquired relatively sound sex-related knowledge.

Index Terms—China, sex education, college students

I. BACKGROUND

Recently, with the rising of social issues regarding sexual abuse and assault of children as well as teenagers in China, great concern from scholars, Chinese media and the Chinese public has been drawn to the prevention and solution towards these issues. At the same time, heated discussion concerning the reasons behind those tragedies along with the adverse impacts on the victims also arose. According to the official statistics, During the year of 2019, the Chinese media publicly reported 301 cases of sexual assault on children (under 18), including 807 victims among whom the youngest was 4 years old [1]. Similar incidents also occurred in 2020: a male student at Zhejiang University was sentenced and expelled for raping a female student, a seven-year-old left-behind girl in guizhou was sexually assaulted by his grandfather, a senior executive of Jerry corporation suspected of sexually assaulting his daughter for four years, and so on.

Tang and other scholars have found that most sexual assault cases occur between acquaintances, and young people who have been sexually assaulted are prone to risky sexual behaviors and adverse productive health outcomes [2]. Zha's review supplemented that from the psychological angel, sexual assault may result in brain abnormalities, damaging the moral judgments and cognitive abilities of the victims [3]. As a result, the scholars suggest that both policymakers and educators should scale up the prevention of childhood abuse and build up effective sex education system [2]. Therefore, sexual assault has serious negative impact on children

physically and mentally and it is necessary to promote sex education and child-protection.

In China, sex is taboo in public and the sexual values of Chinese people tend to be conventional. At the same time, the judicial and administrative intervention to sexual crimes is far from enough. Furthermore, sex education is overall missing from parents and schools. However, some social media and movements play important roles in the prevention of sexual assault and the rising of public awareness towards sex-related issues.

At first, those efforts were usually made by some opinion leaders who can operate communities and shape public opinions, boosting the spread of knowledge concerning sexual issues. In China, some Sina V users act as opinion leaders on social media and took part in the sex education promotion. Qin had studied Xiaohui Peng and his Sinamicroblog and found that it is easier and effective for the professors to launch academic discussion through inviting and commenting mutually the social media platform [4]. Also, users can build discussion groups online in order to spread remanded sexual knowledge and related experience. Those identity-verified celebrities, especially sexual specialist have drastic influence on the opinion of the public, thereby being called as opinion leaders.

Then, social movements, especially those on the internet, will emotionally infuse new sexual values to the public, intriguing the audience to find more about the subject being discussed.

For instance, although it was criticized that the #Metoo global social movement aiming at reducing sexual assault led to sexes confrontation, #Metoo reduced dismissal of sexual assault overall according to its short-term and long-term impacts [5]. In China, We media and social media opinion leaders act as the main group provoking heated discussion regarding sex issues. The We Media lighten us pointed out that under the influence of We Media, sex-related topics prevails, triggered) a sex revolution on the internet. This benefits from the prevalence of sexual assault events as well as collective reports among social media.

Meanwhile, live or recorded online courses also appealed to a large number of learners. Those impressive and interesting courses both call the audience to face an inquiry of what they used to believe for sure and do a problem-and-solution reasoning when confronted with concrete cases. The social media, therefore, can broaden

the channel to sex education by offering virtual courses online [4].

As was defined by Mead, cultural feedback (literally 'cultural reverse feeding'), focuses on the process of extensive cultural absorption from the older generation to the younger generation in the era of rapid cultural change, and includes the element of social values. The younger generation, utilizing the means mentioned above, is facilitating the reversion of conventional values on sex topics and imparting them to the older generation through social media platforms, mainly strengthening the disclosure of sex together with sexual knowledge education.

Despite that Rachel and Sinzina did SWOT analysis and concluded that We Media tends to provide fragmented information which will only be provocative and some of the social media sharers are not qualified [6], the mainstream of sex education promotion concentrating on social media adequately implies the lack of sex education at school and in families.

Therefore, this essay will analyze the current situation of sex education in Chinese universities and find solutions to generalize sex education.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

According to United Nations Population Fund, Comprehensive Sexuality Education(CSE) contains thorough and scientific knowledge and elaborate operational guidance. As was accurately defined, CSE information should include human rights, gender norms and power in relationships (including consent and decision making, sexual coercion, intimate-partner and gender-based violence, and sexual diversity); the body, puberty, and reproduction; relationships, communication, and decision-making; and sexual health (including STIS/HIV and AIDS, unintended pregnancy, condoms and contraception, and how to access health and other support services). Also, the learning environment should be healthy and teachers should be participatory.

Compared with the sex education of China, such education in some countries is advanced and developed. In United Kingdom, sex education is a compulsory curriculum since the students enter primary school. In Sweden, Sex education curriculum is outlined by grade level, which means in different stages of study, students can acquire the designed proper sex knowledge [7]. Apart from that, Swedish schools teach students the way of dealing with some ethical and sex-related issues, such as whether to choose abortion and how to live a celibacy life. The goal of the Swedish schools on sex education is to not only impart neutral reproductive knowledge but also strengthen emotional and ethical side of love relationships.

Foucault interpreted the sex education in China a 'discursive mechanism' implying the fragmented knowledge China have imparted till now. This discursive mechanism constructed a plausible correspondence between the national strength, modernization and the health of the young generation together with their sexual conduct. Overall, the sex education in China is manipulated by the state and is shaped by an abstinence

sex education lobby. The conservative lobby based their argument on that young people's health sexual conduct and proper morality are the pivotal issues to the developing country. Hence, students are taught to be disciplined and self-controlled, in other words, resisting to adolescence-temptation. It is also speculated that considering the great population and intensive learning environment of China, regulating the sexual conduct and pregnancy is difficult. Since the new millennium, the educators of China start considering the conservative approach insufficient.

Although the focus of this essay is to discuss the current situation of Chinese universities' sex education, it is necessary to retrospect the history of sex education in modern and contemporary China. In the early 1920s, modern elites of China unprecedentedly pointed out that the improvement of populations' health, women's liberation and human reproduction can increase the population's quality, thereby strengthening Chinese race and liberating the country from semi-colonialism. A series of breaking 'sexual taboo' books were published. When the People's Republic of China founded, sexual activities beyond monogamous marital couples were forbidden because the regulation-designers aimed to ensure eugenic marriage and the abstinence contains resisting masturbation, prostitution and sodomy. The imperative of this education was to encourage young couples to choose discreetly and enjoy the pleasure of sexual activities within marriage for the sake of nurturing better babies. In 1963, A birth control policy was enacted by Enlai Zhou, which can be identified as quantity control comparing to the quality control of babies. From then on, sex education became a forbidden zone in China. It had been seen as a potential threat to the young generation. During the Cultural Revolution, sex was banned from public discourses until the end of the disastrous period to Chinese people society. In 1970s, sexual hygiene was reemphasized. After that, One-Child Policy was enacted after heated discussion. Also, due to the UNFPA project's popularization of sex education textbook, China gradually turned the sensitive and controversial sex issue into explicitly discussed texts. Meanwhile, the eugenic criteria deriving from 'correct' love, marriage and giving birth was also strengthened in the textbooks. In mid 1980s, sex education played the role of maintaining social stability by reducing sex crimes and misconducts. Scientific elements were added to the education as supplement to family sex education. Nevertheless, Chinese schools, especially universities, develop sex education slowly and unsystematically stemming from lack of financial resources and coordination. After 1998, prevention methods targeting at AIDS were compiled in Chinese middle school textbooks.

It can be concluded from the history that sex education in China had merely developed except the eugenic, birth control and disease prevention part. By contrast, other developed countries have systematic and scientific sex education curriculum. Therefore, it is reasonable to analyze the current situation of relatively open universities' sex education in contemporary China because school-

based sex education ended in universities for most Chinese students and they have access to the internet to be investigated. If the sex education and mastered sex knowledge of university students in China is insufficient, a conclusion can be induced that sex education system in China is incomplete.

III. DATA ANALYSIS

A. Basic Demographics of the Respondents

The data shows that there are 149 respondents in the survey, of which 63.76% are females and 36.24% are males. Freshman students accounted for 28.86%, sophomore students accounted for 14.77%, junior students accounted for 34.9%, and senior students accounted for 21.48% respectively. In terms of majors, humanities and social sciences and science and engineering have the largest proportions, both making up 32.21% of the group. From the aspect of the country where they study, Chinese students account for 73.15% while overseas students account for 26.85%. When it comes to parental educational background, their parents are overall well-educated and their degree of education is concentrated in high school/college or above.

B. Sexual Knowledge Understanding and Acquisition Channels of Survey Subjects

Regarding the knowledge of sex, relationships (how to understand and deal with family relationships, friendship, love and intimacy), values and human rights (e.g. genders are different but equal) and gender (gender awareness and identity, the division of social roles, etc.) ranked the top three (85.23%, 87.92%, 85.91%), indicating that more than 85% of the surveyed college students have understood the three aspects of sexual knowledge of relationship, value and human rights, and that of gender. Sexual orientation and sexual behavior (introduction and explanation to different sexual orientations and sexual behaviors) and reproductive health (prevention of diseases and how to do contraception) accounted for the lowest proportions, being 67.79% and 69.8% respectively, indicating that the proportion of students who understand sexual orientation, sexual behaviors and reproductive health is relatively fewer. The average value of the importance of acquiring sex education is 7.66, indicating that most the college students surveyed paid much attention to sex education.

Regarding the acquisition channels of sex education, the Internet accounted for the highest percentage of 85.23%, friends and peers accounted for 76.51%, and the ratio of books/newspapers/TV was 50.34%, indicating that the main channels for college students to obtain sex education are the Internet and books, newspapers, television and other media and peer groups. When it comes to the expected understanding channels for sex education, the data shows that the most anticipated channels of college students are schools, teachers and parents.

C. Analysis of Influencing Factors of Sexual Behavior

1) The degree of the importance attached to sex education affects whether sexual behavior occur

The importance of sex education was used as an independent variable and whether sexual behavior had occurred was regarded as a dependent variable in order to make binary Logistic regression analysis. Through data analysis, the regression coefficient of the importance of sex education was -0.112 as is shown in Table I, but it did not show significance ($z=-1.254$, $p=0.210>0.05$), which means that the importance of sex education will not affect whether or not sex has occurred.

TABLE I. SEX EDUCATION

Item	Regression Coefficient	z	p	OR
<i>The degree of importance attached to sex education</i>	-0.112	1.254	0.210	0.894
Dependent variable: whether they had sex				

2) The influence of health and good development on whether to have sex

Taking health and good development as independent variables, and whether or not having sex as a dependent variable, the binary Logistic regression analysis based on them. According to the analysis, it can be found from Table II that the regression coefficient of health and good development is -1.364, and it shows a significant level of 0.01 ($z=-2.625$, $p=0.009<0.01$), which means that health and good development will have a significant negative impact on whether or not you have had sex. And the odds ratio (OR value) is 0.256, which means that when health and good development increase by one unit, the decrease in sexual behaviors is 0.256 times.

TABLE II. HEALTH DEVELOPMENT

Item	Regression Coefficient	z	p	OR
<i>The influence of health and good development</i>	-1.364	-2.265	0.009	0.256
Dependent variable: whether they had sex				

3) The influence of health and good development on whether to have sex

Using reproductive health as an independent variable, and whether sexual behavior has occurred as a dependent variable for linear regression analysis, it can be seen from Table III that the model R-square value is 0.063, which means that reproductive health can explain 6.3% of the change in whether sexual behavior has occurred. When the F test was performed on the model, it was found that the model passed the F test ($F=9.865$, $p=0.002<0.05$), and the regression coefficient value was -0.258 ($t=-3.141$, $p=0.002<0.01$), indicating whether understanding the importance of reproductive health has a significant negative influence on whether to have sex.

TABLE III. REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

Item	Regression Coefficient	z	p	OR
<i>The influence of knowing reproductive health</i>	-0.258	-3.141	0.002	0.063
Dependent variable: whether they had sex				

4) *The impact of parents' educational background on whether sexual behavior occurs*

Taking the father's education level and the mother's education level as the independent variables, the binary Logistic regression analysis is performed with whether or not having sex as the dependent variable. The data in Table IV shows that the regression coefficient of the father's education level is 0.409, but there is no significance ($z=1.790$, $p=0.074>0.05$), which means that the father's level of education does not affect whether the respondent has had sex. The regression coefficient of the mother's education level is -0.427, but it is not significant ($z=-1.827$, $p=0.068>0.05$), which means that the mother's education level does not affect whether the student has had sex.

TABLE IV. PARENTAL EDUCATION BG

Item	Regression Coefficient	z	p	OR
<i>The impact of father's educational background</i>	0.112	1.254	0.210	0.894
<i>The impact of mother's educational background</i>	-0.427	-1.827	0.068	0.652
Dependent variable: whether they had sex				

D. *Analysis of Factors Affecting Contraception and Defence*

1) *The impact of understanding reproductive health on contraception*

As is shown in Table V, taking reproductive health as an independent variable and contraceptive measures as a dependent variable for multi-class logistic regression analysis, the statistics shows that the regression coefficient of reproductive health is 1.342, and it shows a significant level of 0.01 ($z=2.937$, $p=0.003<0.01$), which means that reproductive health will have a significant positive impact on whether to take contraceptive measures. And the odds ratio (OR value) is 3.827, which means that when reproductive health increases by one unit, the increase is 3.827 times.

TABLE V. THE IMPACT OF UNDERSTANDING REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

Item	Regression Coefficient	z	p	OR
<i>The impact of understanding reproductive health</i>	-1.342	2.937	0.003	3.827
Dependent variable: whether they did contraception				

2) *The impact of knowledge regarding violence and infringement on defense*

Multi-class logistic regression analysis is performed with violence and prevention as independent variables, and whether proper defense measures are taken as the dependent variable. Data analysis, which is based on Table VI, shows that the regression coefficients of violence and prevention (definitions of sexual violence and how to prevent and take measures) is 19.880, but it does not show significance ($z=0.001$, $p=0.999>0.05$), which means that violence and prevention of infringement will not affect whether proper defense measures are taken.

TABLE VI. VIOLENCE

Item	Regression Coefficient	z	p	OR
<i>Knowledge regarding violence and infringement</i>	19.880	0.001	0.999	5.336
Dependent variable: whether they took defending measures				

3) *The impact of violence and infringement on self-protection*

According to Table VII, the multi-class logistic regression analysis is performed with violence and prevention as independent variables, and whether know how to prevent and defend as dependent variables. The analysis shows that the regression coefficient of violence and prevention is -25.167, but it does not show significance ($z=-0.000$, $p=1.000>0.05$), which means that violence and prevention of infringement will not affect whether they know how to prevent and defend.

TABLE VII. INFRINGEMENT

Item	Regression Coefficient	z	p	OR
<i>Knowledge regarding violence and infringement</i>	-25.167	-0.000	1.000	0.000
Dependent variable: whether they did self-protection				

E. *Analysis of Influencing Factors of Early Love*

1) *The influence of the relationship on whether they fall in love when they are puppies*

Multi-class logistic regression analysis was performed with relationship as an independent variable and whether or not puppies was a dependent variable as is presented in Table VIII. Data analysis showed that the regression coefficient was -0.493, but it did not show significance ($z=-1.003$, $p=0.316>0.05$), Which means that the relationship does not affect whether the relationship is puppies.

TABLE VIII. RELATIONSHIPS

Item	Regression Coefficient	z	p	OR
<i>Knowledge regarding relationships</i>	-0.493	-1.003	0.316	0.661
Dependent variable: whether they had puppy love				

2) The influence of the country where they study on whether experience puppy love

Using the country of study as an independent variable, and whether or not puppies is used as the dependent variable for multi-class Logistic regression analysis in Table IX, the data analysis shows that the regression coefficient of the country of study is 0.091, but it does not show significance ($z=0.242$, $p=0.809>0.05$), which means that the country where you study will not affect whether you are in a relationship.

TABLE IX. STUDY COUNTRY

Item	Regression Coefficient	z	p	OR
Study Country	0.091	0.377	0.809	1.095
Dependent variable: whether they had puppy love				

IV. CONCLUSION

After conducting an online questionnaire survey of 149 Chinese college students from home and abroad, the current sex education situation can be reflected from the feedback. The corresponding suggestions on improvements are given.

First of all, main sexual knowledge acquisition channels of the respondents are the internet, friends and peers as well as books/newspapers/TV whereas the expected top 3 channels are schools, teachers and parents. Hence, the three channels mentioned above should not treat sex education as taboo like they were taught in their teenage and should be responsible for imparting sex education adequately.

According to the survey, most students have acquired three modules of sex education, namely relationships, value and human rights and gender. By contrast, nearly one third students are unfamiliar with the knowledge regarding sex orientation and reproductive health. More information regarding these two parts should be included in textbooks.

The NPS form recorded the average value of importance of acquiring sex education (7.66/10), revealing that most college students attached importance to sex education and would recommend it to be universalized.

When it comes to the factors influencing sexual behavior, it is found that the influence of health and good development (discussion and decision on whether to have sex) has a negative impact on sexual behaviors, which means the more the students have learnt about how to make sex decisions, the less likely would they have sex. Similarly, the more the students have learnt about how to ensure reproductive health, the less sexual behaviors would occur. The degree of the importance attached to sex education together with parents' educational background have little effect on sexual behaviors of the respondents.

In terms of the relationship between understanding the reproductive health and whether had sex, data show that knowing more about reproductive health can lead to better contraception measure.

There was no relevance found between learning how to react and defend sexual violence and infringement and knowing how to defend as well as reacting properly when suffering sexual assault. It is conjectured that even if students think that they understand the knowledge of "violence and prevention of sexual assault", sex education lacks in the aspect of "violence and prevention of assault", which results in students not being able to take correct and effective defend measures or preventive actions in real life. Also, one of the universalized textbook assert that sexual assault mostly occurs when the girls wear sexy clothes or behave flightily. This is misleading because it is blaming the potential victims rather than the abusers. The textbooks therefore should be modified since if students have learnt unreal factors, it is difficult for them to react correctly.

Finally, where the students study and whether know how to deal with relationships won't affect students' choices on whether to try puppy love. Maybe the students tend to choose premature love before they don't know how to deal with the relationship between the sexes.

After conducting the survey and analyzing the data, several deficiencies are found. First, when setting multiple questionnaire questions, I didn't set the minimum answer number, leading to some blank forms which may stem from filling in the form curtly. Second, although the overseas students are Chinese, their sexual knowledge may be acquired from abroad universities, which adds the uncertainty of the answers. Moreover, the overall number of respondents is relatively small because the results would represent for the whole Chinese university students.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Shijia Huang conducted the research, analyzed the data, and wrote the paper; Delsey Zheng reviewed the paper; all authors had approved the final version.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors wish to thank Dr. Zheng. This work was supported in part by a grant from her help.

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