

Sociology Perspective on Emotional Maltreatment: Retrospective Case Study in a Japanese Elementary School

Authors : Nozomi Fujisaka

Abstract : This sociological case study analyzes a sequence of student maltreatment in an elementary school in Japan, based on narratives from former students. Among various forms of student maltreatment, emotional maltreatment has received less attention. One reason for this is that emotional maltreatment is often considered part of education and is difficult to capture in surveys. To discuss the challenge of recognizing emotional maltreatment, it's necessary to consider the social background in which student maltreatment occurs. Therefore, from the perspective of the sociology of education, this study aims to clarify the process through which emotional maltreatment was embraced by students within a Japanese classroom. The focus of this study is a series of educational interactions by a homeroom teacher with 11- or 12-year-old students at a small public elementary school approximately 10 years ago. The research employs retrospective narrative data collected through interviews and autoethnography. The semi-structured interviews, lasting one to three hours each, were conducted with 11 young people who were enrolled in the same class as the researcher during their time in elementary school. Autoethnography, as a critical research method, contributes to existing theories and studies by providing a critical representation of the researcher's own experiences. Autoethnography enables researchers to collect detailed data that is often difficult to verbalize in interviews. These research methods are well-suited for this study, which aims to shift the focus from teachers' educational intentions to students' perspectives and gain a deeper understanding of student maltreatment. The research results imply a pattern of emotional maltreatment that is challenging to differentiate from education. In this study's case, the teacher displayed calm and kind behavior toward students after a threat and an explosion of anger. Former students frequently mentioned this behavior of the teacher and perceived emotional maltreatment as part of education. It was not uncommon for former students to offer positive evaluations of the teacher despite experiencing emotional distress. These findings are analyzed and discussed in conjunction with the deschooling theory and the cycle of violence theory. The deschooling theory provides a sociological explanation for how emotional maltreatment can be overlooked in society. The cycle of violence theory, originally developed within the context of domestic violence, explains how violence between romantic partners can be tolerated due to prevailing social norms. Analyzing the case in association with these two theories highlights the characteristics of teachers' behaviors that rationalize maltreatment as education and hinder students from escaping emotional maltreatment. This study deepens our understanding of the causes of student maltreatment and provides a new perspective for future qualitative and quantitative research. Furthermore, since this research is based on the sociology of education, it has the potential to expand research in the fields of pedagogy and sociology, in addition to psychology and social welfare.

Keywords : emotional maltreatment, education, student maltreatment, Japan

Conference Title : ICCAN 2024 : International Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect

Conference Location : Belgrade, Serbia

Conference Dates : May 20-21, 2024