

Where does the Chinese Sexual Shame Come From?

Ziqi Gao^{1,*}

¹Ningbo Foreign Language School

Abstract. Sexual shame is the sense of shame that people feel when they mention or think about sex. Based on the existing research on sexual shame, this paper will discuss where the sexual shame of Chinese people comes from and analyze how to reduce the sexual shame of Chinese people.

1 Introduction

Under the influence of the "shame-based culture", the Chinese people's attitude towards "sex" has been avoiding talking about it since ancient times [1]. After the reform and opening-up policy, China opened up its attitude towards sex slightly, gradually opening up the forbidden area of sex education in the ten years from 1978 to 1988. (Zhu Aisheng Hu Weifang, 2007) The publication of some books on general knowledge of puberty education put an end to the situation of "teachers without textbooks, parents without references and students without textbooks" in the development of puberty sex education in China. The publication of sex education books is a big step forward in China's exploration of sex education. In 1993, China's first sex toys shop, Beijing Adam & Eve Health-Care Center, opened at 143 Zhao Dengyu Road in Beijing. However, it was 16 days after its opening that the sex toys shop welcomed its first customer. A few months later, the owner of the Beijing Adam & Eve Health-Care Center gained some popularity thanks to publicity in the foreign media. In 1995, he launched China's first television program about Beings, Life, and Birth, together with the Publicity and Education Center of the Beijing Family Planning Commission and BTV. However, in 2017, a mother in Hangzhou complained on microblog that the sex education textbooks (Cherish Life: Sexual Health Education Reader for primary school students) given to her second-grade daughter at school were too extensive for children to read. The post caused such a stir that the education bureau had to pull the book from the shelves. One of the few complete and comprehensive sex education textbooks in China has become "inappropriate for children". Against this backdrop, China's rapidly developing sex education and progressive attitudes towards sex seem to have gone backwards.

In China, most research are about the difference of sex education between western country and China, and mainly focus on the solutions about it. There's not much research about the origin of Chinese people's attitude toward sex.

This essay will discuss the reasons behind the backward sex education in China, as well as related culture. People need to understand the root cause of Chinese people's strange attitude towards sex and the underlying logic of its formation, so that they can better solve the problems and perplexities about sex.

2 Sources of sexual shame

2.1 Shame-based culture

To understand the word "Shame-based culture", one should first understand the definition of Shame. According to Na He and Liying Cui, Shame is a sense of humiliation that is degraded and worthless due to the gap between the real self and the ideal self after an individual makes a negative behavior"(Na He and Liying Cui, 2022) This definition explains the meaning of shame. And the concept of "Shame-based culture" refers to the culture which leads people to rethink their behaviors many times, and find out if their behaviors are "full of shameful" or not [2]. According to Lan Xu, "As the name implies, the so-called shame culture is a kind of cultural mentality that pays attention to shame. Characteristic of this culture is that it cares deeply about what others say, think, and talk about. Therefore, their behavior will be restricted and dominated by many external social factors and standards, that is, people with the characteristics of "shame culture" are mostly controlled by others." [3], it can be seen that the shame-based culture has been prolonged culture in China.

Shame-based culture" is influenced by Confucian culture thought and form, its characteristic is particularly care about other people's thinking, easily swayed by surrounding environment and control, their mannerisms constraint by ethics and social environment, in the aspect of moral ideas and value orientation by psychologists call "shame orientation" (Zhao Hongzhong, wang jianxin, 2018)[4].

Some scholars traced back the formation of traditional Chinese shame culture and emphasized that shame culture (macro) plays a role in maintaining moral

* Corresponding author: villa_gaoziqi@outlook.com

order, such as "paying attention to introspection, introspection, seeking self-improvement, inspiring morale, and honing reputation and morality".

Below are the two main influences of this kind of culture on sex:

2.1.1 Avoid talking about sex

There is an attitude of avoiding talk about sex, and avoiding things about sex. Some adults, especially the older ones who are more backward in thinking, tend to hold a repressed attitude towards sex. They don't talk about sex, and they try to avoid it all. This type of person may have grown up in a family with a very repressive attitude towards sex. Their parents might also consider sex as an unspoken secret, and to some extent, they pass their feelings to their children, consciously or unconsciously. As children in this kind of family grow up, they will have a repression opinion about sex. In their eyes, sex is a vulgar and noble thing that is not noble. They force their ideas on others and expect them to have the "right" ideas about sex. Therefore, when people around this person discuss the topic of sex, they will shout accusations and stop. Therefore, this kind of behavior is helping the growing spread of sexual shame in China.

2.1.2 Be duplicitous when it comes to sex and sexual shame

Some people have two-faced attitudes about sex. On the one hand, they appear to be abstinent and have no sexual desire, they pretend to be noble, and avoid everything about sex. However, in some unknown places, they talk about sex in some, such as the Internet, or while they are eating with their friends who have similar attitude towards sex with them. They may even have a tendency to be degrading to women and may engage in acts of aggression against women, such as sexual harassment or rape. While they avoid talking about sex, they have the shame and disgust of sex; while they are eager and curious about sex, and they will disguise their desire for sex in their heart with lofty words and gorgeous rhetoric. Whether it's not talking about sex or being duplicitous about sex and sexual shame, people are going against their nature. Humans, as advanced creatures who derive pleasure from sex, are inseparable from all things sexual. The progeny, the pleasure of sex, and the deep desire for sex in the human body are all reasons why sex cannot be eliminated.

2.2 Social atmosphere

In people's daily lives, it is common to feel the shame of girls for "menstruation" and "sexual organs", and the enthusiasm of boys for dirty jokes. To some extent, the atmosphere people are exposed to also reinforces the sense of sexual shame among Chinese people. And in daily conversation, people pass on the shame they feel to others, affecting another group of people. Over and over again, it becomes a vicious cycle.

Schools do not pay attention to sex education, incapacity is also one of the factors affecting adolescent sexual mental health. In schools, teachers try to avoid talking about "sex" in order not to "bring children down". In the only sex education classes in school, children make fun of everything about sex out of curiosity and curiosity, as well as the stereotype that sex is evil and not to be discussed in school, which makes sex education harder to carry out. There are obviously solutions to this kind of problems, though.

2.3 Family relationships

Home schooling is thought to be linked to teen sexual behavior. Each dimension of parent-child sexual communication is negatively correlated with adolescents' deviant behaviors of online pornography. Adolescents' sexual attitude, sexual control and self-adaptation were negatively correlated with adolescents' deviant behaviors in online pornography. There was a significant positive correlation between the dimensions of parent-child sexual communication and the dimensions of adolescent sexual mental health (Wang Xiaorong, 2017)[5].

A family's education on sex has a great impact on children's attitudes towards sex. Parents' attitudes towards sex will influence their children imperceptibly.

A family's education about sex can have a big impact on a child's attitude towards sex. If parents are ashamed of sex, chances are high that their children will be ashamed of sex, too. Parents' daily contact with their children can imperceptibly transfer their own attitudes to their children. Children who see their parents as role models are easy to accept their parents' attitude and then imitate their parents.

2.4 Social Media and Capitalism

People are now living under the manipulation of capitalism and social media. The headlines of Weibo, The rise of marketing labels, they are all spreading a trend. People are easily to chase the trend of the popular things on the internet, and believe what "most people" say. Social media is just a weapon of capitalism to control the minds of the masses. They use social media to guide users to think the way they want to, in order to sell their products better. There are many examples of media manipulation of ordinary people. For example, capital teaches women to feel inferior and try to please men. As a result, many products can be sold to media-manipulated women in the name of attracting men. Therefore, under the manipulation of social media, which essence in the capitalism, people have the way of thinking sex is a shame, and capitalism can take the advantage like improving the price of sex toys or condoms.

3 Solutions

The investigation shows that under the influence of many factors (such as dietary habits, family environment, living habits, parent-child relationship, etc.), the

incidence of precocious puberty in Chinese children shows an increasing trend year by year [6]. Therefore, China is in need of solutions to improve children's education of sex, and lead children to have a more healthy attitude towards sex.

Therefore, in order to improve the sexual shame of Chinese people, it can be started from government propaganda, school education and parents' home education of their children. Below are the solutions of previous parts.

3.1 Raise the family's emphasis on sex education

To change attitudes toward sex in China, the first step is to change children's prejudices about sex. In the face of sexual assault and other critical situations, nearly 70 percent of students prefer their parents and expect their help (Shen Lingzhu, 2016)[7]. It can be seen that parents in Chinese society hold a very important position in children's hearts. Parents spend most of their time with their children, so they have a lot of opportunities to communicate with their children. Among them, intrusive sex education can improve children's sexual mental health.

Children between the ages of 5 and 8 are the most likely to form values. At this age, children's minds are influenced by their surroundings, especially by their parents. This kind of effect might be hard to reverse later on in China. Therefore, parents need to have the right value orientation towards sex and not shy away from discussing sex with their children. We need children to develop the right values about sex at an early age.

To achieve this, parents can buy books about sex education for their children and teach them to read them. Parents can teach their children basic knowledge about both sexes when they are young. When children are a little older, parents can buy books about sex and reproduction for their children to read. And when children are confused about sex, parents should encourage them to ask their questions boldly and show them the correct answer after researching.

3.2 Sex Education in School

According to Yeli Lin, "The popularization of sexual health education reflects the development level of social civilization, and also reflects the importance of national health education. Therefore, to develop sexual health education, popularize scientific knowledge of sex, develop healthy sexual psychology and cultivate good sexual morality is an important content and development direction of national health education, which is the concrete embodiment of responsibility for children and adolescents." [8] The government should pay more attention on the education of sex to teenagers.

According to Professor Wenli Liu and Professor Jiayang Lee of Beijing Normal University, "Sex education in school is one of the ways to promote children's physical and mental health not only the

necessary guarantee or realization of children's rights."(Wenli Liu, Jiayang Lee, 2020) [9] When students receive education, the school should play its role and properly guide students to have a positive attitude towards sex. After children start school, they spend most of their conscious time in school. What teachers teach will have a great influence on the formation of their personalities. The teacher's words will carry a lot of weight in the students' minds. Therefore, schools should take advantage of students' respect for teachers and redirect the incorrect values they learn from their parents in time.

If students receive sex education from an early age, they will have a positive and healthy attitude towards sex and even a deeper understanding of it. This attitude will directly influence one children's entire life, and this will continue to their adult life, either.

3.3 Government Propaganda

The government should strengthen the publicity of all kinds of sexual knowledge and reject the situation of "lack of sexual knowledge among the whole population". The government needs to play its part in providing people with general knowledge of sex. Society appears on some wrong direction, such as "withdrawal will not pregnant", "black nakedness shows a woman very lewd", or when recovering from an "can't" shampoo, rumors of these errors will also further meng forced the people's eyes, and cause them to ignore the facts, chronic diseases, pregnancy and other serious consequences. Therefore, it is necessary for the government to refute these rumors and promote correct sexual knowledge among Chinese people.

"At present, it is a key issue for each network we-media platform to review the content of published articles and eliminate the articles containing low-quality information to ensure a positive reading environment." [10], said by Daqiang Liu, the government should inhibit more passages that have wrong and misleading information about sex.

The introduction talks about sex education books that have been pulled from shelves. Yet these books are what China needs and lacks. Due to the lack of appropriate sex education materials, teachers and parents have no way to start children's sex education. Therefore, the Chinese government should encourage the compilation and implementation of sex education books. The content of sex education books does not need to be limited to reproduction, but can also talk about the differences between the sexes, so that children can be aware of the differences between men and women, and thus children can have a healthy and comprehensive understanding of gender.

Parents' attitudes towards sex will influence their children imperceptibly at a person's early age. After one grows up and accept education, the school should provide students the resources of sex education. When a person grows up and becomes an adult, the government should interfere their attitudes towards sex, and make

them form a more comprehensive and thorough sex system.

4 Conclusion

Chinese people's sense of sexual shame comes from culture, social environment and family relations. These sources, in turn, have different influences on Chinese attitudes toward sex. There is no doubt that whatever the cause, the Chinese people's sense of sexual shame is strong. Therefore, if we want to change the status quo, we need to start from both education and publicity. Both families and schools should pay attention to the education of children about sex; And the government needs to popularize the correct sex knowledge.

There is no doubt that whatever the cause, Chinese people's sense of shame about sex is strong. Therefore, if we want to change the status quo, we need to start from both education and publicity. Both families and schools should pay attention to the education of children about sex; And the government needs to popularize the correct sex knowledge.

If parents, schools, and the government can work harder on the sex education to children, Chinese' sex shame will be improved to a better, healthier, and more comprehensive attitude. The society will become a better place.

References

1. Cao Yunfei, Chen Rong, Zheng Lulu, Zhang Yu & Gou Ping.(2021). The effectiveness of systematic sex education for adolescent students from the perspective of sexual mental health. *Chinese School Health* (11),1744-1746+1750. Doi: 10.16835 / j.carol carroll nki. 1000-9817.2021.11.033. https://kns.cnki.net/kcms/detail/detail.aspx?dbcode=CJFD&dbname=CJFDLAST2021&filename=XIWS202111036&uniplatform=NZKPT&v=dU-YJNLiIt54HZDQ47Rg7ypYkBe1hpNtbN8FnhbZx0AM_t1NxrubXOkWICLp1NMH
2. Li Fangyun, Wang Meng, Yang Tianbao & Wang Shuangshuang.(2021). Qualitative research on sex education and sexual mental health in senior primary schools. *Psychological issue* (20), 77-78 + 135. Doi: 10.19738 / j.carol carroll nki psy. 2021.20.024. https://kns.cnki.net/kcms/detail/detail.aspx?dbcode=CJFD&dbname=CJFDLAST2021&filename=XLYK202120024&uniplatform=NZKPT&v=tyXH315wqhhYHjCygZB87um3cLeVZ8n4wiQH1VA4cUUxUD5JOk3Ye9qfnM_glGBM
3. https://baike.baidu.com/reference/8430823/128axGZdZPpSvz-9ewngSdXwi5pbDsAcIVhhFmXT8aNrZ5Utcbr-jZkBgScJXzQ-gJA9OLbwoO90dI34iTn_gMrgxb2tur0MUn8zgHs2GwlsUOpg
4. Jade. Yang (2020). *Attitude puppy love in junior high school students and its relationship with psychological health (a master's degree thesis, southwest university)*.
5. Hao Na & Cui Li-Ying.(2022). Compensating Others or protecting oneself? Differences in the effects of guilt and shame on cooperative behavior. *Advances in Psychological Science* (07),1626-1636. https://kns.cnki.net/kcms/detail/detail.aspx?dbcode=CJFD&dbname=CJFDLAST2022&filename=XLXD202207016&uniplatform=NZKPT&v=TUVssPVf3LcQIXU286XF-oKwyVOtIx_BRqXSq7eCb6oXyO213WkBE3kDt5-5lOno
6. Shame is the source of shame "-- The cultural and psychological roots of sexual assault and domestic violence in Fang Siqu's *First Love Paradise* <https://kns.cnki.net/kcms/detail/detail.aspx?dbcode=CJFD&dbname=CJFDLAST2020&filename=TFXL202005015&uniplatform=NZKPT&v=UvFmRTwOsq4j6DSjj4rVulNVPXZuBpvjSIhl4iduevHdHAtxQFoLiXu8TmqRKvL3>
7. Jin Chuyao Li Nan Li Zhiwen et al. Research progress on Risk factors of early menarche and its Influence on health [J]. *Chinese Journal of Reproductive Health* 201829(4): 386-388. <https://kns.cnki.net/kcms/detail/detail.aspx?dbcode=CMFD&dbname=CMFD201801&filename=1017236686.nh&uniplatform=NZKPT&v=6aEhRnOuNnxvVbDcw8D-mQjWVmnNot0AHRcvL0Dj7avnq7TGYI3PvH3CoHmfoBK>
8. Ye L L. (2009). Out of the misunderstanding of sexual health education. *School Party Building and Ideological Education* (36),11-12. <https://kns.cnki.net/kcms/detail/detail.aspx?dbcode=CJFD&dbname=CJFD2009&filename=XXDJ200936007&uniplatform=NZKPT&v=elnaT-fJMKZaJiFkYaeMkh6oleEIHyaHfa9rbVDHFOU3ilrnZYMSGJPNBt0Alh>
9. Liu Wenli & Li Jiayang.. Present situation and countermeasures of sex education in Chinese schools. *School Health in China*. doi:10.16835/j.cnki.1000-9817.2022.12.001. https://kns.cnki.net/kcms/detail/detail.aspx?dbcode=CJFD&dbname=CJFDAUTODAY&filename=XIWS202212001&uniplatform=NZKPT&v=ltZ2yEKnuCsP9hzHy7QlkYzIlpViCAV84H95iT4kYAjK5B_V2NfbLp4OGzBZyS_w
10. Lin Daqiang.(2019). Design and Implementation of Low Quality Review System for Article Content (Master's Thesis, Beijing Jiaotong University) <https://kns.cnki.net/KCMS/detail/detail.aspx?dbname=CMFD202001&filename=1019209408.nh>