Chapter 2

Encountering New Risks in Educating Children in the Contemporary Society: The Risk of Cyberbullying

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ABSTRACT

This chapter assesses the phenomenon of cyberbullying as a risk involved in educating children in the contemporary world. While online technologies become a vital part of teenagers’ worlds, cyberbullying is becoming a significant problem. In this chapter, cyberbullying is regarded as a social issue that builds on the existing social structures and hierarchies inherent in societies. A sociological perspective is used in analyzing bullying and cyberbullying in relation to power, various forms of capital, and the gender order. The discussion also takes a critical stance and focus on technology as a social construct. Cyberbullying studies conducted in Turkey, which is defined as a ‘lower use, some risk’ country for children and prevention strategies against cyberbullying will also be subject to analysis in this chapter. This discussion proposes that a sociological analysis of the underlying mechanisms will be useful in establishing a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of cyberbullying as a social issue.

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INTRODUCTION

The development of technology offers new ways in which societies can thrive, creating new means and opportunities that individuals can take advantage of. However, while technology carries the promise of more convenient ways of living, it carries along many risks that should be carefully assessed. Educating children in the contemporary world involves reaping the benefits of technological developments while assessing many new risk factors created with the use of new communication technologies. This chapter plans to open a discussion on a recent phenomenon that children are faced with while using the internet, mainly while using social networking sites. The phenomenon of cyberbullying is a serious problem that children, especially adolescents face and has important consequences ranging from poor school performance to drug use; even to youth suicides (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010).

This chapter aims at analyzing cyberbullying from a sociological perspective. While this phenomenon is mainly analyzed in the field of psychology (Ey, Taddeo, & Spears, 2015), this paper will adopt a sociological stance. Cyber (bullying) may be considered as a sociological issue that builds on the existing structures in society. Bullying and cyberbullying are problems that involve a power dynamic inherent in society that can be considered sociological.

The outline of the chapter will be as follows: First, the concept of bullying will be analyzed taking into consideration factors such as the school environment, the school setting, the effects of various forms of capital and the gender order. In the second part, a definition of cyberbullying will be presented, and this phenomenon will be analyzed in comparison to traditional bullying. The following discussion will focus on social impacts of new communication technologies and how they relate to creating new forms of power imbalances. The concepts of hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity will also be analyzed in this respect. The following discussion will examine cyberbullying studies conducted in Turkey. The last part of this chapter will take into consideration the strategies that may be effective in preventing cyberbullying.

TRADITIONAL BULLYING FROM A SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Analysis of traditional bullying is crucial in understanding the notion of cyberbullying. ‘Traditional Bullying’ studies, that is the study of face to face bullying mainly occurring at school, has been initiated after three boys committed suicide in Norway. Psychology scholar Dan Olweus of Norway has been a pioneer in bullying studies and his initiative for bullying prevention received attention throughout the world.
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