A Study Based on the Current Situation of Puberty Psychosexual Health—A Survey of Secondary School Students in Guangzhou

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Abstract

Through investigating the current situation of psychosexual health education for secondary school students in Guangzhou, we found that the current level of knowledge of psychosexual health among secondary school students varies. Sexual information is widely available. Sex education in schools is not widely available, and the sex education provided does not match the needs of students in terms of sexual values, and does not meet the needs of most students. Most parents are also unable to answer their students’ questions about “sex”. In this paper, we propose a series of recommendations to address this issue in the context of our national context, such as the development of targeted sex education that is appropriate for our young people and the promotion of home-school collaboration. The aim is to raise the attention of education departments, schools and families to the mental health education of adolescents, and to provide some theoretical basis and constructive suggestions for the development of scientific mental sex education.

Keywords

Secondary school students, Current situation of psychosexual health education, Home-School Association

The World Health Organization (WHO) has conducted research on the concept of "sexual health": "the complete combination of physical and mental, emotional, intellectual and social dimensions of sexuality, which positively enriches humanity, promotes communication and enhances love." The main reason for providing adolescent sexual health education and psychosexual guidance education to secondary school students is to promote their healthy physical and mental growth. Sexual and psychological health education is one of the main contents of modern quality higher education in China, and it is also the main way to cultivate high-quality talents in the new era. However, due to the continuous development of the economy and society, Chinese young people generally know about sex too early and lack clear knowledge about the current situation of sex and the need for sex knowledge, so education on psychosexual health is a shortcoming of China's quality education.

The purpose of sex mental health education for students is to let them learn scientific and systematic knowledge of sex physiology and psychology and understand the law of sex development so that they can accept the constraints and norms of sexual morality and establish the correct concept of sex law. Based on this, this paper investigates the current situation of psychosexual health education in Guangzhou secondary schools, hoping to provide reference opinions for the effective implementation of psychosexual health education for secondary school students.
In the new era, education on sexuality has become one of the curricula in some schools, but this curriculum has been much debated. As of now, the curriculum about adolescent sex education is facing various problems in the process of practice in China. Many factors, such as school, family and society, affect the healthy development of students' sexuality. Therefore, it is the unavoidable and urgent responsibility of schools, families, and society to strengthen students' psychosexual health education and ensure their healthy growth with scientific psychosexual health education.

1. Literature Review

In the 1990s, Former President Jiang Zemin pointed out that "If a new generation of a nation without a strong physical and psychological quality, this nation will have no strength without the opportunity to develop sustainably." Mental health education is an important part of quality education, and psychosexual health is an indispensable part of mental health education (Xie Jianhong, 2007).

Sexual health refers to a healthy view of sexuality, sexual awareness, sexual emotion, and sexual behavior (Zuo Xiang, 2005). Sex education refers to giving students scientific knowledge about sex, cultivating their correct sexual concepts and healthy sexual psychology, and making them have sexual behaviors that compound social moral norms, and also, through adolescent sex education, students should establish positive self-concepts, harmonious interpersonal relationships, develop goodwill quality, and build a complete personality (Zuo Xiang, 2005).

Sex psychology refers to the sum of psychological phenomena in human sexuality, such as sexual awareness, sexual desire, sexual perception, sexual emotion, sexual dreams, and other mental activities (Ding Bangping & Zhu Ming, 1999). In the past two decades, the Chinese government has promulgated several health education policy documents that emphasize the importance and necessity of sex education for adolescent development, so in the health promotion work carried out in schools around the world, more and more schools try to provide health education from three levels: physical, psychological, social and from multiple perspectives, such as physical hygiene, adolescent health care, prevention of bullying and sexual abuse, and prevention of AIDS and sexually transmitted infections.

However, sex education in China has not been set up as an independent course but relies on carrier courses such as biology, ideology and morality, and mental health education classes. And it does not have a clear guideline outline and some sound teaching materials. Sex education still faces social resistance and obstacles at the implementation level, as noted in the policy paper on CSE in the Global Education Monitoring Report released by UNESCO in 2019 (UNESCO, 2019). China is no exception to this rule, because the lack of a clear and adapted syllabus for sex education courses in high schools and universities in China's teaching practices has prevented any improvement in the implementation of sex education connotations, task completion, and teaching efficiency. Moreover, there are very few specialized institutions and publishers in China that have researched and launched sex education curricula, and there is no curriculum that fully reflects Chinese comprehensive sex teaching ideas. At present, some of the existing curricula in schools are obviously lagging behind the needs of contemporary school teaching practices and the needs of modern society for sex education in terms of sex education concepts, teaching contents and methods. Many educators still think that the curriculum is about "having children" (Liu Wenli & Li Yuhui, 2020).

In fact, comprehensive sex education should be an organic combination of both physiological and psychological education, but existing sex education is relatively neglected for the popularization of psychosexual health education, both at home and at school. In conclusion, at this stage, the state actively encourages the promotion of sex education, and the existing authoritative studies emphasize that sex education should include psychosexual health education, but most school education is more inclined to conduct physical education and ignore psychosexual health education.

2. Research Design

This study was conducted on the psychosexual health education of secondary school students, and the quantitative research method was used to investigate the status of psychosexual health education of secondary school students in Guangzhou. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of this study was tested to be 0.936, the KMO coefficient was 0.953, and Bartlett's sphericity test significance level reached 0.000, which had a good level of reliability and validity. After obtaining the questionnaire, our group also analyzed it scientifically and compared it from multiple perspectives with various methods. In summary, this survey can get a more accurate and effective analysis of the current situation of psychosexual health education courses in Guangzhou.

3. Discovery & Discussion

3.1 Overview of psychosexual knowledge awareness

In this study, psychosexual knowledge was categorized into physical and psychosocial dimensions and specified into
the following topics, using a five-point Likert scale, to initially examine the student respondents' knowledge of sexual health. In this case, higher scores on a scale of 1-5 for the questions indicate more certainty about that knowledge (Luo Y & Zheng C, 2006).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Psychosexual Health Knowledge</th>
<th>Observations</th>
<th>Mean Value</th>
<th>Standard deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I understand what is menstruation and seminal emission</td>
<td>1208</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>1.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I understand the structure and function of the reproductive system</td>
<td>1208</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>1.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I understand proper contraception</td>
<td>1208</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>1.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe that sex is dirty, shameful, and unseemly</td>
<td>1208</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>1.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think that masturbation is sick and nasty</td>
<td>1208</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I agree with the traditional concept of sexual confinement and repression in China</td>
<td>1208</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>1.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think we should respect the sexual liberation and freedom in modern Western culture</td>
<td>1208</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>1.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think it's humiliating to not be in a relationship when everyone around me is in love</td>
<td>1208</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>1.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe that sex can be used as a means to exchange for self-interest</td>
<td>1208</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>1.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can resolve my sexual desires and impulses in an appropriate way</td>
<td>1208</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>1.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can control my sex-related behavior and speech according to social and moral norms</td>
<td>1208</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>1.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can use the resources provided by society, family and school to acquire sexual knowledge actively and effectively</td>
<td>1208</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>1.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I have sexual urges, I feel that I have no control over them and cannot divert my energy to study, work, play, etc.</td>
<td>1208</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>1.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I have sexual urges, I feel that I have no control over them and cannot divert my energy to study, work, play, etc.</td>
<td>1208</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>1.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I identify with my gender role</td>
<td>1208</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>1.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can get along harmoniously and naturally with the opposite sex</td>
<td>1208</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>1.16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 shows that most of the student respondents believe they have a good grasp of the knowledge related to mental health, with scores higher than 4.0 on the questions of biological sex and gender orientation, such as "I understand what menstruation and seminal emission are" and "I agree with my gender role". However, there are also a few students who think that "sex can be used as a means to exchange for self-interest" and "I feel humiliated if I don't fall in love when everyone around me is in love". This shows that students' knowledge of psychosexual health varies, and it is important to carry out psychosexual health education.

3.2 Sources of sexual information

The different sources of sexual information to which the students in the sample were exposed in their daily lives are shown in the figure below:

Figure 1 shows that students today have a wide range of sources of sexual information, and many of these sources contain uncontrollable information about sexuality, such as books, newspapers, magazines, the Internet, television and radio, and peer-to-peer communication. Also, we can see that some of the students' sources of sexual information include pornography. In addition, only 24.42% of secondary school students' sexual information in their daily life includes school curriculum education or bulletin boards, which indicates that the current popularity of school sex education and the depth of its influence on students are still at a low level.
3.3 Sex Education in Schools

The number of students who had received sex education in the sample was 593 (50.38%) and the number of students who had never received sex education was 583 (49.62%). Among the students who had received sex education, 490 students (82.63% of the students who had received sex education) had received sex education in school. This indicates that sex education for secondary school students is still not widespread, and the main role of sex education for secondary school students is currently undertaken by schools.

Figure 2. Statistics of secondary school students receiving school psychosexual education in Guangzhou.

In Figure 2, in terms of the implementation of school sex education, the level of implementation of school sex education could not meet the needs of most students. The mean value of satisfaction with school sex education among students who had received school sex education was 3.62. K-means cluster analysis was conducted on students' psychosexual health levels, and independent samples t-test was performed on the satisfaction level of school sex education based on the clustering results grouped together. And the results obtained that the satisfaction level of school sex education among students with higher levels of sexual value dimensions was significantly lower (p=0.013) than that of stu-
dents with lower levels of sexual values. This indicates that there is a mismatch between the sex education provided in schools and the needs of students in terms of sexual values. In the next school sex education, attention should be paid to improving the teaching content related to sexual values so that it meets the requirements of secondary school students' psychosexual health development.

3.4 Sex Education in Family

From Figures 3 and 4, we can see that there are few discussions about "sex" in the family. Also, when secondary school students asked their parents questions about "sex," few parents were able to answer them. This shows the lack of sex education in the families of middle school students and the parent's inability to provide sex education, which also shows the need for the "family" link in the home-school association.

![Figure 3. The frequency of discussing "sex" with parents among secondary school students in Guangzhou.](image1)

![Figure 4. Statistics on whether parents of secondary school students in Guangzhou can answer "sex"-related questions.](image2)
4. Suggestion

4.1 To carry out targeted sex education that is appropriate to our youth, taking into account China’s conditions

Adolescent sex education is an area of education that is generally valued by the international community, and many countries have included it as one of their important educational strategic goals. The experiences of some developed countries in the West are indeed worthy of our reference, but while learning from them, we must base ourselves on the specific situation of the majority of our adolescents, and continue to reflect, develop and improve in our exploration. In the process of sexual and mental health education, the following principles need to be followed:

4.1.1 Follow the characteristics of students' physical and mental development

The personality and psychological characteristics of secondary school students are still in a transitional period of perfection, so their physical and mental development presents special contradictions, and there is a clear interweaving of positive and negative psychological phenomena. At this stage, secondary school students often show the conflict between independence and dependence in school and daily life, the conflict between a strong closed personality and the need for normal interpersonal communication, and the conflict between a strong sense of individuality and the correct handling of interpersonal relationships with the opposite sex. These are the general events that secondary school students will experience during their growth and development, and they are also a reflection of their maturity but not yet full growth.

However, in the current curriculum of sexual and mental health education for secondary school students, it mostly focuses on topics such as early love, lacks the teaching of peer interaction and other life problems caused by the contradictory characteristics of their psychological development, and even detaches from the real life and needs of students, so such a curriculum design not only cannot help students to solve their internal psychological conflicts, but also makes students feel aggrieved and resentful, and even causes problems to further develop, intensify and change. The design of such a curriculum not only cannot help students to solve their inner conflicts, but also can make them feel aggrieved and resentful, and even cause further development, intensification, and deterioration of the problems. Therefore, the design of the school sex education curriculum should follow the characteristics of students' physical and mental development and serve them.

4.1.2 Collaborative education between home and school

Family education on psychosexual health is an education that should begin at birth. The best way and time for sex education is to occur naturally along with the growth of children, but from the survey, we can find that most parents have difficulty in providing effective sex education to their children due to their lack of sex knowledge and communication skills.

In the future of psychosexual health education, parents should be mobilized in advance to join the school to learn professional psychosexual health knowledge and put family sex education courses on the agenda (Zhao et al., 2023), while parents who have complete knowledge of psychosexual health education can also influence their children by buying books for them and talking with them about the contents of books and the phenomenon of heterosexual interactions around them in their daily lives (Guo Hao & Yi Yingna, 2022; Zhang Chunjiang et al., 2020).

4.2 Accelerate the development of teaching materials and case studies related to psychosexual health education

The education department can gather relevant experts and scholars to discuss and research, and speed up the development of teaching materials related to psychosexual health education, so as to provide theoretical guidance for the development of psychosexual health education and the comprehensive popularization of sex education in more regions of China. Teachers should be encouraged to explore new teaching modes and move from traditional lectures to more interesting and creative classes, so that young people can not only master basic sexual knowledge but also acquire skills related to solving sexual troubles and establish scientific and correct sexual attitudes, so that theories can be applied in practice and developed in practice, thus making psychosexual health education really come into practice.

4.3 Expanding the weight of psychosexual health education in the scope of study and assessment and evaluation criteria for teacher trainees

At present, most non-psychology teacher trainees have a shallow depth of professional learning in sex education, especially in psychosexual health education, which is the fundamental reason why teacher trainees are less involved in
psychosexual health education when they face real students after entering their careers. Expanding the proportion of psychosexual health education and improving the professional level of teachers are effective ways to improve the current situation of psychosexual health education and solve the dilemma of unbalanced development of sex education in the long run. Mental health education in the scope of study and assessment and evaluation criteria are teacher trainees (Liu Wenli & Li Jiayang, 2022).

4.4 Integrating youth sex education into overall school education planning and implementation

Some schools often focus on lectures on adolescent education for students, which are far from being effective in educating adolescents, and their educational content is limited to physical health care of adolescents, while sexual morality, sexual psychology, and knowledge of sexual health are neglected. It is the inescapable responsibility of schools to comprehensively strengthen sexual health education during adolescence, to enhance adolescent students' awareness of sexual self-protection, to maintain their physical and mental health, and to ensure their healthy growth with scientific sexual knowledge education. Integrating adolescent sex education into the overall education planning of schools will help schools to carry out sex education courses more proactively, strengthen the education of students' psychosexual health, and promote the comprehensive and balanced development of sex education.

References