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BEHAVIORAL PROBLEMS OF STREET CHILDREN IN THE CLASSROOM: A CASE STUDY**H. M. N. S. Herath, H. M. V. D. Herath, L. B. C. Dilani, K. A. P. Naranpanawa, S. M. N. S. K. Samarakoon, Walter Senevirathna***Department of Education, Faculty of Arts, University of Peradeniya*

Street children are often identified as a social problem. Street children in third world countries, such as Sri Lanka have become a major problem. Mainly concentrated in big cities in Sri Lanka, some of them go through formal schooling. However, little is known about the education experience of this particular demographic. The objectives of this study are to identify interaction between teacher - student and student - student , to identify specific behaviour of school children outside the classroom, to identify school related factors and external factors affecting their behaviour and to identify steps that could be taken to develop their behaviour in relation to the learning - teaching process.

Three street children studying in Grade Two of a school in the Kandy District were selected as the sample. Participatory observation was the primary mode of data collection. In addition formal and informal discussions were used. Meanwhile, lists of names, evaluation reports, exercise books of children, creative activity papers and personal reports of children were used as data. When compared with other children, street children did not show interest to learn inside the classroom and their educational performance was low. The reasons may be that they did not have a learning environment at home or future hopes and about 80% of teachers rejected them as street children.

Further, this research revealed that these street children become victims of sexual misbehaviour. Factors leading to this situation include the experiences they get from their environment, negligence on the part of their parents, lack of proper security and guidance and the lukewarm attitude of their teachers. It was also found that these children are not educated on religion and have a begging mentality and that their behaviour is normally aggressive. Although most of the earlier research on street children has dealt with their bad behaviour, this study was able to observe some of their positive traits. They were quite fair and reasonable in sharing their meals with each other while their team spirit and co-operation were praiseworthy.