

Article

Research on Authoritative Oppression of Gender Equality: An Empirical Case in Taiwan

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Abstract: Although sex education in Taiwan has been conducted for many years and there has been increased attention to gender equality and the prevention of gender-based violence, traditional gender norms still deeply influence society. As a result, students face challenges in navigating sexual communication and making informed decisions about their sexuality. This research is carried out to empirically analyze the issue of authoritative oppression and gender equality through a textual analysis of the renowned book “*Fang Si-Qi’s First Love Paradise*”. The findings of this analysis shed light on various contemporary sex education issues in Taiwan, particularly those related to gender equality. These issues are deconstructed into key points for reforming sex and gender education. We propose five key points for discussion and suggest the adoption of a sex-positive framework as a guiding principle for curriculum design.

Keywords: Authoritative oppression, Gender equality, Sex education in Taiwan, Sex-positive framework, *Fang Si-Qi’s First Love Paradise*

1. Introduction

Nowadays, when discussing sex education and gender equality in Taiwan, it is important to acknowledge the early advocates of sex education in the country. In 1971, Jiang Wan-Xuan, Li Yi-Yao, and Wen Rong-Guang wrote articles on sex education that were published in domestic newspapers. Additionally, in 1977, Dr. Yan Han-Wen researched sex education which was completed in the United States and introduced the concept to Taiwan. This marked the beginning of the incorporation of sex education into the national compulsory education system in Taiwan. Dr. Yan dedicated himself to this cause¹, and his efforts eventually led to the successful inclusion of sex education in the national curriculum (Yen, 2019). The curriculum design of sex education in Taiwan has been significantly influenced by the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS) since 1991. As a result, the focus of sex education in Taiwan shifted towards the eight conceptual themes outlined in the sex education program published by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 2009 (Yan and Shih, 2021). Since the implementation of the Gender Equity Education Act in Taiwan in 2004, sex education has been incorporated into gender equity education and has been narrowly defined as education on physical and behavioral aspects. The psychological and social aspects of sex education are categorized under relationship and gender education. While the main objective of sex education and gender equity education is similar, their frameworks are distinct. Sex education focuses on promoting sexual well-being in the long term, whereas gender equity education aims to prevent risks associated with sex such as sexual assault, gender discrimination, and sexual harassment, by advocating for gender equality (Sinacore et al., 2019). Practically, as sex education has received more attention from the new generations in Taiwan, many parents believe that their children must have a basic understanding of sexuality. However, due to having grown up in a relatively conservative era, several parents may even feel that their children already have too much knowledge about sex and may not appreciate teachers imparting excessive information about sex in school (Lu, 1994). Sexual attitudes in Taiwan have undergone rapid changes with the majority of people now accepting premarital sex and the non-virginity of individuals before marriage (Lo and Wei, 2005). Despite rapid changes in sexual attitudes in Taiwan, there are still many sexual stigmas prevalent, such as sex trade, adultery, and teacher-student romance. These stigmas are influenced by various factors, including Chinese traditional culture, feminism, and the Sexual Assault Crime Prevention Act, which contribute to the perpetuation of authoritative oppression and hinder gender equality. From a feminist perspective, the sex trade is viewed as a form of sexual exploitation, even when participation is consensual. Teacher-student romance is consistently seen as a form of sexual assault, as it involves the misuse of power by teachers to exploit students sexually. In Chinese traditional culture, societal expectations dictate

that a “good girl” remains abstinent until finding a suitable spouse, and love is often equated with passion, responsibility, and marriage. Consequently, although sex education in Taiwan provides comprehensive knowledge, it has not effectively transformed deeply ingrained societal beliefs and attitudes, making it challenging for individuals to navigate the complexities of real-life sexual relationships (Birnbaum et al., 2006).

Furthermore, in response to the growing awareness of women’s rights and the need to address authoritative oppression of gender equality (AOGE), the concept of a sex-positive framework has emerged and developed in Taiwan. Traditionally, the foundation of sex education in Taiwan was rooted in risk reduction, promoting abstinence as the healthiest option for teenagers. However, the sex-positive framework takes a different approach, considering consensual sexual activities as positive and healthy. It advocates for an open and non-judgmental perspective on sexuality, acknowledging its crucial role in human development and relationships. By emphasizing pleasure, consent, and communication, this framework strives to foster a sex-positive culture that embraces diversity and fosters mutual respect and understanding (Lin and Lin, 2018). Sex-positivity encompasses a wide range of sexual behaviors, identities, and relationships that have historically been considered deviant. However, it is important to note that the sex-positive framework does not promote the idea that having sex is always good in any situation. There are instances where abstinence can still be a valid and responsible choice. However, within the sex-positive framework, individuals are encouraged to explore and learn about other risk-management methods to prevent negative consequences. These methods are seen as an essential part of navigating healthy and consensual sexual relationships and behaviors (Williams et al., 2013). Furthermore, when comparing the risk-based sex education in Taiwan to the sex education implemented in the Netherlands, it is evident that the latter follows a sex-positive approach. Research indicates that 23% of Dutch boys and 21% of Dutch girls have reported engaging in sexual activity by the age of 15 (Godeau et al., 2008). However, it is interesting to note that despite the difference in sexual activity rates, both the Netherlands and Taiwan have similar low teen birth rates, with fewer than five births per 1000 women (United Nations, 2011). In other words, sex education formulated with a sex-positive framework may still be effective in controlling the risks of sexual behavior. Additionally, embracing a sex-positive attitude can assist individuals in improving their sexual well-being and feeling more empowered in their sexual relationships (Harden, 2014). Eventually, in order to conduct an in-depth analysis of the authoritative oppression of gender equality (AOGE) in Taiwan, this research employed textual analysis (TA) to evaluate the application of the sex-positive framework in a prominent case: Fang Si-Qi’s suicide incident.

2. Theoretical and Methodological Perspectives

2.1. Theoretical Perspectives

The theoretical perspective helps to conceptualize and identify the arguments and highlight the issues of gender inequality and authoritative oppression. To achieve the aforementioned objectives, we identify key findings through a comparative analysis of Taiwan’s domestic sex education system and the current United Nations’ Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) principles.

2.2. Methodological Perspectives

The concept of textual analysis originates from literary studies and has subsequently become a research method widely employed in social sciences and humanities studies. The textual analysis primarily is used to comprehend the author’s mental construction and extract cultural insights and events from the author’s perspective. Given that this research is conducted to understand the author’s mental construction and analyze their perception of sex attitudes, textual analysis (TA) is an appropriate method to achieve the research goals (McKee, 2001). In detail, the five analytical steps (Fig. 1) of the TA method were implemented in this study as follows (Ifversen, 2003).

2.2.1. First analytical step: Understanding story’s grammar

Firstly, a comprehensive understanding of the entire story is required. It is necessary to be completely familiar with the whole story and treat it as a text for further analysis. Thus, the text must be divided into at least four parts: setting, theme, plot, and resolution, according to the principle of story grammar.

2.2.2. Second analytical step: Characters analysis

A character analysis involves evaluating the specific traits of a literary character and considering additional elements such as the character’s role in the story and the conflicts they experience. It is essential to remain critical when analyzing a character and ask concise analysis questions. A story’s characters are often essential to the plot and understanding their traits and development can provide insight into the entire narrative. Therefore, character analysis plays a significant role in understanding the entirety of a

story. There are a total of 22 characters with dialogue in the text, out of which 7 characters have a significant impact on the main plot of the story. These 7 characters are Fang Si-Qi, Li Guo-Hua, Liu Yi-Ting, Xu Yi-Wen, Qian Yi-Wei, Guo Xiao-Qi, and Mao Jing-Yuan. On the other hand, the remaining 17 characters do not have a direct impact on the development of the plot. However, they may reveal important information or convey key messages that can serve as textual evidence for the analysis process.

2.2.3. Third analytical step: Character-plot review

By using the process of understanding the story's grammar and character analysis, we gain a deeper understanding of the text. It allows us to examine the process of creating or making a text and shed light on the text's relation to other fields such as philosophy, sociology, and theology. For example, one of the relations we identify is the sex-positive framework. The next step is to review the plot of each character and identify any parts that do not conform to the sex-positive framework. This provides a deeper understanding of the characters and the text as a whole and helps to identify any areas where the author may be reinforcing negative attitudes or stereotypes about sexuality.

2.2.4. Forth analytical step: Evidence analysis

This process mainly involves collecting and encoding textual evidence that fits the purpose of the research.

2.2.5. Fifth analytical step: Comments and appreciation

This process adopts the collected and encoded textual evidence to analyze and interpret the original text to provide insight, commentary, and suggestions related to the research purpose. The analysis may involve reconstructing the story or examining specific elements such as character development, themes, and literary devices. The conclusion of the research provides a comprehensive summary of the findings and their implications, as well as suggestions for future research.

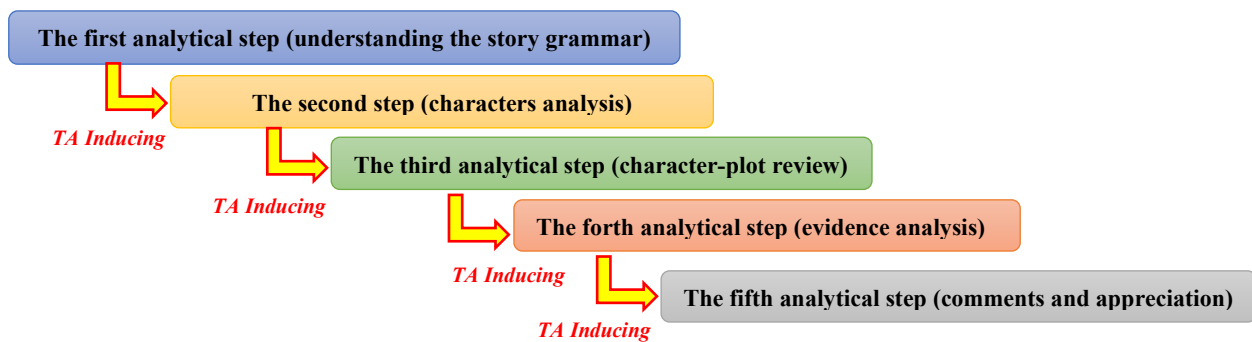


Fig. 1. Five analytical steps of TA method in this research.

3. Results

3.1. Insights of Story's Grammar

The book, Fang Si-Qi's First Love Paradise, begins with the story of Fang Si-Qi, a 13-year-old girl from a wealthy family, who is entangled in a complex relationship with Li Guo-Hua, her neighbor and Chinese tutor. Initially, Fang Si-Qi admired and trusted Li Guo-Hua, leading to a romantic and sexual relationship between them, resulting in feelings of shame and lowered self-esteem for Fang Si-Qi after losing her virginity. Despite believing in Li Guo-Hua's love, Fang Si-Qi realized that he only saw their relationship as a romantic affair rather than a committed partnership. This teacher-student relationship sheds the light on the challenges of gender inequality and authoritative oppression experienced by the protagonist and author. Fang Si-Qi's relatives, friends, and society at large view her relationship with Li Guo-Hua as immoral, further adding her emotional turmoil. Despite her attempts to end the relationship, Li Guo-Hua forced her to continue. As the story progresses, Fang Si-Qi's mental health deteriorated, leading to her admission to a mental hospital. Fang Si-Qi's best friends, Liu Yi-Ting and Syu Yi-Wun, eventually discovered her diary and uncovered the truth about the situation. However, it was too late to gather enough legal evidence to bring charges against Li Guo-Hua for perpetuating gender inequality and oppression (Lin, 2017).

3.2. Discovering Five Key Points

After understanding the story grammar, on the surface, the text describes that Fang Si-Qi was seduced by Li Guo-Hua, and in the end, she could not bear the moral condemnation and was unable to get rid of Li Guo-Hua's physical and mental control. Consequently, she suffered from mental illness as a result of the authoritative oppression of gender inequality. After conducting a thorough analysis of the text using a sex-positive framework and applying all the analytical steps, five key points are determined.

3.2.1. Keypoint 1: Importance of reacting after saying no to authoritative oppression

One key point that emerges from analyzing the text with a sex-positive framework is that Fang Si-Qi was unsure how to respond when someone she admired made a sexual advance. Textual evidence supports this, as after Li Guo-hua gained her admiration and trust, Fang Si-Qi does not know how to react to his sudden sexual invitation:

“Fang Si-Qi responded with, ‘Don’t, don’t, don’t, don’t,’ when Li Guo-Hua proposed the first sexual invitation due to authoritative oppression.”

“Li Guo-Hua: If not, oral sex is fine”—Li Guo-Hua convinced Fang Si-Qi to engage in oral sex with him.

As mentioned previously, Fang Si-Qi was convinced to engage in oral sex and subsequently did not refuse Li Guo-Hua's further demands for intercourse, ultimately entering into a sexual relationship with him. While Taiwan's sex education advocates for the importance of saying “no” if one does not wish to engage in sexual activity, Fang Si-Qi's attraction to Li Guo-Hua complicated this situation. She viewed their relationship as a commitment after engaging in sexual activity, reflecting the influence of traditional Chinese views on sex. Unfortunately, Taiwan's sex education has yet to shift away from traditional gender roles and societal expectations regarding women's sexual behavior.

3.2.2. Keypoint 2: Challenging traditional views on girls' sexual ignorance or activity

As the story progressed, Fang Si-Qi became increasingly confused about her sexual relationship with Li Guo-Hua, and she struggled to navigate through the haze of her life. She realized that she knew very little about sex, but this was what her mother expected of her, believing that a “good girl” should be sexually ignorant.

“Fang Si-Qi: Our family education seems to have covered everything except sex education.”

“Fang SI-Qi's mother: Sex education? Sex education is for those who need it. Isn't that what education is all about?”

This passage highlights the main idea of this research, which is that Taiwan's sex education only focuses on imparting knowledge and fails to teach various skills to deal with sexual issues. A fundamental problem lies in the fact that parents believe that as long as students are not exposed to sexual information, they will not have sexual desires or behavior. However, this ignores the impact of authoritative oppression on individuals.

3.2.3. Keypoint 3: Exploring various meanings of love

As the story progresses, Fang Si-Qi realized that her relationship with her teacher was immoral, causing her great pain. However, she convinced herself to maintain the relationship because she believed that as long as her teacher loved her, that reason justified crossing moral boundaries. This highlights the complexity of the concept of “Love” in Fang Si-Qi's value system, which can have multiple definitions, including those shaped by authoritative oppression.

“Li Guo-Hua said to the ceiling, lying in bed: This is the teacher's way of loving you, do you understand?”

After having sex with Fang Si-Qi, Li Guo-Hua claimed that it was his way of expressing love towards her, and that having sex was the noblest form of love. This way of thinking can be seen as a manifestation of authoritative oppression, where the person in power imposes their own beliefs and values onto others, in this case, convincing Fang Si-Qi that having sex was an act of love.

“Li Guo-Hua approached Fang Si-Qi, kissed her, and said, ‘Don't you always ask me if I love you?’”

“Li Guo-Hua stripped Fang Si-Qi's clothes, did the sexual penetration, and said: ‘Ask! Ask me if I love you! Ask!’”

“When Fang Si-Qi asked Li Guo-Hua what he liked most about her, he replied, ‘seeing you slightly panting.’”

The text reveals Li Guo-Hua's attempt to redefine sexual behavior as a form of love. However, when Fang Si-Qi asked him what he loved most about her, he responded with her reaction during sex. This realization made Fang Si-Qi understand that his definition of love was limited to the pleasure derived from having sex with her. In Taiwan's sex education, sexual behavior is viewed

as a manifestation of intimate relationships that entail commitment. Merely indulging in sexual pleasure is not love, but lust, which is a result of authoritative oppression.

3.2.4. Keypoint 4: Overcoming sexual trauma

After discovering Li Guo-Hua's true intentions, Fang Si-Qi attempted to seek help from those she trusted. She first tried to hint at her mother but received negative feedback.

"Fang Si-Qi mentioned to her mother: 'I heard that there was a classmate in the school who had a relationship with her teacher.'"

"Fang Si-Qi's mother replied: So horny at such a young age."

Then, Fang Si-Qi told her best friend, Liu Yi-Ting, but instead of receiving comfort, she was met with disdain.

"Si-Qi asked Yi-Ting, 'If I tell you that I am in a relationship with teacher Li, would you be angry?'"

"Yi-Ting: Oh my god, Fang Si-Qi, Li Guo-Hua is a married man with a daughter. What are you doing? It's so disgusting. Stay away from me!"

After being rejected by her mother and best friend, Fang Si-Qi turned to Xu Yi-Wen, whom she considered an elder sister. However, Xu Yi-Wen had her own experiences with intimate relationship violence, which Fang Si-Qi was aware of. Xu Yi-Wen chose to keep silent, which made Fang Si-Qi hesitant to disclose the full extent of her own situation.

"Fang Si-Qi: I think Teacher Li is acting weird."

"Xu Yi-Wen: What do you mean? What's happening with Teacher Li?"

"Fang Si-Qi: I don't know, he's just being too nice to me..."

Without receiving positive responses or support, Fang Si-Qi attempted to address the issue on her own, but she found herself unable to escape Li Guo-Hua's control. Eventually, she developed a mental illness, marking the tragic conclusion of the story. From the above story, it is clear that Fang Si-Qi faced rejection from her loved ones after experiencing sexual trauma. This deepened her wounds and even led her to believe that there was no way to recover from the situation. If Taiwan's sex education provides early information about support resources and healing methods for those who have experienced authoritative oppression, it will reduce the impact of sexual trauma.

3.2.5. Keypoint 5: Possible solutions to address authoritative oppression

The text of this book draws inspiration from the author's personal experience. Following the teacher-student relationship, the author embarked on a search for alternative perspectives, which are metaphorically represented by the characters in this book.

(1) Guo Xiao-Qi—Exposing the teacher's wrongdoings through the internet

In this book, both Fang Si-Qi and Guo Xiao-Qi, as female students, were victims of the seduction tactics of Li Guo-Hua. While the author tried to seek justice by publicizing the teacher's evil deeds on the Internet, her efforts are met with a lack of positive responses from netizens. The author used the plot of Guo Xiao-Qi to convey her personal attempts and experiences.

(2) Xu Yi-Wen—Embracing the future with a mature attitude, letting go of the past

In the story, Xu Yi-Wen divorced her abusive husband, Qian Yi-Wei, and embarked on a new relationship with someone who may not be her true love but was dedicated to treating her well. Similarly, the author, after experiencing a teacher-student relationship, also sought a partner Mao Jing-Yuan, who wholeheartedly cared for her.

(3) Liu Yi-Ting—Publishing the story to prevent the repetition of Fang Si-Qi's experience

In the story, Liu Yi-Ting was Fang Si-Qi's best friend and the only person who read her diary and knew the entire story of Fang Si-Qi's relationship with Li Guo-Hua. At the conclusion of the story, it was Liu Yi-Ting who survived instead of Fang Si-Qi,

and endeavored to expose the truth to others. The author of this book attempted the three aforementioned solutions, but tragically chose to take their own life before the book's release. It can be inferred from the outcome that these three methods may serve as mere remedies rather than preventive measures. We present a sex-positive framework as a potential preventive method and recommendation for reforming Taiwan's sex education.

4. Discussion

After conducting a textual analysis of the book using a sex-positive framework, five key points for improvement were identified. Reflecting on these key points, it becomes apparent that if a girl shares the same perspective on sex as Fang Si-Qi, she finds herself trapped in an internal prison. While it is undeniable that the teacher-student relationship presents legal and moral concerns, it is highly probable that the sexual values ingrained in society contributed to the author's mental illness and eventual tragic decision to end her life due to the oppressive nature of authority. Unfortunately, the public in Taiwan views the incident involving Fang Si-Qi solely as an act of sexual violence and attempts to address the issue of authoritative oppression from a legal perspective (Shen, 2020). In this research, the Fang Si-Qi incident is approached as a sexual education problem in Taiwan lacking a sex-positive framework. Three main ideas will be discussed.

Firstly, although sex education in Taiwan is relatively advanced compared to other Asian countries and has been integrated into the compulsory education curriculum, it does not fully comply with the guidance provided by UNESCO on sex education. One issue is the lack of sufficient lessons on interpersonal skills and sexual behavior. Additionally, the prevailing attitudes toward sex are heavily influenced by traditional Chinese culture and Christianity, which may not promote true equality (Yeh, 2022). Consequently, incidents such as Fang Si-Qi's would not receive effective preventive solutions within Taiwan's sex education system, as they often carry a social stigma, especially in cases of teacher-student relationships. Secondly, due to the emphasis on academic achievement in Taiwan, sex education in schools often remains as mere curriculum planning with limited implementation. The lack of well-trained sex education teachers is also a problem. Furthermore, public discussions about sexuality typically arise only during investigations into incidents of sexual violence within schools. When schools perceive sexuality as a negative issue to be addressed on campus, constructive sex education initiatives, such as workshops involving teachers, parents, and students, are difficult to promote. However, it is precisely this type of sex education work that Fang Si-Qi needed most at that time. Thirdly, apart from schools, Taiwan currently lacks community-based sex education. From the perspective of the Fang Si-Qi incident, it is not only Fang Si-Qi herself who lacked sex education, but more importantly, the adults around her also lacked comprehensive sex education. This resulted in Fang Si-Qi seeking help from adults when faced with sexual issues, which ultimately worsened the situation. In reality, as one grows older, the encountered sexual issues tend to become more complex. If Fang Si-Qi's parents had received community-based sex education and learned how to address their child's sexual concerns, the outcome of the story could have been different.

5. Conclusions

Based on the aforementioned research findings and discussions, if Fang Si-Qi had received Taiwan's sex education based on a sexual-positive framework, there would have been a chance to overcome the authoritative oppression from a different perspective. In addition to the sexual-positive framework, it needs to be pointed out that there are still many factors in Taiwan's sex education that cannot be effectively implemented besides curriculum design. With the rapid dissemination of modern internet media, the diversity of sexual culture poses a greater challenge to students' ability to cope with sexual issues. Comprehensive sex education programs help individuals navigate various sexual issues throughout their lives, fostering diverse perspectives and skills, and promoting good sexual health, sexual satisfaction, and intimate relationships.

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