

Research on the Current Situation and Countermeasures of Sexual Education in Primary Schools

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Abstract: With the further development of quality education, there is a general tendency to improve sexual education in primary schools. A questionnaire investigation is conducted among primary students in Shaoguan and it is found that primary students' sexual knowledge is insufficient, and their ways of acquiring "sexual knowledge" are mainly through television and network; the awareness and attitudes of their teachers and parents towards sexual education are not scientific enough; primary schools lack sexual education; and sexual education conducted by primary schools and parents can be influenced by various aspects. Therefore, some feasible suggestions are put forward for sexual education in primary schools: social support and educational resultant force should be required, more attention should be paid to family education and its correct guidance, relevant curricula should be set up in primary schools and more teaching methods should be created.

1. Introduction

Today, children's sexual education has attracted worldwide attention due to its profound influence on children's healthy growth, family happiness and social stability. Professional sexual education scholars around the world believe that sexual education must start from preschool stage and be included in the curriculum system of compulsory education with class hour guarantee, whose teaching content must be comprehensive (Wenli Liu, 2013). At present, some countries with better sexual education such as Sweden and Japan have attached importance to sexual education since the 1960s. Sexual Guidance in Guidance for Students and Main Points Explanation of Sexual Education Guidance issued in Japan respectively stated the purpose and content of sexual education. In the meantime, sexual education system in Sweden was divided into kindergarten stage, primary school stage, high education, and college education with corresponding contents and purposes at different stages (Weiping Wu, 2011).

On the basis of foreign sexual education experience, Chinese government, combining with the Chinese culture and national conditions, issued *Guidelines to Health Education in Primary and Secondary Schools* in 2008, which incorporates sexual education into the health education framework. Sexual education has been carried out in primary schools across China based on *Guidelines to International Sexual Education Technology* issued by UNESCO in 2009. *Chinese Children Development Program (2011-2020)* passed in 2011 stipulates that sexual education should be included into the curriculum system of compulsory education.

Although various measures have been taken as early as ten years ago in China, juveniles sexual abuse has happened frequently in recent years. This makes people wonder about the following questions: What the current situation of sexual education in primary schools? Is there a practical sexual education curriculum in primary schools? How to conduct sexual education in primary schools? On account of this, this study aims to explore the current situation and dilemma of sexual education in primary schools in Shaoguan City and propose corresponding countermeasures based on the research results to provide reference for people in need.

This Research takes primary teachers of Shaoguan and students in grade 3 to 6 of Lai Xin Primary School as the research objects, and methods adopted mainly include literature research and survey research.

Throught analyzes the research results of the current situation and the countermeasures taken of sexual education in primary schools at home and abroad, to determine the subject and direction of the research, as well as the focus of the research. Literature research will be used to specify the research direction and then put forward the corresponding solutions to the problems in different regions by finding out the problems of sexual education in China's primary schools.

The research mainly adopts the questionnaire method by self-designing the students questionnaire and the teachers questionnaire. The students questionnaire is focused on 4 aspects: the current situation of primary students' sexual knowledge and concept, teachers' and parents' attitudes towards primary students' sexual health education, the content of primary schools' sexual education, and ways and techniques used in primary schools' sexual education. And the teachers' questionnaire is also focused on 4 aspects: the current situation of sexual education in primary schools, teachers' attitudes to and understanding of sexual education, factors that affect the outcomes of sexual education, and effective ways of carrying out sexual education in primary schools. The students questionnaire has a total of 21 questions--20 closed-ended questions and 1 open-ended question. And 300 students questionnaires were sent out, of which 150 were sent to students in grades 5-6, 150 in grades 3-4. And 293 students questionnaires have been collected among which 278 are valid. The teachers questionnaire contains 22 questions--21 closed-ended questions and 1 open-ended question. A total of 68 teachers questionnaires were sent out, of which 68 have been collected and found valid. The conclusions of this study are based on the detailed data analyses powered by www.wjx.cn.

2. Findings

The primary school period is an important stage of sexual enlightenment and therefore correct guidance from teachers and parents is rather important. It is insufficient for children to acquire sexual knowledge only through incorrect channels, which will even cause great harm to them. Under the background of examination-oriented education, however, it is not easy to carry out sexual education scientifically and comprehensively in primary schools, which requires the cooperation of teachers, parents, all walks of the society and students.

2.1 Students' sexual knowledge

The following paragraphs will discuss what students know about sex.

2.1.1 The sexual knowledge acquired by primary students

According to the statistics, sexual knowledge acquired by primary students at present includes: what privacy places are, what sexual assault is, how to prevent sexual assault, and what to do after being sexually assaulted. 12.59% of students say they have not received sexual education while around 60% of students say they mostly want to learn the sexual knowledge about giving birth to a baby and 37% want to learn knowledge about their physical development. These students were in the fifth or sixth grade. Additionally, the sexual knowledge they want to learn also include knowledge of sexual self-protection, sexual psychology, sexual hygiene, and puppy love respectively accounting for 26%, 27%, 23% and 17% when they reply the question "what aspect of sexual education do you want to learn most?"

A certain gap appears between the levels of knowledge that they have learned and that they want to learn, which to some extent reflects the phenomenon of precocious behaviors of primary students.

As shown in Figure 1, 46% students know that pregnancy can only be achieved through sexual behaviors, while others consider that intimate behaviors such as shaking hands, kissing and hugging can also lead to pregnancy. And 25.18% students still know nothing about how women get pregnant.

It shows that some primary students do not have a correct understanding of the sources of life. Therefore, parents and teachers should carry out scientific and effective education focused on the relevant knowledge which should includes the understanding of the life sources of humans, animals and plants.

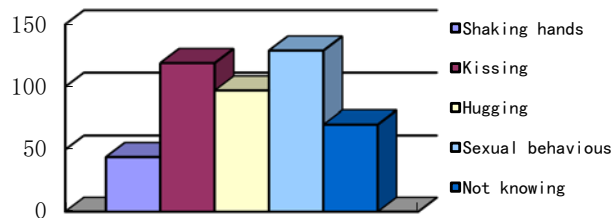


Figure 1 The understanding of the source of life

2.1.2 Understanding of sexual assault

Students in different grades have different levels of understanding of sexual assault and how to prevent it. Figure 2 shows the research results of the question, "Do you know what sexual assault is?" The results show that 62.27% of the students know what sexual assault is, of which 75.86% are in the fifth or sixth grade, meaning that most middle and low grade students do not have a full understanding of the concept of sexual assault. As shown in figure 3, more than 45% of the 278 students surveyed know how to prevent sexual assault to different degrees, while about 54% do not know how to prevent it.

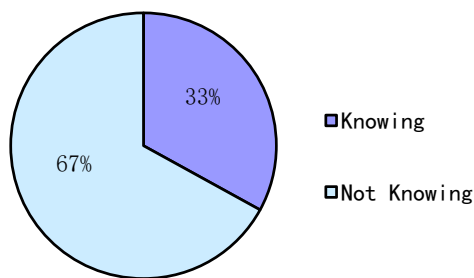


Figure 2 Students' Understanding of Sexual Assault

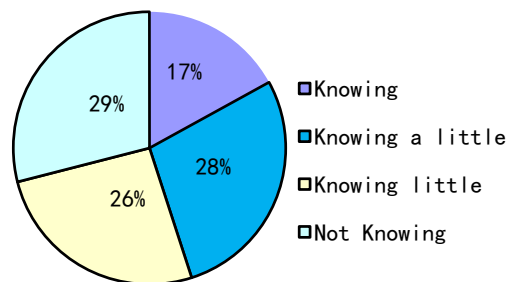


Figure 3 Students' Understanding of Preventing Sexual Assault

Primary students are at a relatively high risk of sexual abuse, therefore they must master certain preventive measures. Table 1 shows the research data of the question, "Do you know how to prevent sexual assault?" When encountering harassment like sexual assault, more than 70% students will react in different ways to protect themselves such as refusing by words, running away while crying for help, telling parents and teachers, calling the police and so on. However, 31.29% of the students have no idea how to protect themselves when they encounter sexual assault. Most of these students are in middle and low grade, reflecting that most students have an awareness of self-protection which helps them avoid being harassed by lawbreakers and to a certain extent can prompt some students who do not know.

Table 1 Students' Methods of Preventing Sexual Assault

Methods	number of people	percentage
Refusing by words	48	17.27
Running while crying for help	79	28.42
Telling teachers and parents	71	25.54
Calling the police	80	28.78
Having no idea	87	31.29

2.2 Teachers' and parents' attitudes

Teachers' and parents' attitudes towards sexual education will influence students' development.

2.2.1 Parents' attitudes towards sexual education

Family education can affect a child's whole life, therefore parents play the most important role in children's sexual education. According to the survey, about 67% parents will not give their children sexual education. For example, they would not tell their children the composition of human bodies, how babies come to this world, how to prevent sexual abuse, and so on. Among these parents, 5% of them never allow their children to talk about relevant topics. About 86% of the students do not know anything about the relevant knowledge before their first spermatozoa or menarche. And more than 86% parents do not allow their students to watch scenes of kissing and other intimate behaviors when watching TV. When children ask knowledge about the composition of human bodies, how babies come to this world, spermatozoa and menarche, about 65% parents choose not to answer or avoid such questions, while 33% give their children a little of the knowledge, and 1.44% parents give them a detailed answer. Research shows that most parents do not answer their children's questions in time, which can hinder the propitious moment of their children's sexual education. Primary students do not have basic physiological knowledge and abilities to recognize and prevent harmful behaviors. This reminds us that we should not ignore children's sexual education and sexual safety education for both boys and girls.

2.2.2 Teachers attitudes towards sexual education

Teachers' understanding of and attitudes towards sexual education will directly affect the outcomes of primary students' sexual education. About 50% of the teachers have a little understanding of the sexual physiology and the development state of sexual psychology of primary students, and 32.35% say they do not understand, and 9% have never paid attention on this kind of knowledge, while 4.41% of the teachers fully understand. Most teachers consider that family education and school education should be the main channels of primary students' sexual education. However, some teachers think that children should learn sexual knowledge by themselves or they do not need sexual education because they will naturally know it when they grow up. Students will naturally know when they grow up. But all the teachers surveyed believe that sexual education plays a certain role in the growth of students, and that sexual education courses offered by schools should include knowledge about sources of life, healthy mental growth, and self-protection, reaching the purposes of understanding basic knowledge of sexual physiology, the meaning of life and how to take care of the body, and forming an awareness of self-protection.

As to "attitude towards sexual education work in primary schools", about 30% of the teachers respond that they will actively conduct related educational activities, and 44.12% say that they will carry out the corresponding tasks as long as they are assigned by their leaders, while nearly 30% think it difficult to conduct sexual education among students and even try to avoid it. Most of these teachers are over 50 and under 30, indicating that age will influence teachers' sexual education work to a certain extent.

2.3 Factors

This part will taking about the Factors influencing the implementation of sexual education in primary schools.

2.3.1 School factors

Although more than 95% teachers think sexual education plays a certain role in primary students, there are still 30% of them who are not willing to do the sexual education work. So what are the reasons? That is, what are the factors that influence the implementation of sexual education in elementary schools? As shown in Table 2, the main factors influencing the implementation of sexual education in primary schools include: schools pay no attention to the sexual education; the form and content of sexual education courses are not good enough; teachers and parents themselves

lack relevant professional knowledge; teachers and parents object to the sexual education; and students are not willing to participate in the sexual education. Among these factors, schools' paying no attention to sexual education becomes one of the prime reasons for hindering the implementation of sexual education in primary schools. As a matter of fact, many teachers have an awareness about the implementation of sexual education, but due to all sorts of reasons mentioned above, they will be confronted with many obstacles in practice. Especially, because of the existence of examination-oriented education and school leaders ignoring the sexual education, many home-room teachers and course teachers have to make way for various cultural courses when they carry out related activities.

Table 2 Factors Influencing Sexual education in Primary Schools

Factors Percentage	Number of people	
Schools' neglect	65	95.59
Defects in the form and content	56	82.35
Lack of the knowledge	52	76.47
Opposition from teachers and parents	28	41.18
Students' unwillingness to take part	12	17.65
Others	7	10.2

2.3.2 Parental factors

As to the parents, the influence of traditional concept and the lack of relevant knowledge have largely affected the implementation of sexual education in primary schools. Affected by the traditional values, many parents consider "sex" as a taboo, which, they think, will bring harmful effects to children if mentioned (Fang Jiang, 2013). Parents also believe that children of certain age would understand sex naturally because these parents did not accept any sexual education when they were children.

In addition, when parents frequently see sexually assaulted events happening on children, they realize the importance of sexual education. Due to the lack of relevant knowledge, parents do not know where to start. They do not know what knowledge should be taught to children, and in what way they can explain this knowledge scientifically. Inappropriate content and unscientific explanations may not help children, but bring harm to children. Therefore, parents are one of the important factors influencing sexual education in primary schools.

2.4 The methods and ways of sexual education in primary schools

Next we will discuss the methods and approaches of sexual education in primary school.

2.4.1 Ways for primary school students to acquire sexual knowledge

Students' access to sexual knowledge generally includes television, books, magazines, the Internet, exchanges between classmates and friends, parents, teachers, and education from off-campus volunteers. 68.71% of students learn about sexual knowledge from TV, and more than 70% of students learn about that from books, magazines, and the Internet. 27% and 12.23% of the students were educated by parents and schools to learn relevant knowledge. In this set of data, more than half of the students learned sexual knowledge through off-campus volunteers, and TV, the Internet, books and magazines are the main ways for students to acquire sexual knowledge. There is a great deal of negative information in TV, the Internet, books and magazines, and children's ability to identify good and bad is low. Therefore, there is a great risk in acquiring sexual knowledge through TV, the Internet, books and magazines. At the same time, these data also indicate that off-campus volunteers are also one of the main ways for primary school students to acquire sexual knowledge. According to the investigation, Shaoguan City has established the "Girls' Protection Foundation". It is a non-profit organization that specializes in sexual education in kindergartens and primary schools. At present, "Girls' Protection" has been carried out in many kindergartens and primary schools in Shaoguan City. In addition, some college students will form a volunteer team to go to the primary schools near the university to conduct a righteous education and conduct sexual education activities. The main activities of the students are: "Preventing sexual assault", "knowing

your own body” and “how lives being born”. Off-campus volunteers are also one of the main ways for primary school students to acquire sexual knowledge.

2.4.2 Main methods of sexual education in primary school

Different schools and teachers use different methods for sexual education. 86.76% of teachers use themed activities to conduct sexual education, such as class meetings and moral lectures; 63.24% of schools have specialized sexual health education courses; about 62% are infiltrated in the teaching process of each subject; more than 40% of the volunteer groups in the field cooperated with the off-campus volunteers to develop and use the network to conduct sexual education for students. The methods used by schools in sexual education reflect the importance attached to sexual education in primary school.

3. Contributions

The strategies to solve the primary sexual education problem will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

3.1 Change schools and parents' understanding of sexual education

On the one hand, change schools' attitude and educational models of sexual education. Schools must establish the concept of education reform. Only by actively reforming the current education and teaching system, aiming at quality education, improving people's all-round development as a guide, and adapting to lifelong education as a requirement, can we achieve sexual education in primary school better (Wenli Liu, 2017).

According to the Guidelines for Health Education in Primary and Secondary Schools and local traditional cultural practices, the organization and management of teaching content and extracurricular activities should meet the needs of students and improve teaching effectiveness and quality.

Besides, many forms can be taken by teachers in sexual education classes, such as intuitive, game-style, and situation-based teaching mode. Intuitive teaching can show the process of the formation and birth of life through multimedia. Game-based teaching mode can design games with different characteristics for men and women, allowing students to experience the differences between men and women in the game. The game-style teaching mode is very consistent with the psychological characteristics of primary school students. Different situations can also be designed, such as being forced to have physical contact with strangers when playing in public places (buses, subways, plazas, etc.). Teachers should guide students to discuss, experience and learn to distinguish sexual assault and learn how to protect themselves best.

New educational philosophy starting from the needs of students should be established. According to the characteristics of students' physical and mental development, adopting different teaching modes will lead education to a historic step forward, thus achieving twice the result with half the effort.

On the other hand, raise the level of parents in sexual education. Parents should educate their children to understand themselves, the structure of the body, the structure and function of the reproductive system. First, they must have a scientific understanding of sexual knowledge, so that their education can be credible. Because the information the child receives is multifaceted, when the knowledge they get at the parent is inconsistent with the information obtained elsewhere, it may cause them to lose confidence in their parents. Secondly, parents should explain the knowledge related to “sex” to the child in a scientific and correct attitude, and help the child to form a correct attitude towards “sex”. If parents consider it as a shame to explain sexual knowledge to children, it will give children an illusion that “sex” is a bad thing.

3.2 Change the ways for students to acquire sexual knowledge

According to the survey, most primary school students acquire sexual knowledge through TV, the Internet, books and magazines that have not been processed for minors. TV and the Internet

have a wide range of sources of information, and there are many unfiltered indecent messages that can cause unpredictable harm to children's mind and body. As parents and teachers, it is their responsibility to protect the curiosity of children and let them grow in a scientific, green and harmonious environment. Therefore, all sectors of society should cooperate with supporting sexual education in primary school. The school cooperate with various government departments to prepare scientific sexual education readers, combine local customs and traditions to interpret gender education from the perspective of children, teach sexual knowledge with life-based examples, equip students with scientific self-defense methods and let sexual education readers become one of the important channels for students to acquire scientific knowledge.

3.3 Exert the function of themed class in school sexual education

It is a long way for the education reform and it is unrealistic to bring "sexual education" to every elementary school instantly. However, sexual education is an urgent task for children's growth. Before schools, parents and all walks of life can accept sexual education courses to enter the school, we can first integrate the topic of sexual education into the themed class and make sexual education infiltrate in class meetings to change the concept of students, and further change that of parents and the society.

3.4 Learn from the experience of sexual education in foreign schools

Sexual education is not about introducing sex-related education, but a comprehensive education including sexual analysis, physiological and psychological disease prevention, contraception, culture, ethics, law and other knowledge education, which includes understanding of sex and love, education of concepts and skills such as gender roles, intimate relationships, family, gender relations, and gender communication, including education that recognizes oneself, determines ability, responsibility, obligation, and rights.

For a long time, the sexual education in primary school in China only involves the level of physiological knowledge. Further research is needed on how to conduct comprehensive sexual education. Foreign countries' experience in sexual education are worth learning, such as the sexual education in Sweden and Japan. Sweden is the first country to conduct sexual education. Its sexual education has been carried out for more than half a century and is a model of the world. However, while studying the experience of other countries, we must combine our national conditions, cream off the best and filter out the impurities, and establish a sexual education curriculum that is most suitable for China's national conditions (Zuoqiao Li, 2016).

4. Conclusion

The implementation of sexual education in primary school will not only help students' with their physical and mental development, but also protect them from sexual assault. Students can learn basic physiological knowledge, protect themselves, protect others in the process of receiving sexual education, and it is meaningful to thoroughly study the countermeasures against the current predicament of sexual education in primary school. The implementation of sexual education in primary school is restricted by many factors and it requires the cooperation of schools, teachers, parents and the society. Only when schools attach importance to it, teachers and parents guide it, and the society accept it, can it be carried out successfully and effectively.

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