# The enlightenment of postmodernism on sexual health education of college students

Zejun Chen<sup>1,a,\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Macau, Macau S.A.R, 999078, China <sup>a</sup>mc35738@um.edu.mo \*Corresponding author

Abstract: Deeply analyzes the important enlightenment of postmodernism on the sexual health education of college students. The article first points out that although sexual health is an indispensable part of education, the sexual health education of college students in China still faces many challenges, including backward concept, single content and outdated teaching methods. Postmodernism provides a new perspective for sexual health education with its characteristics of deconstructing rationality, opposing tradition and multi-value orientation. The article emphasizes that sexual health education should go beyond simply imparting physiological knowledge, and integrate psychological, ethical, social and cultural contents, so as to realize the organic combination of science and humanity. At the same time, the content of education should be diversified, covering sexual physiology, sexual psychology, sexual culture, sexual aesthetic and sexual law, so as to meet the needs of different students. Teaching methods should also be more open and interactive, encouraging students to actively engage and think. Through these reforms, sexual health education will more effectively promote college students to form a comprehensive and healthy concept of sex, laying the foundation for their lifelong happiness.

Keywords: Sexual health education; Postmodernism trend of thought; Multiple value orientation

#### 1. Problems existing in sexual health education of contemporary college students

Tagore said: "The purpose of education should be to transmit the breath of life to people." Sex, as an important part of human life, should be an important part of education. College students are a special group with a higher cultural level, but in recent years, due to the role of sex hormones in the late youth of college students, the maturity of sexual psychology, active sexual emotions, sexual thinking, the influence of western concepts of "sexual liberation" and "sexual freedom", and the media's hype on "sex", unhealthy behaviors and related problems have become one of the dangerous behaviors affecting college students' health. Therefore, many colleges and universities try to carry out college students sexual health education; The main contents are: Broad and narrow sense of sex - college students sexual health cultivation, the introduction of male and female reproductive system, those things that trouble male and female students, how much do virgins know, the advantages and disadvantages of sperm donation and egg donation, the simulation of fertilization process, sexual dysfunction, assisted reproductive technology, scientific contraception, puberty and sexual development, precocious puberty, how to do in the face of harassment and sexual assault?, sexual protection, overview of sexually transmitted diseases, AIDS columns, sexual psychology and other courses focusing on theory. However, according to the survey, the main sources of college students' sexual knowledge are still entertainment, movies, books and so on. The reason is mainly affected by traditional concepts, the topic of sex is often difficult to talk, teachers, parents do not want to talk with their children, resulting in students dare not read the formal books about sexual health, but secretly from some movies and books to contact the relevant content. Sex education is an important content of family education, school education and social education, which should occupy an important position in the whole education system project, but there are many misunderstandings about sex education for a long time. "Unspoken sex" is an important language norm of the Chinese people, many people talk about sex color change, regard it as immoral, moral corruption, think that sex is untaught, avoid talking about it. With the development of society and the deepening of opening to the outside world, people's sexual ideas are changing quietly[1]. Some studies on the sexual issues of college students show that college students' sexual ideas are becoming more and more open, and their understanding of sexual behaviors has undergone profound changes. Due to the general lack of sexual knowledge and reproductive health knowledge, more and more college students are facing sexrelated health problems, so it is urgent to carry out scientific sex education for college students. At present,

#### ISSN 2616-5783 Vol.7, Issue 7: 35-39, DOI: 10.25236/AJHSS.2024.070706

it is necessary for colleges and universities to establish a complete set of college sex education system. In addition to the necessary theoretical teaching, comprehensive and systematic teaching of sexual physiology, sexual health care, and how to deal with the interpersonal relationship of the opposite sex, the corresponding sexual health education and counseling mechanism should be set up for different groups, and specific sexual psychological and emotional rescue groups or mutual aid groups should be established. It is also necessary for students to correctly treat the practical knowledge of love emotion and sexual ethics and morals, so as to correctly treat their sexual desire and sexual impulse, strictly control their sexual behavior within the scope of marriage and morality, and learn to protect themselves and be responsible for their own behavior.

#### 1.1 The purpose of sexual health education has the tendency of "rational education"

The famous educationist Ushinsky said: "The main purpose of education is to make students happy, and this happiness can not be sacrificed for any irrelevant interests, of course, this point is beyond doubt." Through sexual health education, all students understand the law of "sex" in the development of human life and the role of obtaining happiness, experience the different happiness realms brought by "sex" in the individual physical and mental state and growth environment, learn to have the ability to create "sex" happiness, and form the quality of contributing happiness. Due to the historical reasons and the influence of traditional factors, the purpose of sexual health education of college students in China has a tendency of "rational education", emphasizing that the core of sexual education in college is ethical and moral education, and advocating strict adherence to sexual purity before marriage. The purpose of sexual health education is to guide college students to consciously adhere to scientific sexual concepts and moral sexual behaviors, and to resist wrong sexual concepts and immoral sexual behaviors[2]. Turning sexual health education into sexual ethics education ignores the actual needs of college students and the essence of sexual health education is to serve the lifelong happiness of students.

#### 1.2 The content of sexual health education tends to narrow

Since sex extensively involves all aspects of human physical and mental development, sexual health education should be a comprehensive education in many aspects such as sexual physiological science, sexual mental health and health, sexual culture, sexual aesthetic, sexual morality, and sexual law. This also determines that sexual health education should be done by teachers, counselors, psychological counselors, medical workers, lawyers, social workers and other professional groups. However, in the practice of college students' sexual health education, the content of college students' sexual health education is often limited to the education of sexual physiology and ethics, which makes the sexual health education of college students appear narrow tendency. For example, some universities "replace sexual health education with moral education", equate sex education with ideological and political education, and pay too much attention to moral preaching; Some belong to "sex physiology health education"; Some belong to "sex safety education", please obstetrics and gynecology or urologist focus on explaining sex safety. In short, in the process of college students' sexual health education, it mainly stays at the level of sexual physiological health and sexual morality education, ignoring the answer to sexual awareness, sexual emotions, sexual characteristics, sexual experience, sexual needs, sexual aesthetic knowledge and sexual ability expression.

#### 1.3 Sexual health education model and teaching methods are single

As the sexual health education of college students involves many subjects, and the content is relatively special, so the teaching model and method have high requirements. However, due to the influence of cultural tradition, and because China's sexual health education is still in a relatively closed and backward state, teachers often choose a relatively single teaching mode and teaching method in the actual teaching process, that is, basically adopt the traditional imparting type.

## 1.4 Sexual health education can not give full play to the subjectivity of college students

Sexual health education of college students should be consistent with the purpose of sexual health education of college students, the law of their own development and the demand and law of their own growth. Each college student has a different physical and psychological age, their sexual cognition range and the environment they face are very different. However, in reality, the sexual health education of college students only regards college students as the objects of education, ignoring the subjectivity of the objects of education, and mainly adopts the educational mode of "indoctrination" and preaching in the

#### ISSN 2616-5783 Vol.7, Issue 7: 35-39, DOI: 10.25236/AJHSS.2024.070706

process of education, which lacks the contemporary, vividness and effectiveness, and deviates from the purpose of sexual health education of college students, its own law and the law of college students' growth. It is not conducive to college students' self-thinking and face, can not give full play to the consciousness and enthusiasm of college students' self-improvement and perfection, and consciously transform the requirements of educators into their own efforts.

#### 2. The characteristics of postmodernism

As an important social and cultural trend of thought in western society, postmodernism not only has an important impact on philosophy, literature, architecture, art, cultural communication and many other fields, but also plays an important role in the sexual health education of college students. The main characteristics of postmodernism are as follows.

#### 2.1 Deconstruct rationality and subvert tradition

Since the Enlightenment, the principle of modernism based on reason has penetrated into the political, economic and cultural fields of western society. The penetration of rationality as the fundamental principle not only helped people get rid of ignorance and fear in the early age of Enlightenment, but also helped people establish scientific and technological rationality to understand nature and regulate production[3]. The standardization, unity and wholeness of scientific and technological rationality make "objectivity and absoluteness" become the fundamental characteristics of modernism. However, with the rapid development of the Industrial Revolution in the 19th century, people found that scientific and technological rationality eroded people's freedom and human rights, science and technology controlled people's ideological behavior and cultural life, and people's excessive pursuit of material life ignored people's needs for the spiritual world. For this reason, postmodernism criticizes and reflects on modernism. Postmodernism believes that no single method can explain and solve all problems. Besides scientific and technological rationality and natural scientific method, there are humanities and social sciences. Therefore, deconstructing rationality, advocating irrational thinking and subverting tradition have become the important characteristics of postmodernism.

#### 2.2 No central consciousness and a pluralistic value orientation

In the reflection of modernism, postmodernism thought that knowledge and truth do not have objectivity and absoluteness, can not be universally applicable, should be situational and conditional. Therefore, postmodernism opposes the general way of thinking based on scientific and technological rationality and ruled by a single standard. Postmodernism uses complexity and contradiction to wash away the simplicity and singleness of modernism. In the eyes of postmodern theorists, there is no universal logic, nothing can be determined, and the only certainty is uncertainty[4]. Therefore, postmodernism opposes identity and wholeness, advocates difference and advocates pluralism. In the process of solving problems, contradictions and differences should not be simply eliminated or unified, but should be organically combined under the guidance of multiple value orientations. The uncentered consciousness and multiple value orientations of postmodernism affect people's evaluation standards of things, especially moral standards, making people's evaluation standards have no uniqueness, and there is a situation of unclear or completely fuzzy evaluation value standards, which also makes people's thoughts completely liberated, and also enables people to have a deeper understanding of themselves.

# 2.3 Oppose subjective and objective dualism and anthropocentrism

The subjective and objective dualism of modernism is one of the objects of criticism of postmodernism. Postmodernism believes that subject and object are not the opposite relationship emphasized by scientific and technological reason, but the relationship of coordinated development under the action of human subjective initiative. Therefore, postmodernism advocates that by launching a huge change in the way of thinking, it can eliminate the wrong idea that reason is above reason and rational authority is supreme brought about by the opposition of subject and object, and emphasizes the important role of human irrational factors in the development of things.

#### 3. The enlightenment of postmodernism on sexual health education of college students

# 3.1 The purpose of sexual health education for college students is to deconstruct rationality and pay equal attention to science and humanity

The purpose of college students' sexual health education is to deconstruct rationality. Science and humanity are inspired by postmodernism to deconstruct rationality and subvert tradition. Postmodernism believes that any knowledge exists in a certain time, space, value system, history and culture, therefore, knowledge should be situational and personalized knowledge. If we ignore this point, the one-sided emphasis on rational and scientific education will certainly lead to the loss of personality, alienation of human nature, and even the loss of meaning of personal life. As Feyerabend put it, "reason and science have no duty to restrict the life, thought, and education of the members of a free society." In such a society everyone should have the opportunity to build his own spirit and to live according to the social creed which he considers most acceptable." Sex develops along with the development of human life and plays an important role in human life. What is sex? From the biological point of view, human sexual behavior also has the natural attributes of animals, sex is human's natural instinct and physiological needs, is one of the most basic biological characteristics of human beings; From the sociological point of view, human sex and sexual behavior, like other human behaviors, are bound to be restricted, regulated and regulated by social factors such as ethics, laws, decrees and ideology in order to consolidate social order. From a psychological point of view, sex, like other behaviors, is affected by the psychological characteristics of consciousness, attitude, emotion, and will, and has subjective feelings, which are manifested through people's sexual consciousness, sexual desires, sexual ideas, sexual emotions, sexual adaptation, and sexual dreams. It can be seen that "sex education" is not only to popularize the education of scientific knowledge about sex, but to cultivate the public's sound attitude toward sex, and then guide the public to obtain comprehensive sexual life education in physical, psychological and social aspects, which is the education of love and marriage, the education of family life, and the education of guiding the development of the entire life of individuals[5]. Therefore, the sexual health education of college students should dissolve the educational purpose of "rational education", and the purpose of sexual health education should be the combination of "rational education" and "humanistic education".

#### 3.2 Content of sexual health education for college students: diversification

The diversified content of college students' sexual health education is inspired by postmodernism's uncentered consciousness and multiple value orientation. Postmodernism holds that there is no universally applicable logic in all human cognition and activities in the world of life, there is no universally effective way of thinking in the human spirit, and of course, there is no eternal universal standard of value. Therefore, postmodernism advocates diversity and diversity. Therefore, postmodernism believes that the curriculum should constantly change dynamically with the development of the educated, so the goal of the curriculum is not set in advance and cannot be changed, but can be adjusted according to the actual situation. Therefore, the content of the curriculum should not be fixed, but should be diversified. The curriculum goals of sexual health education for college students can be divided into sexual science knowledge goals, interpersonal communication and healthy and happy life skills goals, attitudes, emotions and values goals, moral regulations and social responsibility goals. When implementing college students' sexual health education, we can start from any goal, therefore, the control of college students' sexual health education goals should not be controlled by pre-set goals. Instead, it should be formulated on the basis of college students' development, according to their actual needs, practical experience, recognition and respect for the diversity of college students' natural values and students' acceptance. The diversity of goals also determines that the content of college students' sexual health education should be diversified.

## 3.3 The organizational form of sexual health education course for college students: openness

The organization form of college students' sexual health education course -- openness is inspired by postmodernism against the dualism of subject and object and anthropocentrism. Postmodernism advocates the elimination of the wrong concept of rationality and the supremacy of rational authority brought about by the opposition of subject and object, and emphasizes the important role of human irrational factors in the development of things, which provides us with great inspiration for sexual health education: eliminate the authority of knowledge and eliminate the authority of teachers. The function of teachers is no longer to control and indoctrinate, the task of teachers is no longer to impart knowledge, but to serve and guide students, and the organizational form of curriculum should be open. Due to the

#### ISSN 2616-5783 Vol.7, Issue 7: 35-39, DOI: 10.25236/AJHSS.2024.070706

teaching process, teachers should learn to listen to a variety of different voices, according to the needs of students' physical and mental development, social ethics, social expectations and other aspects, college students should conduct "personality shaping based on learning sexual physiological knowledge, focusing on sexual psychological debugging education, sexual history, sexual concepts, sexual culture, sexual aesthetic as the main line, and sexual morality and legal education as the core." "Therefore, the organization form of college students' sexual health education curriculum should pay attention to openness, and can be supplemented by discussion, cases, brainstorming, film and television works appreciation, role playing and other participatory teaching methods, so that college students come with questions and go with questions, so as to truly achieve the essence of sexual health education is service - is to serve the lifelong happiness of students.

#### 4. Conclusions

All in all, a comprehensive and systematic sexual health education supported by sexual physical health, sexual mental health and sexual behavior health is a complete sexual health education. Sexual health education for college students should not only popularize scientific and all-round sexual knowledge, but also pay attention to the combination of natural scientific knowledge of sexual anatomy and development with psychological, ethical, social and other humanistic knowledge, so as to comprehensively guide college students' cognition of sexual health education[6]. In the sexual health education of contemporary college students, it is necessary to disseminate scientific knowledge of sexual physiology, strengthen the guidance education of sexual psychology to college students, and pay attention to the effective regulation and control of sexual society, so as to truly guide college students to eliminate personal anxiety and fear in sexual development and sexual behavior. It helps individuals to adopt an objective and understanding attitude towards various sexual phenomena (including themselves and others) in sexual development, helps college students to correctly understand and deal with gender relations and their related morals and laws, and promotes and improves the sexual health education of college students as a whole.

#### References

- [1] Pengfei, Zhao, Li, Yang, Zhihong, Sa, Xiying, Wang. (2020). Propriety, empowerment and compromise: challenges in addressing gender among sex educators in China. Sex Education, doi: 10.1080/14681811.2019.1705779
- [2] Shushi, Yao. (2023). The Impact of Chinese Sex Education on the Younger Generation: Gender Relations, Self-Awareness, and Awareness of Sexual Protection. Journal of Education, Humanities and Social Sciences, doi: 10.54097/ehss.v8i.4458
- [3] Gordon, C. (2023). Modernity. In: Many Possible Worlds. Palgrave Macmillan, Singapore. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-19-9281-0 14
- [4] Kwame Anthony Appiah. (2022). Postcolonlsm. Is the Post- in Postmodernism the Post- in Postcolonial? Routledge. doi: 10.4324/9781003101406-6
- [5] Ma Chuan. (2017). What are they talking about when they talk about "sex" -- based on in-depth interview analysis of sexual values of 22 college students. Chinese Journal of Sexuality, 26 (12):132-136
- [6] Sølvi, Mausethagen., Christina, Elde, Mølstad. (2015). Shifts in curriculum control: contesting ideas of teacher autonomy. Nordic Journal of Studies in Educational Policy, doi: 10.3402/NSTEP.V1.28520