

〈資料〉

# Report on the Implementation of a Sexuality Education Workshop for Childcare Workers

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## Abstract

**Purpose:** This study reports on the implementation of a sexuality education workshop for childcare workers who care for preschool children.

**Methods:** The subjects were 20 childcare workers working at a child daycare center in Mie Prefecture. The title of the workshop was “Methodologies for providing sexuality education to children of preschool age”. The workshop consisted of a lecture and a group work session, covering the concept of sexuality education, human rights, and gender equality.

**Results:** The participants considered that advocating for the children’s feelings, which they regularly perform, would ensure the children’s rights to express their views. Reflecting on their words and actions toward the parents of children, the participants became aware that their behavior had been unconsciously influenced by gender bias. They then discussed measures to improve the way to interact with children, in which children’s rights had not been protected.

**Conclusion:** Implementing the sexuality education workshop for childcare workers provided them with an opportunity to reflect on their daily childcare situations and to discuss children’s human rights and gender equality. It also served as an opportunity for them to reexamine their own attitudes and behaviors.

Key Words : Sexuality Education Workshop, Childcare Worker, Implementation

## I. Introduction

Sexuality education is important to lead safe and meaningful lives in the present environment, where HIV/AIDS, sexually transmitted diseases, unintended pregnancy, gender-based violence, and gender bias are prevalent as they put people’s well-being at risk<sup>1)</sup>. Among all stages of life, early childhood is a period when children grow and develop remarkably, especially in the brain and nervous system. Experiences during this period have a significant impact on later life<sup>2)</sup>. This is why sexuality education in early

childhood is considered an important issue to be addressed<sup>3)</sup>.

Childcare workers, who regularly interact with children of preschool age on a daily basis, are very close and familiar to such children, so it is highly significant for childcare workers to address sexuality education in early childhood. Nursing professionals, who encourage the better formation and development of parent-child and family relationships and contribute to the healthy growth of younger generations, are also responsible for taking a role in this effort.

Sexuality education in Japan is based on the

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“Concept and approach to teaching sexuality in schools”<sup>4)</sup> published by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology in 1999, which systematically outlines the goals and content of instruction according to the development stages of children. According to this, the goals of sexuality education in kindergarten are indicated as “the birth of life”, “differences between male and female bodies”, and “importance of life”. In addition, the ministry published a guideline on methods of teaching sexuality in schools<sup>5)</sup>. This report addresses the need for education and enlightenment to prevent children from being victims or aggressors of sexual violence. Its educational goal is to help children understand misconceptions and misguided actions that lead to sexual violence.

Globally, comprehensive sexuality education based on human rights and gender equality<sup>6)</sup> is considered to be the trend in such education. International sexuality education guidance was indicated by the revised International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education<sup>1)</sup>, published in 2018. This guidance presents the knowledge, attitudes, and skills to build healthy and positive relationships, grounded in human rights and gender equality. Moreover, this guidance is based on the concept that is linked to the Convention on the Rights of the Child<sup>7)</sup>, requiring approaches that incorporate a perspective on children’s human rights for international sexuality education.

In Japan, sexuality education is based on a narrowly defined concept, such as mental and physical health and the prevention of sexual violence. Whereas overseas, the perception of sexuality education has been shifting to a comprehensive one centering on human rights and gender equality. Human rights and gender equality have been taught in moral education in schools in Japan, but in order to further pro-

mote them, it is important to teach them in sexuality education for children. To the authors’ knowledge, there have been no reported studies on sexuality education using such a broad perspective. The author, therefore, conducted a sexuality education workshop involving childcare workers. This paper reports on the implementation of this practice.

## **II. Methods of implementing sexuality education workshop**

### **1. Target facility and participants**

According to a report of childcare workers working at a child daycare center in Mie Prefecture, Japan, they encountered several children showing their body parts to each other in a corner of the playground on multiple occasions. The childcare workers considered this sexual behavior but had difficulty how to teach the children about sexuality.

Upon receiving a request for consultation from the childcare workers, the author decided to conduct a workshop on sexuality education involving childcare workers working at a child daycare center. A total of 20 childcare workers participated in this workshop.

### **2. Title and methods of the workshop**

The title and methods of the workshop were examined by referring to the literature<sup>1, 8)</sup>. The workshop was titled “Methodologies for providing sexuality education to children of preschool age”. As keywords for the workshop, the concept of sexuality education, human rights, and gender equality were selected.

The workshop program was designed to be a combination of a 60-minute lecture followed by a 20-minute group work session.

In the workshop, PowerPoint presentation software was selected to create educational materials so that the participants could learn

through visual stimuli. The PowerPoint presentation did not contain a lot of information, but instead displayed some key words of the workshop content to help the participants understand the main point of sexuality education.

In the group work session, the participants were encouraged to exchange their opinions on sexuality education. The author considered that this would help the participants to clarify their ideas on sexuality education and develop strategies for teaching children.

### 3. Workshop content

At the beginning of the workshop, the author explained the concept of sexuality education<sup>6)</sup>. The current concept of sexuality education does not focus solely on pregnancy, childbirth, and contraception, as many childcare workers may imagine, but rather based on human rights and gender equality. In order to help the participants understand how sexuality education is provided, the author introduced a sexuality education class that was conducted in the past for junior high school students. This class was performed in a workshop-style lecture on how to build human relationships based on human rights.

Next, the author explained that everyone has human rights, and everyone's human rights must be respected. Regarding children's rights<sup>7)</sup>, the author explained that as with adults, they are the holders of rights, such as the freedom of religious activities and freedom of assembly. Children are not people who are only "protected" and "given what they need for their growth", but they are also "participants of society". The author encouraged the participants to recognize that children are equal to adults.

The author then presented methods for achieving children's human rights in daily situations at the daycare. In this workshop, protection of

privacy and the right to express views, which the author considered children's rights that are difficult to ensure, were addressed.

In Japan, children are cared for in groups in daycare centers. They are divided into separate rooms for each age group, where they eat, play, change clothes, and take naps. In such a group, the author considered that privacy, as stated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, is unlikely to be ensured. Therefore, the author tried to help the participants be aware of the protection of children's privacy in daily childcare. To help the participants more specifically focus on privacy protection, they were encouraged to reflect on their interactions with children during dressing. Asking them about where they change the children's clothes, the author encouraged them to examine specific measures that they could practice to ensure children's privacy.

With regard to the right to express views, the participants discussed ways to facilitate the expression of children's views. Children who are cared for in child daycare centers in Japan range from 0 to 5 years of age with different developmental stages. They are small enough not to be able to express their views verbally. The author considers that the care of these children tends to be a one-sided approach from the childcare workers without encouraging children to express their views. In daily childcare, for example, childcare workers do not ask children before they change diapers or lift children from beds. Therefore, the author explained the importance for the participants to pay attention to the "feelings" and "understandings" of all children who are still unable to express their views verbally. It was also told to the participants that paying attention, being receptive, and responding to children's reactions will contribute to ensuring the expression of children's views. In addition to asking the participants to

reflect on their actions when they change diapers, such as whether they talk to children, what kind of communication they use, and whether they pay attention to children's feelings, the author encouraged the participants to reflect on other situations that require respect for children's feelings and views.

Regarding gender equality, the author presented the facts about domestic violence, and described how it is associated with gender. Also, gender bias in social life was explained, including the idea of fixed gender roles based on the data on the number of hours spent on housework and childcare by married couples in Japan. After explaining the possibility that the gender views of childcare workers may affect the way they interact with children, the author encouraged the participants to become aware of their own gender perspective.

A group work session was held after the lecture, with 3 groups of 6 to 7 members each. A moderator was assigned to each group to facilitate the exchange of ideas and opinions.

### III. Implementation results

The participants showed positive responses, taking notes and sometimes nodding their heads about the content and explanations provided in the PowerPoint presentation (Fig. 1).

In the group work session, there were comments reflecting on situations where the participants interact with children.

First, the participants' statements regarding the protection of children's privacy will be discussed. One participant stated that she talks to each child when changing clothes, and that it may be possible to find a place where children can change their clothes without being seen by others. As for measurements of the body weight of children which has been performed in groups by gender, the participants questioned themselves as to what children had thought about it, and they speculated that some children may not wish to have their body weight measured in front of other people. They presented the possibility of conducting the measurement individually after asking children how they feel about it. In discus-



Fig.1 State of the workshop

sion, many participants shared ideas that sexuality education is not particularly unique, but it rather takes place as “a part of everyday life”.

With regard to the expression of children’s views, the participants discussed as follows: One participant stated, “If I notice the dust on my friend’s clothes, I ask my friend before I remove it. But sometimes I touch children without asking them”. In response to this comment, another participant stated that their behavior, which they took for granted, could have been unpleasant for children. Through this discussion, the participants noticed that they have never asked or confirmed children’s feelings when changing diapers. They then shared the importance of asking children before changing diapers, saying “I am going to change your diaper”.

Another participant stated that she talks to children on a daily basis when changing diapers, saying “Now you feel good” or “Now you feel clean and refreshed”. The participants discussed that this kind of approach to children could be a way of respecting the feelings of children who do not have the ability to express their views verbally. They also shared their experience of daily interactions with children in which they empathize with children’s feelings, such as “happy”, “joyful”, “painful”, and “sad”. They stated that being empathetic to children may be a way of respecting children’s feelings.

With regard to gender equality, the participants discussed as follows: The participants first reflected on their own childhood experiences to share their views. They reported that they had been frustrated by the difference in their parents’ attitude toward them among siblings, *e.g.*, the mother of one participant did not force her sons to help prepare meals, but she did force her daughters to do so. The participants shared empathy with this experience.

Reflected on daily situations at the daycare,

one participant reported that she develops an impression of “cooperative father” toward fathers who come to the daycare to pick up their children, but she does not have such feelings when mothers do. Another participant stated that, when collecting the child’s emergency contact information, she asked for the mother’s contact information rather than the father’s, which was an unconscious behavior.

Reflecting on children’s play activities at the daycare, the participants reported that children feel free to play the roles they wish rather than stereotypical gender roles. They also stated that children are acting in a gender-equal manner in their play, whereas adults may act by being influenced by gender. Some considered that children’s perception of gender equality can be influenced by the attitudes of the children’s parents or grandparents.

One month after the workshop, the organizer of the center contacted the author and said that the childcare workers started to be committed to listening to the children’s feelings and views when interacting with the children, especially during napping and skin-to-skin situations. The organizer also said that the childcare workers now have opportunities to share opinions about changes in their attitudes as well as their approaches to interacting with children after experiencing the workshop. According to the organizer, their approaches to sexuality education were published in the center’s newsletter and distributed to the children’s parents.

#### IV. Discussion

In response to global trends in sexuality education, the workshop was developed using human rights and gender equality as keywords. At the beginning of the workshop, the author introduced in the lecture that current sexuality education

does not only focus on the mechanisms of reproduction and the body, but the main purpose of sexuality education is to teach human rights and gender equality. As observed in the previous study<sup>9)</sup>, the author considered that the participants would feel “embarrassed” and “confused” about sexuality education for children. However, such attitudes were not observed among the participants during the workshop. The participants’ eagerness to listen to the lecture and their active participation in the group work session demonstrated their willingness to be committed to sexuality education.

Regarding human rights, the program was designed to help the participants find ways to achieve children’s human rights based on children’s developmental stages and childcare environment. During the workshop, the “protection of privacy” and the right to “express views”, which the author considered children’s rights that are difficult to ensure in childcare settings, were discussed. Reflecting on the process of changing children’s clothes, the participants were able to realize that children’s privacy had not been protected. Through discussion, the participants found practical measures to protect children’s privacy during dressing. In addition to such situations, the participants realized that there were other daily situations in which children’s rights had not been ensured, so they discussed ways to improve their interactions with children. These suggest that the participants gained an understanding of the children’s rights.

Through the group work session, the participants reflected on various situations in which they interact with children. This helped them find out that they regularly pay attention to children’s feelings when interacting with them and understand that their daily activities with children had significant meanings for the children. This suggests that the participants may

have learned the importance of advocating for the feelings of children who are not old enough to be able to express verbally, in order to ensure children’s rights to express their views.

In terms of gender equality, the participants discussed that their childhood environment was not gender equal. They also reflected on their attitudes toward parents of the children and realized that their behavior had been unconsciously influenced by gender bias.

Considering that children have not played stereotypical gender roles in their play, the participants believed that gender equality has been achieved in children’s play. However, reflecting on their own behavior, the participants considered that the awareness of gender equality could be affected by the childhood care environment of the children. The author agrees with this view. In order to promote sexuality education for children, it is necessary to involve children’s parents and grandparents, who are considered to have an impact on the awareness of gender equality among children, in sexuality education.

## **V. Future challenges**

The workshop was held using human rights and gender equality as keywords. Sexuality education for children requires comprehensive perspectives. In the future, the author will expand the content of the workshop and examine its content according to developmental stages of children.

Sexuality education for children is supposed to take place in the daily activities of children. The ideas and attitudes of children’s parents who are closely involved in the lives of children are assumed to influence their children’s perception of human rights and gender equality. In the future, the author should provide parents with opportunities to discuss sexuality education for their children.

## VI. Conclusion

Implementing the sexuality education workshop for childcare workers provided them with an opportunity to reflect on their daily childcare situations and to discuss children's human rights and gender equality. It also served as an opportunity for them to reexamine their own attitudes and behaviors, in order to ensure children's human rights and to achieve gender equality.

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