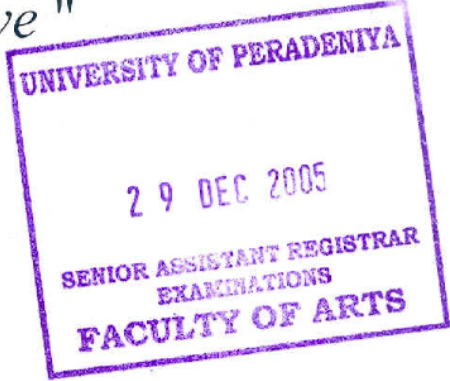


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*"A Study of deviance in context of Sri
Lankan schools from an interactionist
perspective "*



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Abstract

Deviance is a phenomenon that occurs mostly at secondary school level, when students are in their adolescence. Studies have indicated a relationship between perceived negative social reactions towards leading to negative self – concepts and their deviant behaviour. Thus labelling theory argues that school authorities use rules to assess students and staff and that the individuals who do not abide by these rules or conform to expected norms are labelled as deviant. Accordingly, deviance is not an inherent characteristic of an individual but rather a response to the social reaction towards an individual's behaviour.

Even though a large number of studies on deviance have been conducted in the developed world, very few such studies have been carried out in Sri Lanka on deviance. Deviance in context of Sri Lankan schools from an interactionist perspective is an attempt to use an appropriate methodology for the study of deviance. The sample for the study comprises students of seventh and eleventh grades and their teachers in two selected schools in the Central Province. The research methodology used is the ethnographic method, which is effective in identifying the incidence and causes of deviance among these students. Participant observation and informal discussions are thus used for data collection.

The study identifies several issues related to deviance in schools and also the factors contributing to deviance. These factors are the attitude of these teachers, attention given to methods practiced by school authorities in monitoring student behaviour., social background of students, the school environment and the community in which the school is located.

The study also finds that while certain student groups in the school community are seen

as law - abiding others are seen as law- breaking. At times, social misbehaviour extended to drug addiction, smuggling, watching of pornographic films and CD's by a limited number of students. The most serious problem identifies is sexual misbehaviour among a few students.

The study makes several remedial measures that can be taken to reduce deviance in schools and suggests area for further research.

A student-based problem solving process is a need to identify and sort out certain students as being deviants and for reducing deviance in schools. The most frequent explanation of deviance in schools is seems to be that the students referred to diverge from norm from normal, expected behaviour. An important question concerning this phenomenon is of course how the school defines normal and deviance respectively. The rules and regulations governing the school must be presented to all parties concerned and interested in the welfare of the school in such a clear - out manner to give definite and exact meanings, so that no misinterpretations can be made. Society including educational administrators school counselors, school authorities, teachers and parents should participate in this so called process.

In order to meet new approaches e.g. the fruitfulness of applying modified labelling theory to deviance in schools, doing quantitative research on deviance in schools deviance in girl's schools and boys schools separately, further studies seems necessary.